

Amos and the Prophets

Week Five: Prophetic Puns, Sensus Plenior, and Amos's Nice Chapter

Prophetic Fulfillment

- New Testament authors often use the phrase “this was to fulfill” (e.g. Matthew 1:22-23, 2:17-18, 8:17) or something like it (e.g. Luke 8:10; John 12:14-15; Galatians 4:27) when they cite prophetic texts. Yet a reading of those prophets in their own moments makes clear that they had their own current events, not necessarily events centuries away, in mind.
- Christian theologians developed the concept of *sensus plenior* (fuller sense) to account for this: although the prophets spoke to their own days faithfully and intensely, the advent of Christ adds layers of meaning to the already-meaningful words, bending them towards Himself without negating the meaning that the prophets' original audiences would have understood.
- Both kinds of reading are valid objects of careful study, and both are helpful for devotional purposes.

Amos 8:1-6: A Really Sick Joke

- The exchange in 8:1-2 relies on a Hebrew pun: *qayits* means summer fruit; *qets* means end.
- What sorts of practices does the prophet condemn in verses 5-6?

Amos 8:7-14: The Coming of Famine

- What celestial event will signal the beginning of the destruction?
- What do the sackcloth and baldness signify in verse 10?
- What does 8:11 mean? What are the effects of this famine as verse 12 relates them?
- Verse 14 is somewhat of an enigma: The first line might refer to a Syrian goddess, or it might be a spelling variant of the Hebrew word for evil.

Amos 9:1-10: The Terrible Day of the LORD

- How extreme do the prophecies of judgment get in 9:2-4?
- Where does this oracle of destruction lead by the end of 9:6?
- Who finally is the target in verse 10?

Amos 9:11-15: The Nice Half-Chapter

- What is the action in verse 11? What must happen before this mercy arrives?
- What sorts of good things are coming according to verses 13-14?
- Does verse 15 sound like an echo of anything else?

Implications

- The judgment of God is undeniably terrible, and nobody should take it lightly.
- God takes seriously the suffering of the people of the earth.
- After God punishes, God always restores a remnant. (cf. Isaiah 40)

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