

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 46

Monday	Amos 3	Psalm 109	Matthew 11
Tuesday	Amos 4	Psalm 110	Matthew 12
Wednesday	Amos 5	Psalm 111	Matthew 13
Thursday	Amos 6	Psalm 112	Matthew 14
Friday	Amos 7	Psalm 113	Matthew 15
Saturday	Amos 8	Psalm 114	Matthew 16

Sunday: *Enjoy the lessons from Scripture as they are read aloud in Sunday worship. The Bible study summary for each Sunday of the year is found as a separate document on the parish website, under "Adult Education, Bible Study".*

The readings from Amos:

1. See the study summary for week 45 for an introduction to Amos.
2. Chs. 3 to 5 include three summonses to hear the word of the LORD. The people of Israel are summoned, as are the cows of Bashan, and the house of Israel (*e.g.*, the people personified).
 - a. The special covenant relationship of Israel with the LORD is emphasized (3.1-2). A series of rhetorical questions are posed, focusing on cause and effect (3.3-8), leading to the revelation that the prophetic word finds its origin in God.
 - i. Even the great powers of the world would be shocked at the oppression to be found in Samaria (3.9-12). This theme is developed as an indictment against those who live in luxury while oppressing the poor (3.13-15).
 - b. The oppression of the poor is developed, as a theme, with reference to the cows of Bashan, a region famous for its livestock. The women of Samaria are compared to the cows, as living pampered lives.
 - i. The women oppress the poor not by unjust practices (as do their husbands), but by their expectation that they be maintained in luxury.
 - c. The life of the people is described as rife with transgressions against the cult of the LORD, with the people remaining unrepentant (4.4-12). This section then closes with a hymnic fragment, probably derived from the cult.
 - d. In ch. 5 the prophet laments over the personified people. It is in seeking God that they shall live (5.4-6), yet the people pervert justice and so do not seek God (5.7, 10-13).
 - i. At 5.14-15 the most hopeful lines in the book appear. Given the state of the people, God is against them (5.18-20; 9.4), yet they may turn and seek Him
 - ii. A lament follows (5.16-17), followed by three warnings (5.18-6.14).
 1. The warnings include those against those who seek the day of the LORD (for He is now their enemy, 5.18-20), those who focus on corrupt worship rather than on righteousness (5.21-27), and to those secure in their riches:
 - a. The evil decried is not so much self-indulgence as the refusal to notice the corruption of the people, their abandonment of the covenant (6.4-7). This leads to devastation, and the fruits of Israel's

depravity are fruitless (e.g., as in plowing the sea with oxen) (6.11-14).

3. Amos concludes with a series of five visions (7.1-9.10). Visions 1 through 4 follow an identical pattern, in which God shows something to the prophet, asks what the prophet sees, and then explains the vision.
 - a. In the first two visions God relents because of the prophet's intercession. But in the final three there is no reprieve, and punishment is certain.
 - i. First is a vision of locusts (*compare* Joel). Intercession was an aspect of the prophetic office (Jer. 15.1; 27.18).
 - ii. The second vision is of fire.
 - iii. The third vision is the famous image of the plumb line (7.7-9, the best-known image from Amos).
 1. Between the third and fourth visions comes a biographical interlude. The priest's reference to Amos as a "seer" employs an obsolete term for prophet (*cf.* 1 Sam. 9.9), and thus may have an insulting overtone. Amos is condemned as a foreigner (from Judah) interfering in Israel. Amos denies any relationship to the "professional" prophets (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 20.35; 2 Kgs. 2.3, 5, 7, 15).
 - a. Amos does not choose to prophesy, but is chosen by God to do so. Thus the priest's words at vv. 12-13 are in direct contradiction to God's command to the prophet.
 - i. It is for this opposition that the priest is condemned to die in "an unclean land," *i.e.*, without the ritual purity of primary concern to a priest.
 - iv. The fourth vision (8.1-3) is of summer fruit. This text depends on a play on words, between *quais* (end of season fruit) and *qēṣ* (end).
 1. The prophet condemns those who observe holy days (the new moon) while practicing injustice (changing the measure of the ephah).
 - a. Evil literally pollutes the land, and the land quakes (8.8).
 2. A day of darkness shall result (*cf.* 5.20), and because Israel has not heeded the word of God, there shall be a cessation of the divine word in Israel (8.11-12).
 - v. The visions climax (as does the book) in the fifth vision (9.1-4), one of destruction. Rather than follow the formula "Thus the LORD showed me ...," the formula switches to "I saw the LORD ..."
 1. The judgment of God is inescapable.
 - a. Despite this gloomy climax, the book ends with oracles concerning Israel's status, with the message including one of rebuilding (9.11-12). This oracle is cited at Acts 15.16-17.

The psalms: N.B. *In The Bible Challenge the Psalter is read twice (once in each half year). We may all be led into new insights, particularly in focusing on praying each psalm (preferably aloud). See the summary for week 1 for a general introduction.*

1. See the study summaries for weeks 19 and 20.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew:

1. *See* the study summaries for weeks 1, 2 and 3 for a discussion of the readings from Matthew.