



CENTRAL truth

God offers us hope if we repent.

04 session 4 A GREAT REBUILD



EXPLORE scripture AMOS 9:5-15

AMOS 9:5-6

5 The Lord, the GOD of Armies — he touches the earth; it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn; all of it rises like the Nile and subsides like the Nile of Egypt. **6** He builds his upper chambers in the

heavens and lays the foundation of his vault on the earth. He summons the water of the sea and pours it out over the surface of the earth. The LORD is his name.

AMOS 9:7-10

7 Israelites, are you not like the Cushites to me? This is the LORD's declaration. Didn't I bring Israel from the land of Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir? **8** Look, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will obliterate it from the face of the earth. However, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob — this is

the LORD's declaration — **9** for I am about to give the command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations, as one shakes a sieve, but not a pebble will fall to the ground. **10** All the sinners among my people who say, "Disaster will never overtake or confront us," will die by the sword.

AMOS 9:11-15

11 In that day I will restore the fallen shelter of David: I will repair its gaps, restore its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old, **12** so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name — this is the declaration of the LORD; he will do this. **13** Look, the days are coming — this is the LORD's declaration — when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the one who treads

grapes, the sower of seed. The mountains will drip with sweet wine, and all the hills will flow with it.

14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel. They will rebuild and occupy ruined cities, plant vineyards and drink their wine, make gardens and eat their produce. **15** I will plant them on their land, and they will never again be uprooted from the land I have given them. The LORD your God has spoken.



EXPLORE options

1. Shadows of Greatness

Bring a flashlight with you to your group meeting. When your group meets, turn out the lights and close the blinds (if your room doesn't have blinds, cover any windows with dark cloth or paper). Find a blank wall and demonstrate a few shadow puppets for your students, then let them take turns making their own. See who can make the most complex image. Point out that just as the shadow images look like animals but are really just your hands, things in life are not always as they seem. In today's lesson, we'll talk about how the Israelites got the wrong idea. Because things seemed to be going well for them, the Israelites thought they were getting away with their sin and that nothing bad would really happen if they refused to repent. They were wrong on both counts. Fortunately for the remnant that was spared, God offers hope to those who repent. He still does!

2. The Good Stuff

Before your group meets, gather a juice strainer, some oranges, and a large glass. When your group meets, squeeze the oranges through the strainer, allowing the strainer to catch the seeds. Point out that while some people may like pulp in their orange juice, no one wants to drink seeds. Explain that God loves people—quirks and all—but because He is holy, He cannot accept those who refuse to repent into His family. In today's lesson, we'll talk about God's plan to remove the unrepentant Israelites from the remnant He would keep for Himself. Fortunately for that remnant and for us, God offers hope to those who repent.



LET'S talk

Share about a time you made a mistake that you couldn't fix.

If you had the chance to go back and do one thing differently, what would it be? Why?



THIS WEEK'S focus

Just because we haven't yet experienced consequences for our actions doesn't mean there won't be any, and just because we can't see the benefit of changing doesn't mean there isn't a reward waiting for us if we do. Because they hadn't suffered for it yet, the Israelites thought they were getting away with their sin. Because they thought the life they were living was as good as life gets, they didn't see the benefit of repenting. Unfortunately for them, their refusal to see things as they really were would cost them. Fortunately for those who were open to correction, God offers hope to those who repent. That includes us!



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 9:5-6.

5 The Lord, the GOD of Armies — he touches the earth; it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn; all of it rises like the Nile and subsides like the Nile of Egypt. **6** He builds his upper chambers in the heavens and lays the foundation of his vault on the earth. He summons the water of the sea and pours it out over the surface of the earth. The LORD is his name.

The destruction that all-powerful, omnipresent (present everywhere at once) God is capable of bringing upon people who rebel against Him is simply too terrible to consider. Maybe that's why we don't often give it much thought. We don't like to think about God's wrath—His holy anger. We like to think about His grace, mercy, patience, and compassion. Those things make us feel good. They make us feel safe, and as followers of Jesus, we *are* safe. However, when we stop honoring God, we should expect Him to judge, discipline, and even punish us as necessary to preserve His reputation in the world.

KEY QUESTION

.01 Why is it so important for us to pay equal attention to all aspects of God's character, even the aspects we don't like or understand?

The Israelites had lulled themselves into a false sense of security by assuming that God's grace, mercy, patience, and compassion would continue to hold out regardless of their sin—but they were not safe at all. Their complete disregard for God's holiness that was displayed through their insincere and irreverent worship and their horrible treatment of the poor put them at great risk. Furthermore, their refusal to repent even when God sent His disciplinary judgment left them with nothing but punishment to look forward to.

.02 What does it mean to fear God? What keeps us from fearing God as we should?

Just in case they thought they could somehow run away from God and escape the coming judgment, Amos pointed out to the Israelites just how big God really was. After relaying a series of visions in which God had illustrated the coming judgment using relatable imagery—locusts, fire, a plumb line, and a basket of fruit—Amos relayed a more ominous vision of God visiting the altar where they worshiped, knocking it down, and killing everyone who tried to escape (see Amos 7:1-9; 8:1-9:4). To remind Israel that God was indeed capable

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SCRIPTURE commentary

of doing what this vision depicted and to drive home the weight of his prophecy, Amos then quoted a familiar hymn of worship that highlighted God's omnipresence and power to control the heavens, the earth, and the sea.

.03 How is God's sovereignty a comfort to us if we fear Him? How is it a threat to those who do not fear Him?



LEADER PACK

ITEM 4 | The Israelites thought they were safe from God, but God would soon demonstrate His sovereignty. See the **10 Words in Amos, Hosea, Jonah, & Micah** poster for the definition of "sovereignty" and other key words.



LEADER PACK

ITEM 5 | God deserves to be worshiped, but the Israelites worshiped themselves and their comfort instead. They were guilty of idolatry. See the **11 Reasons Idolatry Is a Big Deal** poster to see why God punished them for this sin as well as others.

AMOS 9:5-6

9:5-6. Much of the language and imagery found here was introduced in 8:8. The hymn reveals God's power, creativity, and control.

9:5. An earthquake is an illustration of the power of God, who can touch the *earth* and melt it. The verb translated *melts* probably is better rendered "trembles" or "quakes," since the rest of the hymn contains earthquake imagery. Earthquakes cause so much death and destruction that entire populations may be thrown into mourning. The land reacts to an earthquake like the Nile reacts during a flood. It rises and sinks by the Lord's touch. The language of the verse is found in passages elsewhere in the Old Testament (Ps. 18:7; 46:6; 97:4-5; 144:5; Mic. 1:3-4).

9:6. The creative activity of God is found in the verbs *builds* and *lays*. A palace in the *heavens* whose *foundation* is on the *earth* speaks of a transcendent sovereignty over both earth and heaven. Both heaven and earth are His domain where He has sovereign authority. This is why escape from him is futile



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 9:7-10

7 Israelites, are you not like the Cushites to me? This is the LORD's declaration. Didn't I bring Israel from the land of Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir? **8** Look, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will obliterate it from the face of the earth. However, I will not totally destroy the house of

Jacob — this is the LORD's declaration — **9** for I am about to give the command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations, as one shakes a sieve, but not a pebble will fall to the ground. **10** All the sinners among my people who say, "Disaster will never overtake or confront us," will die by the sword.

Apparently, the Israelites thought their status as God's chosen people somehow obligated God to give them certain things and spare them others. They thought if He didn't preserve and protect them—regardless of their behavior—He would be jeopardizing His own reputation. In response, Amos pointed out that God was just as capable of working in, through, and on behalf of other nations as He was capable of working in, through, and on behalf of Israel. He had delivered Israel from Egypt, yes, but He had also delivered the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir. God is sovereign over all people and circumstances. He owes no one anything and is perfectly capable of glorifying Himself when His chosen people refuse to do so.

.04 Why do we sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that God needs us or owes us something? What's wrong with this thinking?

Amos went on to declare that God's eyes were on the sinful kingdom. Up until this point, such a declaration would have encouraged Israel because it usually meant that God was about to bring destruction down on their enemies. This time, however, God meant to bring destruction down on Israel. Although God intended to "obliterate [Israel] from the face of the earth" (v. 8), He promised not to destroy the nation completely. God intended to keep a remnant for Himself.

.05 Read Luke 19:40. How does God glorify Himself when people refuse to glorify Him?

Just as a farmer shakes a sieve to separate good, usable grain from the rocks that sometimes get picked up with the harvest, God intended to shake Israel to separate those who were willing to repent and be used by God from those who still refused to repent. God's repentant remnant would fall

through the holes and be spared destruction, but the rest of Israel—the “sinners” who were too arrogant to believe God could or would actually destroy them (see v. 10)—would remain in the sieve and be destroyed by the sword.

.06 What actions tend to distinguish true followers of Jesus from those who just claim to follow Him?



HISTORY | Who were the Cushites, Philistines, and Arameans?

The Cushites, Philistines, and Arameans were different people groups who were all descended from various grandsons of Noah (see Gen. 10:1,6,13,22). The Cushites were descended from Noah’s grandson Cush. The prophet Isaiah said they were an intimidating group of people and warned Israel against an alliance with them because they would face judgment (see Isa. 18:1-2,6; 20:4-5). Even so, the Bible depicts the Cushites presenting an offering to God (see Ps. 68:31). The Philistines were long-time enemies of Israel and inhabited the promised land before God gave it to the Israelites. The Arameans were an ancient people who found themselves at odds with King David (see 2 Sam. 8:5-11) and were a constant threat to Israel until they were defeated by Assyria. God was just as sovereign over these nations as He was over His chosen people Israel and used them to bring about His will, as well.

AMOS 9:7-10

9:7. The *Cushites* were people from Nubia, directly south of Egypt. *Caphtor* was either Crete or Cyprus, and it represented the Aegean Sea area from which the *Philistines* came. *Kir* was probably east of Mesopotamia, in the area of Elam. God had moved many nations, not just Israel, to their homelands. But it is astonishing that Yahweh would compare the exodus of Israel, the mighty act by which He claimed Israel for Himself, to the movements of other nations. This seems to be a terrible demotion of Israel, implying that it was no different than any other nation (rather than being a “holy nation,” Ex. 19:6).

9:8. Verse 8c, introduced by *however*, limits God’s judgment. *The house of Jacob* would not suffer total destruction. Apparently, then, *the sinful kingdom* and “the house of Jacob” are not identical. Israel, the sinful Northern Kingdom, would cease to exist as a nation, but a remnant of the people who were descendants of Jacob would survive. While the sinful nation would be removed from the face of the earth, the people whom God had chosen out of all the peoples on the face of the earth (Deut. 7:6; 14:2) would survive according to the covenant.

9:9. The function of the grain *sieve* was to trap what was undesirable so that it could be thrown away. Undesirable elements would include pebbles, husks, and pieces of stalks. The grain would fall into a container. Just as no *pebble* would *fall to the ground*, so thorough would be the screening process of God’s judgment that none of the “sinners” (v. 10) would escape. God’s judgments sift His people to remove the bad from the good.



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 9:11-15.

11 In that day I will restore the fallen shelter of David: I will repair its gaps, restore its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old, **12** so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name — this is the declaration of the LORD; he will do this. **13** Look, the days are coming — this is the LORD’s declaration — when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the one who treads grapes, the sower of seed. The

mountains will drip with sweet wine, and all the hills will flow with it. **14** I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel. They will rebuild and occupy ruined cities, plant vineyards and drink their wine, make gardens and eat their produce. **15** I will plant them on their land, and they will never again be uprooted from the land I have given them. The LORD your God has spoken.

After promising the destruction of Israel, God promised to rebuild the house of David using the remnant He had preserved for Himself. The house of David existed before Israel was divided into two kingdoms (Judah and Israel) but had deteriorated so badly by this point that God could no longer call it a house. Amos called it a “fallen shelter” (v. 11)—the house of David was more like a tent now. Even so, God promised to restore it and “repair its gaps” (v. 11)—reunify Judah and Israel. Not only did God intend to rebuild the house of David, but He also planned to expand it to include “all the nations that bear my name” (v. 12). People whom Israel had always considered enemies—or at least outsiders—would be included in this restored kingdom. All of this rebuilding would be accomplished through Jesus, who was a direct descendant of David, and faith would be the mortar that held it together.



BE VULNERABLE

Because God is so good as to bless His children, we sometimes start thinking we deserve everything He gives us and get angry when He doesn’t give us what we want. Consider telling your group about a time that you weren’t grateful for God’s blessings or got upset when He didn’t give you what you wanted. How did you realize your mistake? What did you do to fix it? How do you guard against that tendency now?

.07 Why didn’t the Israelites like that God meant to include their enemies in the rebuilding of David’s house? Can you relate? Explain.

The imagery God used to describe the restored house of David in this passage is just as beautiful and encouraging as the imagery He used to describe Israel's destruction is dark and foreboding. God's people would not only survive but thrive in a land so lush and fertile that the farmers wouldn't be able to keep up with their yield. After years of exile (see Amos 7:17), Israel would finally be home to stay and be able to rest and enjoy God's abundant blessings as He had intended all along.

.08 What can we learn about God from this portion of Amos's prophecy?



THEOLOGY | To what "day(s)" does Amos refer in this passage?

The day(s) Amos referred to in this passage could have something to do with the future after Christ's second coming (see Luke 21:25-28; Matt. 19:28). It could also simply refer to the establishment of the church, which is made up of everyone who puts their faith in Jesus. The plenty described in this passage could refer to the harvest of people God would reap through the spread of the gospel of Jesus. It could also refer to the peace, security, and abundant life those who put their faith in that gospel will enjoy as a result of their faith. This second view seems to be confirmed by the fact that James, the half-brother of Jesus, quoted this particular passage in his argument to allow Gentile Christians into the fellowship of the early church without being circumcised or being required to obey Mosaic law (see Acts 15:12-21). James believed that the early church was part of the rebuilt house of David and that God had already included the Gentiles.

AMOS 9:11-15

9:11. *The fallen shelter of David* refers to the dynasty and empire of David (normally called the "house" of David but here a "shelter," symbolic of the pathetic condition of this once-mighty line of kings). The restoration will take place first at the resurrection of Christ but after that in the eternal kingdom of the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1).

9:12. *Edom* is representative of the Gentiles that hated and persecuted Israel. The point is that some day all nations, however hostile they have been, will submit either willingly or unwillingly. Paul likewise declared that some day every knee will bow to Jesus (Phil. 2:10). But clearly Amos did not envision simple domination of the Gentiles. Many will *bear my name*, implying that they will belong to Yahweh.

9:13-15. Just as God had promised to bring famine to Israel and nearly to exterminate the nation, He promised in these verses to give them abundant crops and a large population. The statement that *the plowman will overtake the reaper* is hyperbole (exaggerated language meant not to be taken literally but simply to prove a point) for fruitfulness and served to assure the people that they would enjoy eternal well-being.



NOW **What?**

CENTRAL truth

God offers us hope if we repent.

.09 What can we do to make sure we remember God's true character and what He is capable of?

KEY QUESTION

.10 What should we do when we are tempted to think that God needs us or owes us something?

.11 What can we do to show the world we truly belong to God and are not just pretending to follow Jesus?

.12 What reminders could we give fellow Christ-followers when they are feeling overwhelmed by their circumstances?



THE STUDENT LEADER PACK is available for purchase on lifeway.com/explorethebiblestudents. It includes valuable posters that are referenced throughout the *Leader Guide*, Family Connection guides that equip families to discuss the Bible on the go, a Midweek study of a complementary book of the Bible, a link to training audio to help leaders prepare for each session, and PowerPoint templates with graphics from the quarter study to help prepare slides for teaching.



DAILY devotions

The Bible is no ordinary book—it is God’s powerful Word and it is given to us for our good (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12-13). So we should read the Bible more carefully and thoughtfully than any other book. This is where the 7 Arrows of Bible Reading come in—these 7 questions will train you and your students to get more out of your time in the Bible and experience its life-transforming power. Your students’ *Daily Discipleship Guide* (item 005646504) contains five days of Daily Devotions built on the 7 Arrows. Here is a summary of the texts they will be studying. We encourage you to follow along and use the 7 Arrows questions to guide your own study of God’s Word.

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE reading



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about man?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

LEADER challenge

MEMORIZE

Amos 5:15

CONNECT

Send a group email or group message to your students, encouraging them to complete their daily devotions. You might also consider sharing your own insights from the daily readings as a means of encouraging them.

DAY 1 AMOS 9:1-4

DAY 2 AMOS 9:5-6

DAY 3 AMOS 9:7-10

DAY 4 AMOS 9:11-15

DAY 5 MATTHEW 3:7-12