

Amos

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of Amos using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Reading the Prophets*—especially the section on Amos—will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§]And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶]Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||}that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||}and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagnos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel

Prepare

Read the Introduction to Amos, paying particular attention to *The Prophet and His Times*, the *Message of the Prophet*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Amos to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Amos, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Amos as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:3—2:16.** Against which specific nations are these oracles directed? With what crimes are these neighboring nations charged? To what is the latter crime related? Against whom are the final two oracles spoken, and with what are they charged?
2. **1:3.** To what does the Hebrew of this verse refer? As a type of progressive parallelism using successive numbers in parallel lines of poetry, where is the rhetorical emphasis placed? To what does the number four refer here? Where is Damascus in relation to the Sea of Galilee? Where is Gilead? What are threshing sledges, and of what is threshing an image?
3. **Essay: Oracles against the Nations in the Minor Prophets.** Since the Minor Prophets often announce God's displeasure with specific Gentile nations, how might a superficial reading of these passages lead to an inaccurate assessment; in other words, for what are these nations actually faulted? How do these prophetic "oracles against the nations" show us a God whose concern for righteousness is universal? What theological claim, then, do these prophetic "oracles against the nations" establish?
4. **1:13.** Where was Ammon, and how does Scripture identify the Ammonites? In what does the barbaric practice of "ripping up women" consist, and what was the purpose of this wartime tactic? According to St. Gregory the Great, how is the Church as a witness to the truth represented by Gilead in the face of false teachers?

For application

1. **1:3.** Threshing is sometimes used as an analogy for spiritual purification. Based on the physical process of threshing grain, what is supposed to happen spiritually? How has the threshing action of the Holy Spirit taken place in your spiritual life?
2. **1:6–8.** The note for v. 6 refers to the ancient slave trade. How is slavery practiced today? How endemic is it in our own country? How would you recognize that a person you meet is actually in bondage to someone else, and what might you do about it?
3. **1:13.** In the comment by Pope St. Gregory the Great, quoted in the note for this verse, the pope describes how false teachers cut out the conception of truth from the minds of the faithful. How does false propaganda try to convince people that its message is true? For example, how would an attorney for a clearly guilty defendant try to "frame the narrative" in his client's favor? How does a person interested in the truth counter such tactics?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:6–16.** Why does this last and longest oracle of judgment come upon Israel as a rhetorical bombshell? What was the sequence of divine rebukes, moving from neighboring pagans (Syria, Philistia, Tyre) to neighboring cousins (Edom, Ammon, Moab) to neighboring brothers (Judah), designed to produce?
2. **2:8.** What setting does "beside every altar" suggest? Of what are "garments taken in pledge" a form? Why does the Mosaic Law stipulate that an article of clothing given as a pledge must be returned before sundown? Why does Amos allude here to Bethel, which translates "house of God"? Why was wine taken from the common people?
3. **2:11.** Who become prophets? Of what was northern Israel guilty concerning them? Who are Nazirites? Of what was northern Israel guilty in their regard?
4. **2:13–16.** What does this announcement of the coming judgment say Israel will face? Historically, when was this carried out?

For application

1. **2:4.** What makes lies so malicious? How do lies work so as to lead hearers astray? How much of the truth needs to be contained in a lie so as to convince the hearer?

2. **2:6.** What would you call the practice of raising the price of a product seen as necessary for life, such as a medication, to where buyers can only pay for it with difficulty? What are some motives behind this form of extortion? Which commandment does it violate?
3. **2:12.** What happens within a community of strict observance when, either in response to complaints or out of an ideology, the leadership begins to relax the rules? How long will that community continue to respect the original rule? What often happens when the Church relaxes disciplines such as fasting or attendance at liturgy? What happens to virtue when its practice is no longer seen as necessary?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** Although his indictment targets the Northern Kingdom of Israel specifically, to whom does Amos address himself inclusively? What is the purpose of speaking to the whole covenant community?
2. **3:2.** How does this oracle point to Israel's special relationship with the Lord? While Israel's election is not just a privilege, with what responsibility does it come? When Israel fails in national obedience, as in Amos' day, what must it face? How do the words of Jesus apply here?
3. **3:6.** What does the Hebrew *rā'āh* mean here? If Amos is not making a general statement that God is the cause of every misfortune that cities face, what is his point? What does Amos want Israel to understand? According to St. John of Damascus, what two meanings does evil have? Why does the second of these two seem to be evil when, in fact, it is good? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, in what sense is God the author of evil?
4. **3:14.** Where is Bethel? For what was it known? What would the altars of Bethel have functioned as? How does Amos view Bethel? What feature did many altars in biblical Israel have?

For application

1. **3:2.** The note for this verse refers to the responsibilities Israel had to keep the covenant. What rights does a person have who has been validly baptized? What responsibilities go along with those rights?
2. **3:6.** Sin has consequences, some of which may be years in coming. What consequences might reasonably be expected from certain addictions, such as to alcohol, drugs, or pornography? How might their consequences affect persons not directly involved in those addictions? What role does God have in causing such consequences?
3. **3:8.** What is the role of a prophet? How does one distinguish a true prophet from a false one? If a prophet is proved to be true, why is he so often disbelieved?
4. **3:14.** If the horn signifies strength or power, and four of them are placed on an altar of sacrifice, what is the significance of having them cut off? For a Christian, who provides the "horn of salvation"?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1.** Why are the wealthy matrons of Samaria compared to well-fed cattle? What is the prophet implying? What is Samaria? How does Amos describe Samaria's affluent women as reveling in luxuries furnished by unjustly obtained wealth? What were they accused of drinking?
2. **4:4–5.** How does the prophet employ sarcasm in these verses? Why is northern Israel's worship unacceptable to God?
3. **4:6–11.** In what way are the five instances in which the Lord chastised sinful Israel in these verses not signs of rejection but appeals for repentance? What was the refrain that indicates that these warnings tragically went unheeded?
4. **4:12.** What is so terrifying about the announcement of divine confrontation here?

For application

1. **4:1.** In our culture, who are the poor and needy? How are the wealthy pampered at their expense? What moral judgment attaches to the wealthy who claim to be unaware of the needy in their midst or who believe that the poor are responsible for their own poverty?
2. **4:5.** What are some examples of false spirituality in our time? What does a person mean who claims to be spiritual but not religious? Bearing in mind Amos' sarcasm in this verse, what encouragement if any should be given to those who pursue "non-religious" spirituality?

3. **4:6–11.** Read the note for these verses. Has the Lord ever used hard times and negative experiences as a way of getting you to pay attention to him? If so, how long did it take you to realize his purpose in these events? When was your moment of turning?
4. **4:12.** How prepared are you to meet your God? What form should your preparation take? For example, what relationships should you repair, what offenses should you forgive, what goods or even attitudes should you eliminate?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:8.** To what are the constellations Pleiades and Orion related? To what do the luminaries in the day and night sky bear witness, and what was Israel forbidden to do toward them?
2. **5:12.** What makes taking a bribe immoral for judges? In the words of the Torah, what does a bribe do? What was the importance of the city gate?
3. **5:18.** What purpose do the three funeral dirges introduced here serve? What is “the day of the LORD”? What did the northern Israelites wrongly suppose? Not exempted from the dreaded day of the Lord, when do the covenant people make themselves a target? Who is the first of Israel’s prophets to mention the “day of the LORD”?
4. **5:21–24.** With what are these verses concerned? If this oracle is not an attack on ritual or sacrificial worship per se, what is the real problem? According to Scripture, what things are more pleasing to God than ritual sacrifice?
5. **5:26.** What are Sakkuth and Kaiwan? To what do they refer? What will these idols, venerated in northern Israel, be powerless to do? Though the names of the deities appear differently in the Greek version the deacon Stephen cites before his martyrdom, how is his rhetorical purpose the same as that of Amos? With what does Stephen fault his Jewish hearers?

For application

1. **5:4.** According to the note for this verse, what is included in the call to seek the Lord? How often do you seek him this way?
2. **5:10.** When you were a child, how did you respond emotionally to your parents’ corrections? As an adult, how do you regard a peer who corrects you, especially on a moral issue? Why is correction so hard to take and so easy to avoid?
3. **5:13.** In an age where anything posted on social media is seen by the world, what often happens to a person who states a moral opinion on the Internet? What does prudence counsel when responses are hostile or inflammatory?
4. **5:14–15.** In an age when good and evil are reversed, where evil is considered good and good evil (cf. Is 5:20), how does one distinguish right from wrong? What does the person who seeks the true good become for the age in which he lives?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:4–7.** Why is doom pronounced on the wealthy aristocrats of Israel? Distracted by a life of self-indulgence, to what were they oblivious? Of what does Amos warn them?
2. **6:5.** How is David remembered in Scripture? What contrast does his mention imply?
3. **6:13.** What were Lo-debar and Karnaim? While Israelites viewed this recovery of territory as proof of their political and military strength, to what does Amos point?
4. **6:14.** As the northern and southern boundaries of the Promised Land, with what modern city is Hamath identified, and where is the Brook of the Arabah? How will the Assyrian invaders wreak havoc throughout the land?

For application

1. **6:1.** Why do some say that a totalitarian regime, like that of Communist Russia, cannot take over this country? What explains their confidence that such a thing is impossible? How confident are you in the inviolability of our country?
2. **6:3.** What is a Ponzi scheme? How long do those who organize and recruit “investors” hope their pyramid scheme will last? What happens to everyone involved on the day of reckoning when the scheme disintegrates?
3. **6:6.** Assuming you live a fairly comfortable life, what thought have you given to the homeless and hungry of your own environment? Assuming you live a virtuous life, what grief have you felt over the moral disintegration of the country? To what concrete actions have your thoughts and feelings led you?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:3.** What does it mean to say that “the LORD repented”? Why does the language of repentance applied to God have nothing to do with the Almighty ceasing from moral evil? Why does Scripture often describe the Lord in human terms?
2. **7:7–9.** What does Amos’ third vision of the plumb line indicate regarding northern Israel? Because the prophet does not intercede for Israel after this vision, what does this suggest that he realizes? As indicated earlier, when does punishment come?
3. **7:10–17.** In this narrative interlude, of what has Amaziah falsely accused Amos? What does Amos insist about himself? Why is this story placed here?
4. **7:14.** What does Amos’ denial that he is a prophet by profession mean? How does he thus counter Amaziah’s insinuation that financial opportunity is the motive behind his ministry? Why does he deny that he is a prophet’s son? What is involved in dressing sycamores? What does the fact that trees grew in low-lying regions such as Jericho and the Shephelah but not in Amos’ home of Tekoa imply about how the prophet divided his time?

For application

1. **7:2–6.** What is your experience of intercessory prayer? For whom or what do you typically intercede? According to 1 Jn 5:14–15, when is intercessory prayer most effective?
2. **7:7–9.** Read the note for these verses. If you were to intercede regularly for the resolution of a difficult situation, what conditions might prompt you to stop praying for it? How long would you persevere in praying for the conversion of a person who shows no signs of changing?
3. **7:12–13.** How welcome is the Christian gospel in today’s public square? What penalties have some businesses and universities imposed on Christian employees and faculty members whose comments cross their “core values”? How confident are you that your own Christian beliefs are safe from attack?
4. **7:15.** What should hinder you from witnessing to your faith in the public square? What mandate do you have to do so (Mt 28:19–20)?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:1–3.** In his fourth vision of the basket of summer fruit, what does Amos learn? How is this indicated through the wordplay and symbolic association? What does the harvesting of summer fruits symbolize about Israel’s time of growth?
2. **8:5.** How important are the new moon and the Sabbath? When was conducting business forbidden? What is an ephah? A shekel? What are false balances? What do the Torah and the Book of Proverbs say about balances? According to Catholic teaching, which commandment do business fraud and price gouging violate?
3. **8:9.** What is “that day”? How does the sun go down at noon? What Gospel account does Amos’ vision stand behind? According to St. Irenaeus, what did the one who spoke these words clearly announce? According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, what did the darkening of the sun at the Crucifixion signify?
4. **8:11.** For what is a famine of the word of God a just punishment? What does Amos appear to say about rebellious Israel? What is the idea behind this?

For application

1. **8:4–6.** What are some economic opportunities that are either denied to or restricted for certain racial, ethnic, or religious minorities? Who manipulates the law to give the appearance of legality to these restrictions? How might these injustices have affected you or your family?
2. **8:9.** What is the modern attitude toward a total eclipse of the sun? What are some differences between our view of such events and the view suggested in this verse? If moderns do not regard eclipses as omens of divine judgment, what *would* become such an omen for us?
3. **8:11–12.** What famine of hearing the words of the Lord does our culture experience today? How is it manifested? What may be the causes of such a famine?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:1–10.** In his fifth vision, what does Amos see the Lord doing and hear him saying? What does he learn about the coming disaster? What is the only glimmer of hope? What forms an interlude to the divine speech?
2. **9:11–15.** How does the book conclude? What does the Lord declare as his intention? To whom do many scholars attribute these final verses? What do other scholars find that dates the book to the time of Amos in the eighth century B.C.?
3. **9:11.** What is the “booth” of David? What does it mean that the booth of David has fallen? What did the Lord will that David and his successors would do? How long did this arrangement actually hold, and when did it fall apart? From Amos’ perspective in the eighth century B.C., what had already happened to the kingdom of David? What did the destruction and exile of northern Israel create? What was Israel’s messianic hope? On what is the future kingdom modeled? On what premise do the apostles see the upbuilding of the Church as the rebuilding of David’s kingdom?
4. **9:13.** Of what are the visions of the plowman, the reaper, and the treader of grapes the signs? When were grains and vintage crops harvested and plowing and seed planting done? Of what are mountains flowing with wine a sign?

For application

1. **9:2–3.** According to Ps 139, how far does God’s knowledge of you extend? If you wished to hide from him because of your sins, how would you do it? With what invitation to the Lord does the psalm end, and how might it apply to you?
2. **9:9.** Why would a gardener shake a substance such as rocky soil through a sieve? When a marriage is shaken as with a sieve, what ideally should remain and what should fall away? How might the Lord be shaking the Church in these days, and what hope should come from that process?
3. **9:11.** Read the note for this verse, particularly the last two sentences. Has the upbuilding of the Church completed the rebuilding of the Davidic kingdom? If not, what remains to be done?
4. **9:14.** How does this verse affect your vision of what heaven is like? If a person is judged on the basis of his works, what works are most suited to the attainment of heaven? How will heaven include enjoyment of the fruit of those works?