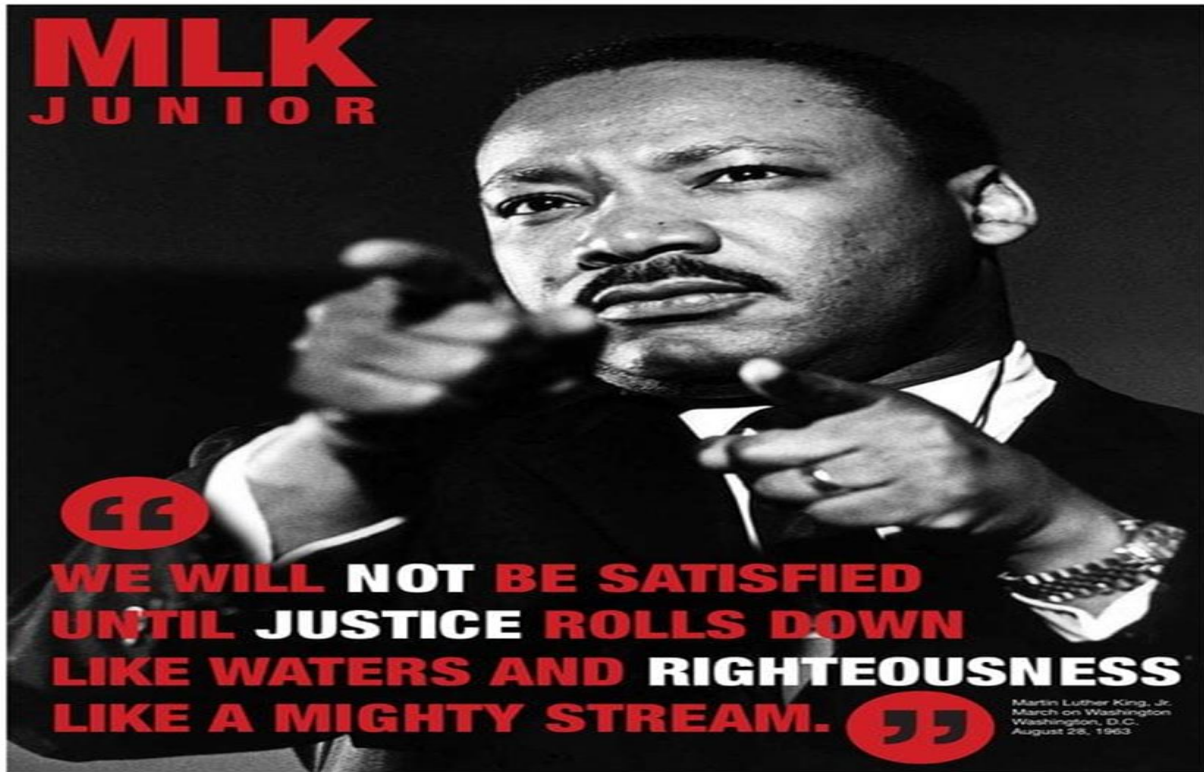
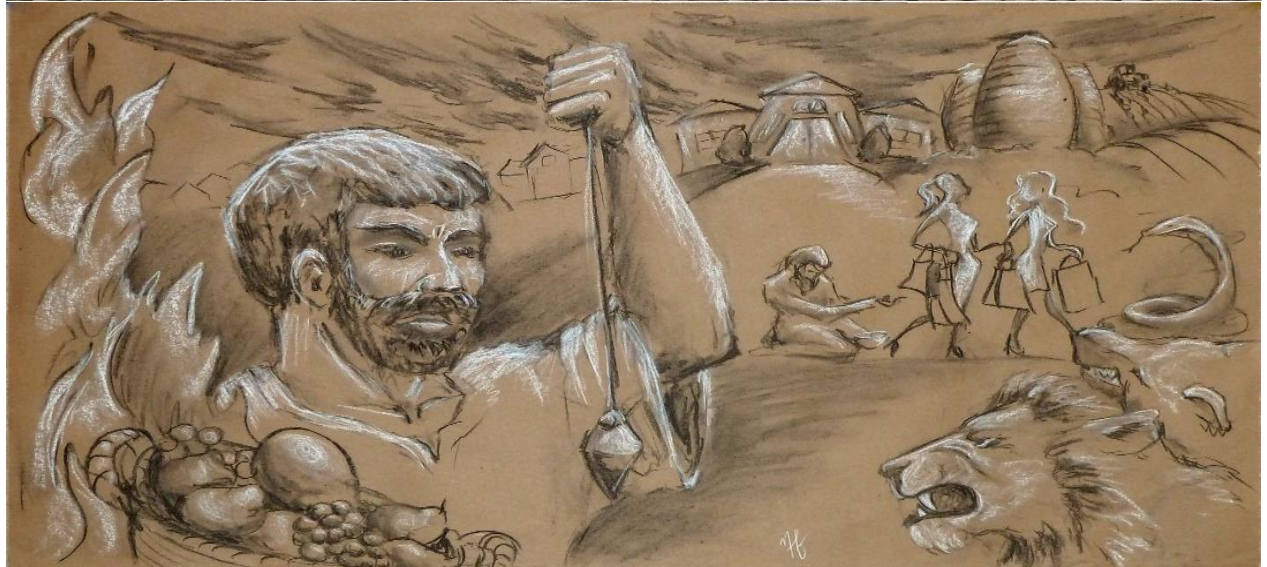
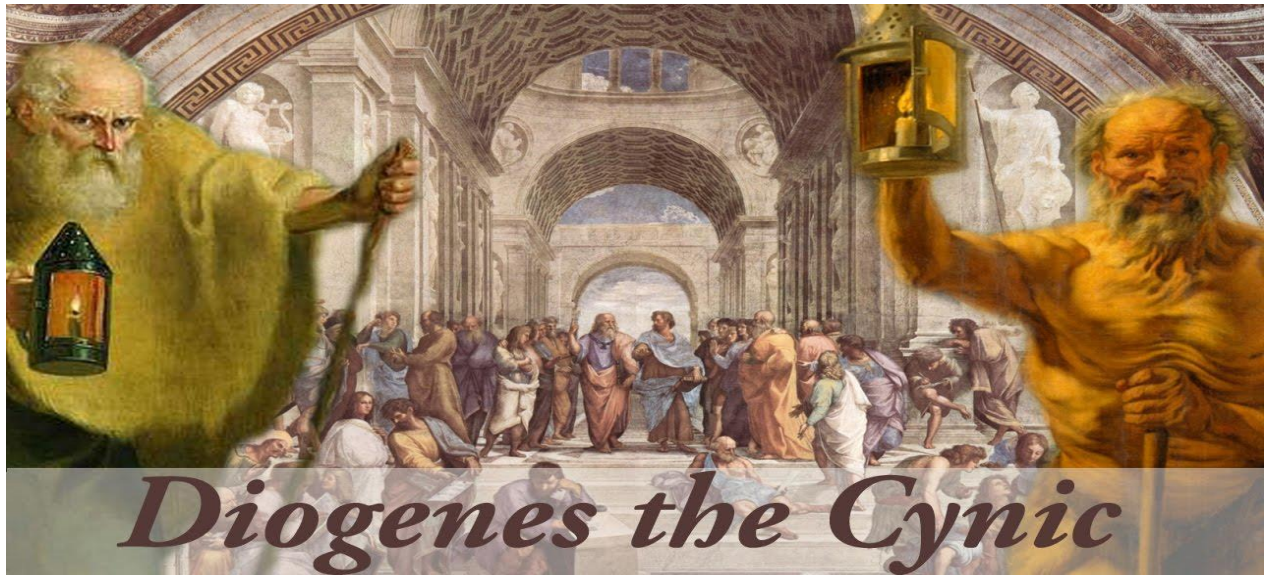


THE HYPOCRITICAL VS. THE HONEST HEART

by David Lee Burris





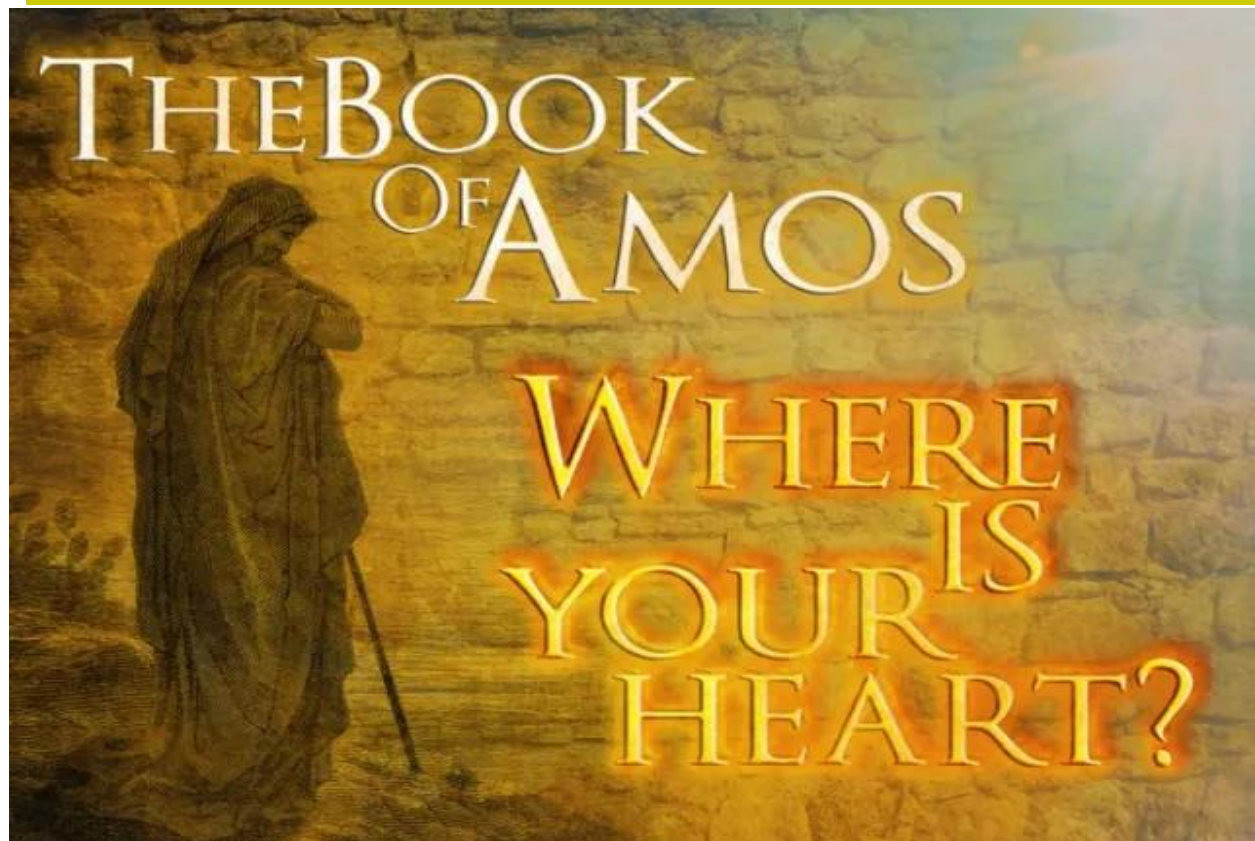
❖ **Bible Says You Are In Charge Of Your Own Heart**

❖ *Jeremiah 4: 4 – “Remove the foreskin of your hearts”*

❖ *Jeremiah 9: 13 – “Stubbornly followed their hearts”*

❖ *Jeremiah 18: 11 – “Act according to his evil heart”*

❖ *Ezekiel 18:31 – “Make Yourselves
A New Heart & A New Spirit!”*





"But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:24 nasb) Every time I read verse 24 I think of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous message proclaiming, "let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream." Dr. King spoke these words one warm summer day in 1963.²² A phrase from Amos 5 became the rallying cry for a movement of justice for people of color all across this country. Today we can both rejoice in the fact that to a significant degree, Dr. King's wonderful dream has come true. On the one hand, only racists want to divide people by melanin skin content or eye shape. On the other hand, there remain parts of that dream that are still only that—a dream. There are racists on both sides using skin pigment for political gain. These are those who fall under God's condemnation in the book of Amos. He wanted people to be freed from the uncleanness of sin. Only then would the expected deeds of love and justice flow like "an unstoppable stream." God wanted his people's joy to culminate in blessing. He did not want their acts of justice and righteousness to ooze out of them, but rather he wanted them to flow like brooks that flow down the mountain. God wanted a day-to-day life of surging integrity and goodness. Only this outer evidence of inner righteousness could offer the Israelites the possibility of survival in the day of the Lord.

AMOS

1-2 MESSAGE TO THE NATIONS & ISRAEL

- AMOS: A SHEPHERD & FIG-TREE FARMER (AMOS 7:14)
- SEPHARJIM (AMOS 1:1)
- VISIONS (AMOS 7:1-9)
- SOUTHERN JUDAH (AMOS 7:12)
- TEKOA (AMOS 7:12)
- BETHEL (AMOS 7:13)
- JEROBAM II (AMOS 7:14)
- NORTHERN ISRAEL (AMOS 7:14)
- TYRE (AMOS 1:1)
- DAMASCUS (AMOS 1:3)
- AMMON (AMOS 1:13)
- MOAB (AMOS 2:1)
- JUDAH (AMOS 2:4)
- EDOM (AMOS 2:12)
- GAZA (AMOS 1:7)
- ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE NATIONS (AMOS 1:1-2:17)
- ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL (AMOS 2:1-3:17)
- THE PARTY'S OVER! (AMOS 6:1-6)
- THE GREAT ONE IGNORES THE POOR (AMOS 4:1)
- SELL THEM INTO DEBT SLAVERY (AMOS 8:1)
- DENY THEM LEGAL REPRESENTATION (AMOS 8:1)

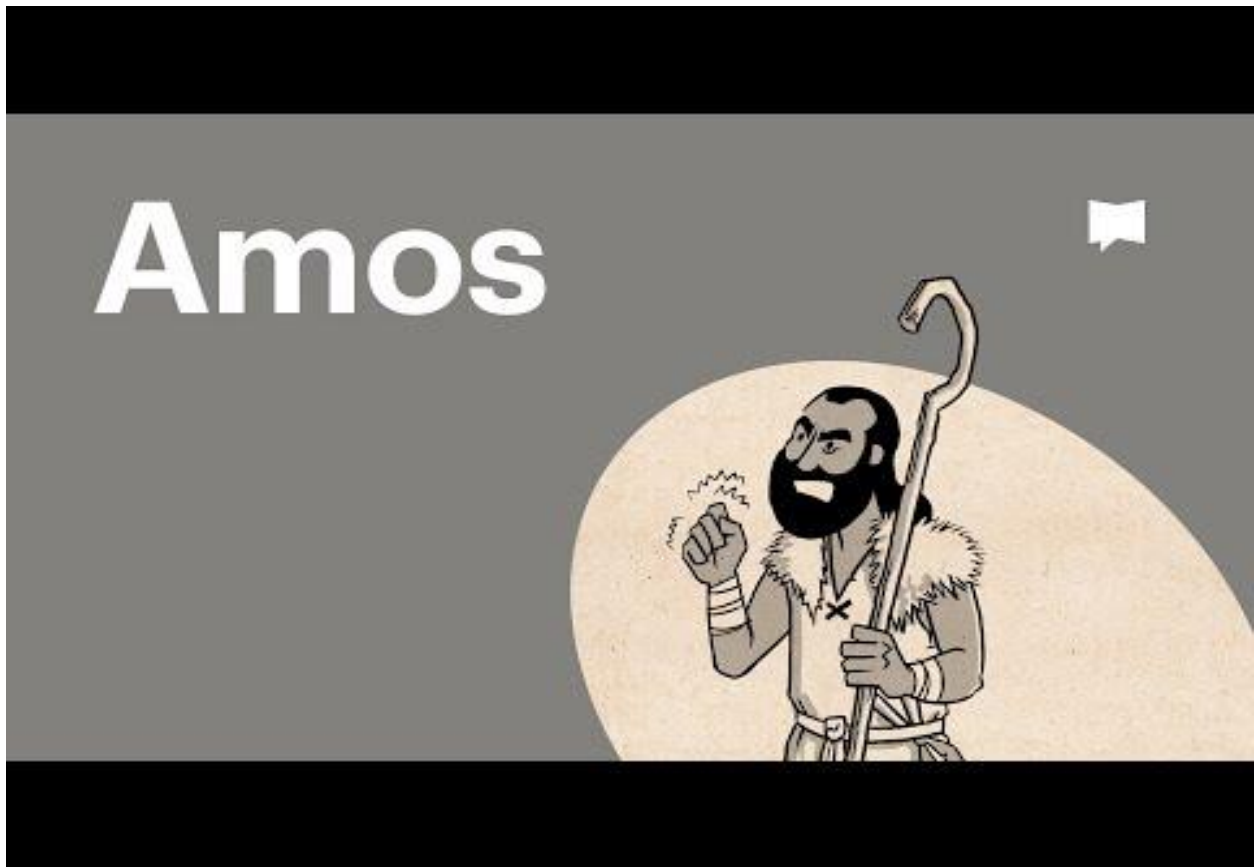
3-6 MESSAGE TO ISRAEL & ITS LEADERS

- "I CHOSE YOU, ISRAEL, FROM AMONG ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH, AND THIS IS WHY I WILL PUNISH YOU FOR ALL YOUR SIN." (AMOS 3:2)
- GREAT CALLING + GREAT RESPONSIBILITY = GREAT CONSEQUENCES (AMOS 3:1)
- ISRAEL SHOULD BE A BLESSING TO ALL NATIONS (AMOS 1:9)
- IT'S ALL A SHAME! (AMOS 3:1)
- EXPOSURE OF RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY (AMOS 4:1-5:17)
- "LET JUSTICE FLOW LIKE A RIVER, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE AN UNFAILING STREAM." (AMOS 5:24)
- HEBREW: *ANUSHWAT* (AMOS 5:24) - ACTIONS LEAD TO CONSEQUENCES
- HEBREW: *TSEMOMAH* (AMOS 5:24) - GOOD REPUTATION, GOOD REPUTATION BRINGS GOOD WILL
- ANNOUNCING THE DAY OF THE LORD (AMOS 5:18-6:1)
- 40 YEARS LATER... (AMOS 8:1)
- AMOS & OTHER PROPHETS (AMOS 8:1)
- ARMIES OF ASSYRIA (AMOS 8:1)
- WORSHIP OF THESE GODS LEADS TO INJUSTICE (AMOS 5:26)
- "SEEK GOD, THAT YOU MAY LIVE" (AMOS 5:4)
- "SEEK GOD, NOT EVIL, THAT YOU MAY LIVE" (AMOS 5:14)

7-9 AMOS' VISIONS

- EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD'S JUSTICE & MERCY (AMOS 5:4-6)
- HE MUST CONFRONT EVIL AMONG ISRAEL & THE NATIONS (AMOS 5:4)
- HIS LONG-TERM PURPOSES ARE FOR RESTORATION & A NEW FAMILY (AMOS 5:6)
- SYMBOLIC DEPICTIONS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD (AMOS 8:1-9:11)
- SCORCHING FIRE (AMOS 8:7)
- LOOT SWARM (AMOS 8:4)
- OVERRIPE FRUIT (AMOS 8:1)
- GOD (AMOS 8:7)
- 40 YEARS LATER... (AMOS 8:1)
- HOUSE OF DAVID (AMOS 9:11)
- FUTURE MESSIANIC KINGDOM (AMOS 9:11)
- GOD'S KINGDOM OVER ALL NATIONS (AMOS 9:12)

created by the Bible Project



Interesting Facts About Amos

MEANING: "Burden" or "Burden Bearer."

AUTHOR: Amos

TIME WRITTEN: Possibly around 755 B.C.

POSITION IN THE BIBLE:

- 30th Book in the Bible
- 30th Book in the Old Testament
- 8th of 17 books of Prophecy (Isaiah - Malachi)
- 3rd of 12 minor prophets (Hosea - Malachi)
- 36 Books to follow it.



CHAPTERS: 9

VERSES: 146

WORDS: 4,217

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT AMOS:

- Amos prophesied in Bethel about 755 B.C.
- Amos was a farmer who became a prophet.
- The only time the name of Amos appears in the Old Testament is in the Book of Amos.
- Amos was from Tekoa in Judah. Tekoa was located about twelve miles south of Jerusalem.
- Astronomical calculations indicate that a solar eclipse occurred in Israel on June 15, 763 B.C. Therefore the event would have been fresh in the mind of the people when Amos wrote in Amos 8:9 - "And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord God, That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight."
- Amos ministered:
 - After:
 - Obadiah
 - Joel
 - Jonah

AMOS

• Just before:

- Hosea
- Micah
- Isaiah

■ During the time of Amos:

- It was a period of optimism in Israel.
- There was great prosperity.
- Economic circumstances were almost ideal.
- Military circumstances were almost ideal.
- Assyria, Babylon, Syria, and Egypt were relatively weak.
- It was three decades before Israel would fail to Assyria.

■ The key to the Book of Amos is God's judgment of Israel.

■ The sins of Israel are great.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty ritualism in religion. • Oppression of the poor by the rich. • Idolatry • Deceit • Self-righteousness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrogance • Greed • Materialism • Callousness |
|---|--|

■ Although the people have repeatedly broken every aspect of their covenant relationship with Jehovah, God's mercy and love for them is demonstrated by His sending Amos to warn the people of their fate should they refuse to repent.

■ Seven times in the Book of Amos, God says, "I will send fire."

■ God promises to:

- Reinstatement the Davidic line.
- Renew the land.
- Restore the Temple.



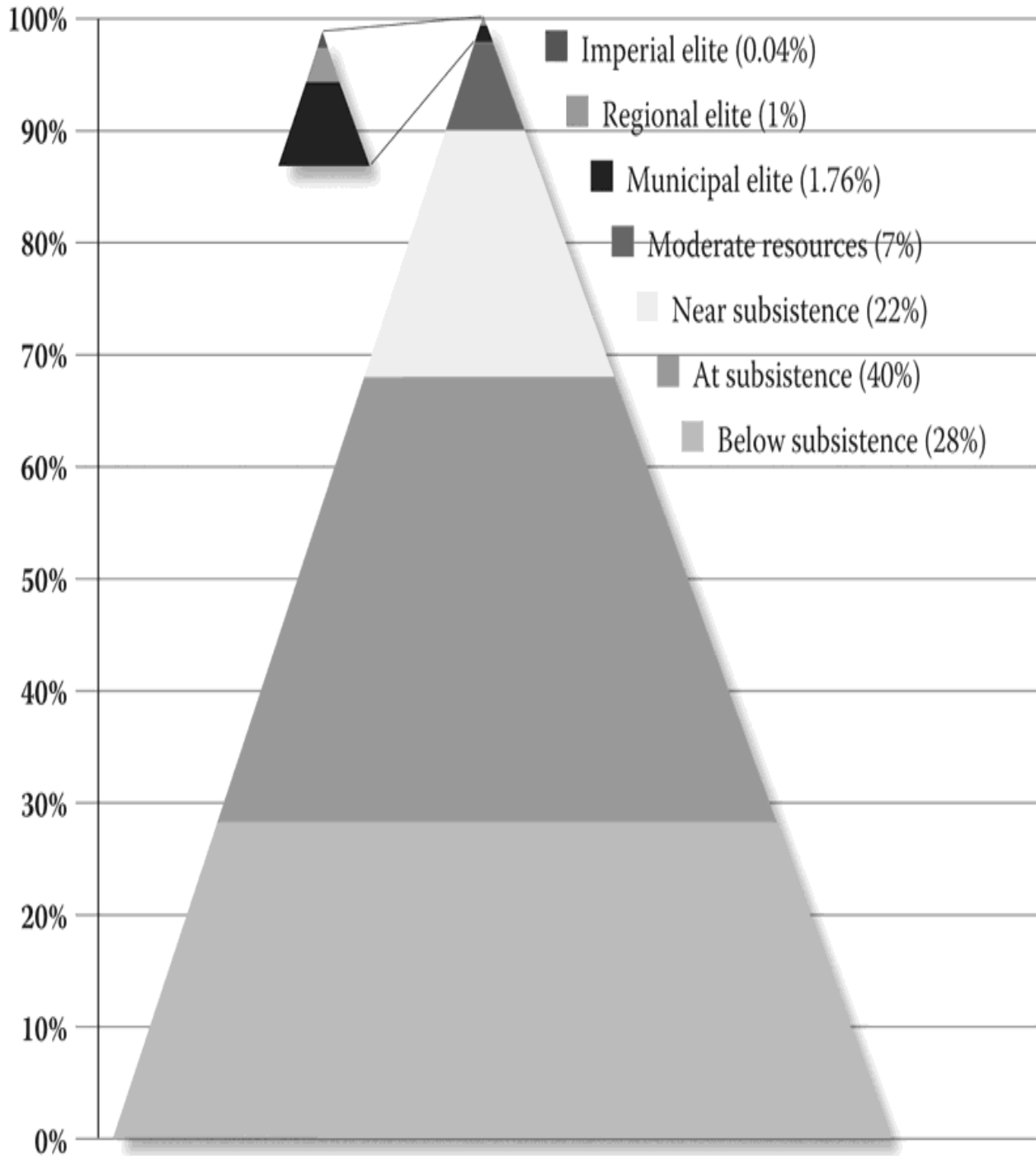
DATE AND HISTORICAL SITUATION

- According to the first verse, Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah over Judah (792-740 b.c.) and Jeroboam II over Israel (793-753). The main part of his ministry was probably carried out c. 760-750. Both kingdoms were enjoying great prosperity and had reached new political and military heights (cf. *2Ki 14:23 -- 15:7; 2Ch 26*). It was also a time of idolatry, extravagant indulgence in luxurious living, immorality, corruption of judicial procedures and oppression of the poor. As a consequence, God would soon bring about the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom (722-721).
- Israel at the time was politically secure and spiritually smug. About 40 years earlier, at the end of his ministry, Elisha had prophesied the resurgence of Israel's power (*2Ki 13:17-19*), and more recently Jonah had prophesied her restoration to a glory not known since the days of Solomon (*2Ki 14:25*). The nation felt sure, therefore, that she was in God's good graces. But prosperity increased Israel's religious and moral corruption. God's past punishments for unfaithfulness were forgotten, and his patience was at an end -- which he sent Amos to announce.
- With Amos, the messages of the prophets began to be preserved in permanent form, being brought together in books that would accompany Israel through the coming debacle and beyond. (Since Amos was a contemporary of Hosea and Jonah, see Introductions to those books.)

AMOS-IMPENDING JUDGMENT

<p style="text-align: center;">THE LORD THUNDERS AGAINST THE NATIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"For 3 Sins, Even for 4".... OF BECAUSE</p> <p>Damascus Threshed Gilead Gaza Took Captives Tyre Sold Captives</p> <p>Edom Pursued In Anger Ammon Violence Moab Burn Edom King Judah Reject Law, Idols</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I Will Not Turn Back My Wrath I Will..... Burn, Break, Destroy, Kill, Consume</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Israel Injustice, Immorality Abuse of Privilege</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I Will.... Crush You, No Escape</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THREE MESSAGES OF ACCUSATION & JUDGMENT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Hear This Word"....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3 4 5:17 People of Cows of House of Israel Bashan Israel</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I.... Chose Disciplined Seek Warned You Me You And Live</p> <p style="text-align: center;">But You.... Hoard Have Not Trample Plunder Returned Oppress Loot To Me Deprive</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Therefore..... I Will Prepare I Will Destroy To Meet Pass You Your God Through You</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3:1 5:17</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TWO WOES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Woe To You Who".... 5:18-27 6:1-7 Long For Are The Day Complacent Of The LORD In Zion</p> <p style="text-align: center;">True Situation. Darkness Nations Destroyed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">False Hope Light Mount Samaria</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Questions Why Do Are You You Long? Better? 5 "I"s 5 "You"s</p> <p style="text-align: center;">But.... Let Justice You Do Roll Not Grieve</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Therefore.... EXILE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5:18 6:7</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PROPHECIES OF JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The LORD's Intention 6:8-14 The LORD will destroy Israel for its pride.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 Visions of Judgment Locusts God Relents Fire God Relents Plumbline No Sparing (Principle illustrated historically) Ripe Fruit Silence/Death</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hear This..... Those Who Practice Injustice In That Day.... 5 "I"s 5 "They"s Climax Judgment "I Saw The LORD" Smash, Cut off, Kill, Shake 5 "Thoughts" = No Escape</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Restoration Restore, Build, Bring Back, Plant</p> <p style="text-align: center;">6:8 9:15</p>
GEOGRAPHIC MOVEMENT	LOGICAL MOVEMENT	LOGICAL MOVEMENT	BUILD TO CLIMAX
PROPHETIC ORACLE	COURTROOM ARGUMENT	JUDGMENT PRONOUNCEMENT	PROPHETIC ORACLE
PROPHECY TO ISRAEL - 765-755 BC			

The Ancient Poverty Standard



Friesen, S. J. (2008). [Injustice or God's Will? Early Christian Explanations of Poverty](#). In S. R. Holman (Ed.), *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* (pp. 17–36). Grand Rapids, MI; Brookline, MA: Baker Academic; Holy Cross Orthodox Press.

Deuteronomy 15:4 & Matthew 26:11 – Forever Poor?

At first glance there certainly does seem to be an outright conflict here. First, we are told that the Lord will so richly bless Israel that there will be no poor people in the land. Then provisions are made for the eventuality that there should be some poor in the land. Finally, we are advised that the poor will always be with us. Which statement is true? Or if they are all true, how do we reconcile the discrepancies?

If Deuteronomy 15:4 is taken in isolation, it certainly does look like a flat contradiction of Deuteronomy 15:11. But verse 4 begins with a “however.” This introduces a correction or a limitation on what has preceded it in Deuteronomy 15:1–3 about the cancellation of debts due to loans that have now been paid off. That is, it should not be necessary to cancel any debts if the people are actually fully experiencing the blessing of the Lord as he promised in verse four. There was a stated condition, however, for the nonexistence of the poor in the land mentioned in Deuteronomy 15:5: Israel must “fully obey” and be “careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today.” But if Israel was to refuse to fully obey (which often they did), then the eventuality of Deuteronomy 15:7 is provided for, and the general assessment of Deuteronomy 15:11 is found true that “there will always be poor people in the land.”

The situation in these verses is very much like that in 1 John 2:1, “I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin ... ” Thus, the ideal is set forth while an alternative is realistically and graciously provided in the way that poor people must be dealt with in an open, generous and magnanimous way.¹

¹ Kaiser, W. C., Jr., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F. F., & Brauch, M. T. (1996). [*Hard sayings of the Bible*](#) (p. 173). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Complaint. Seven – the number of nations Amos addresses – is often the perfect number in the Bible. It's the number symbolizing a job completely finished. God rested on the seventh day of creation. And he told his people to finish each week by resting, as well. But Amos doesn't stop with the seven sinful nations. In fact, he's just getting started. Amos has devoted a total of 18 verses to those seven nations. But up next, Israel all by itself gets that much – and 100 verses more. The prophet's biggest complaint is *social injustice*. Amos complains about oppression of poor people (2:6-7); sexual immorality (2:7); corruption (3:10; 8:5); injustice in the courts (5:7, 12); selfishness (6:1-6); and then the worship of idols (7:9). Throughout the Bible – Old Testament and New – there's one thing God repeatedly says his people should do: help the helpless. In that ancient society without our organized welfare programs, orphans, widows, and migrants are especially vulnerable. Deuteronomy 10: 17-18 sets God-like Standard of Social Responsibility & Social Justice.



He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

Deuteronomy 10:18 KJV

The Book of Amos Outlines How Israel Violated This Model:

- ✚ “They sell honorable people for silver and poor people for a pair of sandals” (2:6). The point is that rich people are collecting the tiniest of debts by going so far as to sell the debtors themselves. Owe a few bucks and can’t pay? Take a stand on the slave block – proceeds of the sale go to the person you owe.
- ✚ “They trample helpless people in the dust and shove the oppressed out of the way” (Amos 2:7).
- ✚ “At their religious festivals, they lounge in clothing their debtors put up as security. In the house of their god, they drink wine bought with unjust fines.” (Amos 2:8). These people had the gall to think they’re religious, even though they’re stealing from the poor.
- ✚ “How you hate honest judges! ... You oppress good people by taking bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts” (5:10).
- ✚ “You trample the poor, stealing their grain through taxes and unfair rent” (Amos 5:11). These are folks who would tax widows selling a few loaves of bread and then use the money to buy a cruise ticket to Greece.



To show just how crooked Israel is, God makes his point with a plumb line – a tool builders use to insure walls go up straight.

“I will test my people with this plumb line,” God says. He obvious finds the nation crooked, because he quickly adds, “I will no longer ignore all their sins” (Amos 7:8).

Fat Cows. God doesn't call the rich elite of Israel “fat cats.” This late into their sinning, God isn't that polite. Instead, he says, “Listen to me, you fat cows living in Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy, and who are always calling to your husbands, ‘Bring us another drink!’” (Amos 4:10). In the original language, Amos is talking about the top breed of cattle – pampered in the fertile pastures of Bashan, in what is now Jordan.



“The time will come,” God adds, “when you will be led away with *hooks in your noses*. Every last one of you will be *dragged away like a fish on a hook!* You will be led out through the ruins of the wall” (Amos 4: 2-3).

– *The Complete Guide To The Bible*, pages 246-248

Elite Women Called Cows. Amos calls Samaritan women pampered cows similar to Kobe beef. The term “cows of Bashan” designates a breed of cattle famous for the fat in the beef. These animals fed on the fertile plains of what now is known as the Golan Heights above the Sea of Galilee. The insult captured the attention of his audience and allowed the prophet to focus on his message. These women were usurping the husband’s leadership while demanding more, like an alcoholic demanding a drink. **These men provided for their wives’ expensive tastes by oppressing poor impoverished fellow Hebrews. In designating location to the “mountains of Samaria,” he is limiting the condemnation to the wives of the political and religiously elite. The elite women of Samaria are blamed because of their domineering attitude while chewing on a cud of luxury.**

Spiritual Mad Cow Disease. The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: “Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon,” says the Lord. (Amos 4:2–3 nkjv) In Amos’s culture, swearing by something, augmented some assurance to the oath. Adding God’s absolute sovereignty and holiness to the proclamation pushes the weight and importance of the message. God pronounces the ultimate cure for Samaria’s mad cow outbreak. He promises every one of these society ladies would be dragged through holes in the city wall instead of the gate. This action equates each mad cow the same social standing as any other city captive. Pictorial reliefs in the British Museum show Assyrian captives led single file with hooks in their faces. **The word “cast out” implies the tossing of dead bodies. Amos may be trying to picture an image of the cows of Bashan lying as carrion at the base of Mt. Hermon.**

Rushing, Charles. *God's Redneck Social Justice Warrior: A Bible Study in Amos* (pp. 55-56). Xulon Press. Kindle Edition.

Dolerite Stele
Akkadian


Victory Stele of Esarhaddon 671 BC

King of Assyria (680-669)

Manasseh
King of Judah (696-642 BC)
2 Chron 33:11-13

& Tirhakah
King of Egypt (690-664 BC)
2 Ki 19:8-10; Isaiah 37:9

2 Chronicles 33:11-13 Manasseh was deported in 671 BC



Esarhaddon

Manasseh

Tirhakah's son Usanahuru

Translation:
 "[Lines 13-33] Esarhaddon, great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria.
 [Lines: Rev. 37b-43a:] As for Taharqa, the king of Egypt and Kush ... I inflicted serious defeats on him daily, without ceasing. ... I inflicted him five times with unrecoverable and (as for) the city of Memphis, his royal city, within half a day by means of mines, breaches, ladders, I besieged, conquered, demolished, destroyed (it), (and) burned (it) with fire.
 Lines [Rev. 43b-50a:] **I carried off to Assyria his wife, his court ladies, Usanahuru, his crown prince, and the rest of his sons (and) his daughters, his goods, his possessions, his horses, his oxen, (rev. 45) (and) his sheep and goats, without number. I tore out the roots of Kush from Egypt. [Lines Rev. 53b-57:] Whoever destroys this stele, ... may the goddess Istar change him from a man into a woman"**

Esarhaddon holding ropes attached by nose hook to standing Manasseh and kneeling Usanahuru wearing the Egyptian Uraeus tiara.

In 671 BC "The king of Assyria captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze chains and brought him to Babylon."
(2 Chro 33:11)

www.bible.ca/manuscripts

Daniel David Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia, Vol. 2: From Sargon to the End, EriqLeahky, Royal inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, 680-669 BC, Vol. 4, #98, p182, 2011 AD

Outer city gate of Zenjirli (Sam'al)
Felix von Luschan & Robert Kodewey1888 AD

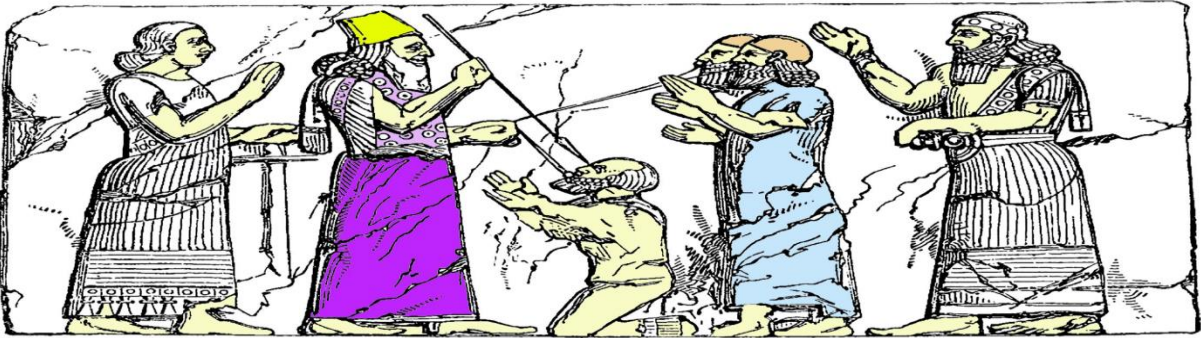
Monument A (cf. Duplicate Monument B)
Pergamon Museum, Berlin VA 2708

Woodcut of Assyrian Stone Relief

Assyrian King Palace relief 7th C. BC

"The LORD brought the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria against them, and they captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze chains to Babylon."
(2 Chronicles 33:11)

2 Chron 33:11; 36:6; Ezek 19:4,8; 2 Ki 19:28; 25:7; Isa 37:29



www.bible.ca/manuscripts

DurSharrukin (Chorsabad, Iraq)
Unknown provenance

May be a fictional drawing

AMOS: The Man and His Message

“Prepare To Meet Thy God!”

Amos 4: 12

Brent Hunter

Amos: A Special Man For A Difficult Job

Historians often ask, “Do the times make the men, or the men make and mold the times?” This question is a hard one to answer properly and conclusively. But, certainly special men that are strong, courageous and God-fearing are necessary to confront a predominantly corrupt, blinded, and rebellious people with a message that they do not want to hear. Amos was just such a man. He was the man of the hour! Amos was the special man God had chosen for the job. He is the only Amos mentioned in the Old Testament and this fact serves to enhance his uniqueness as a prophet. In short, he was specially commissioned by God to deliver a very hard and difficult message to an unreceptive, arrogant, and proud people. Since the people were so smug and proud during this time period, a man of backbone, bluntness, and strength was needed to deal with the corruption head-on. Hard calloused hearts are not punctured easily, and God was looking for a man who had strong convictions who would deliver His message with maximum impact.

Amos: “A Dresser of Sycamore Trees”

God had chosen a man who had not been a prophet before; in fact, Amos himself made this clear when he spoke of his former profession, “I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees” (Amos 7:14). Amos then explains in verse 15 that “Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go prophesy unto my people Israel.”

This point is stressed in the introduction to the book when Amos is introduced to the readers as simply “a herdsman of Tekoa” (Amos 1:1), a small village 12 miles south of Jerusalem. Amos was not someone we would consider “sophisticated”; he certainly was not a priest or even a clergyman in today’s terms. He was from the “blue collar” mold, a man from the southern countryside who came into the cosmopolitan cities of the more prosperous north, and spoke the people’s language in plain and simple terms. Amos is a favorite of all the prophetic books because it is so straightforward and easy to understand and deals with issues that are so timely and relevant to today.

Amos: A Southern Prophet In The Northern Kingdom

Another intriguing fact that made things even more difficult for Amos was that he was a southern prophet sent to prophesy solely against the North. As far as I know, Amos is unique in this regard. This would be similar to a “confederate” preacher being sent shortly after the War Between the States up to New England to confront the “yankees” with their sins! Amos must have been a special man to take on such a difficult mission, but God knew that he was up to the task, or he would not have given him the job. We sometimes make the mistake of asking God as believers for an easier life, or as preachers asking God for an easier “work” instead of simply praying to be *stronger* people. We should not pray for God to send us “tasks equal to our present strengths, but for strength to meet whatever tasks God has set before us.” Amos no doubt, was the type of man who trusted in God, and not men, rolled up his sleeves, and went about doing the job God had commissioned him to do.

Amos and Hosea: A Fascinating Contrast

God primarily called only two of the minor prophets to deal directly with “the Assyrian crisis,” namely, Amos and Hosea. Interestingly, these two men are as different as night and day in regard to their personalities, approaches, and the major thrust of their messages.

Amos was more of an old fashioned “hell fire and brimstone,” type preacher whom we would call today a “negative” type preacher. He was blunt, pointed, bold and courageous. He hit his key themes hard so that they could not be missed and no doubt delivered them with maximum impact. His message was sharp and crisp and, at times, piercing. We do not hear much of this type of preaching anymore, and it is to our shame! No doubt the attitudes of hearers is as much at fault as are the preachers. But it does have its place, and God’s use of Amos is the proof. Doubtless, Amos reached some people that Hosea, who had a much softer, more emotional appeal, could not reach and vice versa. I used to strive to be the “ideal preacher,” but there is no such thing. God uses each man and his personality for His own purpose. In turn, we need to develop an appreciation for different preaching styles and not be overly critical of an Amos if we happen to be more of a Hosea type. However, if we happen to be more inclined to be an Amos, we need not to be overly suspicious of someone we view as too “positive” in his orientation. Both types have their place in the kingdom, and to God be the glory! Frankly, this fact should serve as a challenge for every modern-day preacher to balance out the two appeals in order to give the brethren the advantages to be found in both approaches.

Amos: A Man With A “Burden” To Bear

The word Amos literally means “burden,” and he seemingly, was almost providentially so named because the job God called him to do certainly put a great burden upon him; a burden of responsibility to do Jehovah’s bidding as called and a burden of ridicule and rejection that would fall his lot in his carrying out God’s will. Indeed, what a difficult job that is, today as well as then, to be God’s spokesman, supposedly, to “God’s people,” when they have become “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears” (Acts 7:51), hostile toward the **messenger** as well as toward the message that is being presented.

In spite of the people's stubbornness, God, amazingly, continued to be longsuffering and arranged for Israel to hear the message that they needed so desperately, whether they liked it or not.

Surely, in such a situation as this one, Amos had mixed emotions. The preaching of God's truth is often described by the prophets as something that "shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey." (Rev 10:9; see also Ezekiel 3:3). Doubtless, to know that, as a prophet, you had God's truth and insight into Israel's *true* future, would be exciting, yet to find that so few listen would be maddening, frustrating, and painful. Amos, like most prophets, was a man whose powerful message was not appreciated until after he was gone, and his words were read by future generations. In his day, he was an outcast, a "doomsayer," and, according to many, a false teacher. Yet this did not keep him from clearly, plainly, and frequently proclaiming the needed message. Amos was more interested in pleasing God than men and this serves as a role model for all public and private proclaimers of truth. Like Amos, true "prophets" today find that they and their messages are often not appreciated until years later or, perhaps, not even until the ultimate truth is revealed and the treasures laid up in heaven are rewarded at judgment. We, like Amos, must keep our eyes upon God and heaven and not upon men and the earth if we are to keep the proper perspective, maintain boldness, and receive the strength apart from ourselves that today, more than ever, is needed in the fearless presentation of truth. Amos personifies the courageous spirit that should characterize the preaching of the word as God would have it. Amos carried his "burden" well and certainly was true to the admonition Paul gave Timothy to "preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim 4:2).

The Message of Amos

Historical Background: Jeroboam's "Indian Summer"

Before we can appreciate the message we must understand the general nature of the times. Amos prophesied during the later reign of Jeroboam II, the fourth king of the Jehu dynasty, about 760–750 B.C. Uzziah was king in the southern kingdom of Judah which many historians believe was, at least, economically controlled by the politically and militarily superior Israel. Jeroboam reigned forty-one years over what historians refer to as Israel's "Indian Summer." An Indian Summer is a deceptive period of warm weather that makes it appear that summer will return, or perhaps continue indefinitely, but alas, it is simply the last bit of warmth before the cold of winter sets in permanently. Thus, as the proverbial "calm before the storm," in Israel's case, it was the last revival before the final collapse and plunge into oblivion. As far as the people and the nation were concerned, things had never been better and the future looked bright indeed, but Amos saw a very different future from the one the people had been seeing.

Amos is actually prophesying just 25–30 years away from the time when the captivity will begin and the beloved capital of Samaria will be left in ruins. The problem was that the successes which Israel had under Jeroboam, were military and economic successes, whereas, spiritually, they were still wicked and had failed to show their thankfulness to God for their blessings by being faithful to Him. Instead of softening the people's hearts and making them more appreciative of all Jehovah had done for them, their prosperity simply hardened them and made them think that they did not need God, and that He was as pleased with them as they were with themselves. The Old Testament chronological narrative summarizes this period of Israelite history simply by saying in reference to Jeroboam II:

And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, where with he made Israel to sin. He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath (north of Damascus), unto the sea of the Arabah (area around the Dead Sea) ... thus Jehovah saved them (from the Syrians of Damascus who had oppressed them earlier) by the hand of Jeroboam. (2 Kings 14:24–27)

The fact that so little is said about Jeroboam's long and prosperous reign and astounding military successes further emphasizes how the inspired writers were concerned with the **spiritual** rather than the material aspects of Israel's history. In fact, only by our studying the book of Amos itself will we derive much information about what the times were like during the reign of Jeroboam II, because the biblical references regarding his reign in Kings and Chronicles are far too brief for any such understanding.

The Conditions Amos Faced

By looking at the basic conditions of the times we get a clearer picture of what led up to the final plunge into oblivion. The general spiritual depravity and ungodly attitudes of the age become clear when one examines the four major themes Amos deals with in his book as follows: **material prosperity, moral deterioration, continuous religious apostasy, and pride and arrogance.**

Material Prosperity

Jeroboam II was Israel's most successful king economically, from all outward appearances, since Ahab and, in some ways, must have reminded the people of Solomon! Amos makes reference in Amos 3:15 to the "winter-houses and the summer-houses and the great houses (mansions)" that "shall come to an end."

Apparently, they began to place great confidence in their financial status; that is, they had come to believe that if they lost one house, at least they would still have the other. Amos warns them that this confidence was misplaced, for **all** their houses “shall come to an end.”

In one of the more familiar parts of the book, Amos deals with the problem graphically when he describes their lavish use of expensive and highly decorative, imported ivory inlaid furniture from Africa and India, which was in vogue at the time. In Amos 6:1, he pronounces a woe against those who are “at ease in Zion” and, in vv. 4–6, against those who “lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and calves out of the midst of the stalls, that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in their bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” Here these people are living in the lap of luxury and engaging in self-indulgence on a grand scale, and yet they have no concern for their fellow brethren who are poor and suffering all around them. God is displeased with this, and it was one of the reasons why Israel had to be destroyed. Here is an issue that is relevant to today and should be the basis of a lot of soul-searching introspection on the part of all of us! Just how concerned are we, as a nation and as Christians, for the homeless and the poor who are in affliction all around us?

Moral Decadence and Deterioration

Many of the people were enjoying a time of general prosperity, but not all, because, apparently, some of the wealth was gained through the exploitation of the poor. Yes, there were sexual sins too (Amos 2:7 condemns the practice of a father and a son sharing the same maiden as they participated in pagan fertility cult worship, which, of course, was despicable).

But the primary thing that made the people immoral, and was just as critical in God's sight, and stressed more by Amos, was the **greed, corruption, and injustice** that prevailed in the land. Again, I do not believe there are any messages anywhere in the Bible that are more pertinent and relevant to our present-day situation in America than these messages from Amos.

In chapter 2:6–7, Amos condemns those who “sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; they that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor and turn aside the way of the meek.” Here is a graphic and rather humorous description of how money hungry some were for the land of others. So anxious for repossession were some that they are said to “pant after the dust of the earth” that sits upon “the head of the poor” as they sit at the gate. Talk about greed! In chapter 5:12, he speaks of those who “afflict the just, that take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate from their right.” It, apparently, was a common practice to bribe judges in the corrupt system where the poor could be exploited and their rights abused.

Earlier we noticed, that Amos could be quite blunt. This is best illustrated in Amos 4:1 where he calls the obese self-indulgent women of Israel a bunch of fat cows! “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan (a fertile and lush pasture in the northeastern part of the land), who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husband, ‘Bring now, that we may drink!’ ” The blatant self-indulgent hedonism of the times is once again frightfully similar to modern day America, where more than one-third of the population is overweight, and many Christians and preachers, it seems to me, turn their heads, and for the most part ignore “gluttony”—a common sin among us that shouts our lack of self-control to the whole world. Amos was moved by God to deal with all forms of excessive self-indulgence, and he obviously was not worried about whether he offended someone in the process. Obviously among the saints is not supposed to be a matter of weight.

Israel's moral degeneration was so great that Amos claims that the wicked pagan nations around them could learn something from watching them. In chapter 3:9–10 he challenges the pagan nations to assemble themselves “upon the mountains of Samaria and behold what great tumults are therein, and what oppressions in the midst thereof. For they know not to do right, saith Jehovah, those who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.” He further states that their moral values were so depraved that they “hate them that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly” (Amos 5:10).

Continuous Religious Apostasy

Calf-worship. Ironically, in the midst of all this, the people still worshipped Jehovah as their God, and in some ways considered themselves to be quite “religious.” They continued to go up to Bethel, which is where Amos delivered his message, to worship Jehovah at the golden calf. Amos prophesied that God would “visit the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground” (Amos 3:14). Remember that this was not a total, outright rejection of Jehovah; it was a way of **worshipping Jehovah through an idol** as though He were a pagan god. But the people still viewed it as their worship unto Jehovah. This was an unauthorized, substitute form of worship instituted by Jeroboam I at the outset of the northern kingdom's history, and it became an apostasy that would plague each generation. This “sin of Jeroboam the son Nabat in which he made Israel to sin” continued until the bitter end. It is an excellent example of how one can **worship the right God sincerely**, but still be **unacceptable worship** because it is not done in the **right way**. I wish that our denominational friends, and some of our own brethren, would appreciate this principle and the importance of it, just as Amos did.

Formalistic Ritualism. In chapter 5:21, Jehovah tells the people, “I hate, I despise your feast, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offering, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.” In essence, God did not want worship that had become a meaningless ritual, even if some of it was scriptural! This lesson needs to be heeded today as well. The prophet Joel’s admonition for the people to “rend their hearts and not (just) their garments” (Joel 2:13) would have been as applicable for them as it would be in the worship of many today.

Hypocrisy. The worship the Israelites offered was especially despicable when one considers that many would come on the sabbath day to worship Jehovah, and yet they were living unrighteous, vile lives the rest of the week. Worshippers in that situation found their songs turned out to be nothing but “noise” unto God’s ears (5:23)! What Jehovah wants is not for His people to be “sacrificing” to Him one day and the next day to go out and oppress the poor, He requires “justice to roll down as water, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24).

A Proudful and Arrogant Attitude

Several factors caused the people to become arrogant and, as Amos said, to be “at ease in Zion” and to feel “secure in the mountain of Samaria” (6:1), namely, the prosperity, apparent security from what had previously been their two major enemies, Judah and Syria, and the great amount of territory they controlled, which rivaled the days of the united monarchy under David.

Israel’s attitude was that they were “the chosen people of God.” No nation could overcome them because God would be with them. As a result of their misunderstanding the **conditional** nature of the land promise to Abraham and other statements in the law, they felt God would be with them in spite of how they lived! With this “once saved always saved” mentality, over time they became more and more corrupt.

They were so certain of their condition before God and their own superiority that they actually could not wait for Jehovah to come and destroy their wicked pagan neighbors.

Amos chides them in chapter 5:18 by saying, “Woe unto you that desire the day of Jehovah! Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not light.” The nation of Israel is about to be destroyed because of their wickedness, and yet the whole time they have deceived themselves into believing not only that God is not mad at them, but also that He is pleased with them, and that they can rest in His good graces.

The Judgment of Jehovah: Prepare to Meet Thy God!

Israel—nothing but a basket of summer fruit

One of Amos’ five visions was that of a “basket of summer fruit” which meant “the end is come upon my people Israel” (Amos 8:1–2). What an effective image to portray their current status! Summer fruit looks beautiful on the outside and all appears to be well, but, in reality, it has mellowed out and begun to rot on the inside. And when the rottenness becomes complete, it is good for nothing but to be thrown away and destroyed! That is exactly the state Israel was in as far as God was concerned. Like a basket of summer fruit, they have nearly come to their end. The fitting finale to Amos’ message focused on this judgment, the future destruction to come. The wickedness of the people reached the point that God would tolerate it no more. He sent Hosea and Amos to inform them, in advance, that they would be destroyed, and that the curses of the covenant would come crashing down upon their heads because they had not kept the covenant as their forefathers had promised they would (see Deut 27–28).

Amos’ message then was basically one of punishment and doom. Israel would be taken into Assyrian captivity, not because God had lost His power, or because of Assyria’s superior might, but **because of Israel’s sins**. The Old Testament prophets were actually the “historians of Israelite history.” It was extremely important that future generations understand the true significance of the events that were about to occur. Thus, God ushered in what is called “The Age of Written Prophecy.”

Among the ancients, pagan nations commonly believed that their losing a battle *proved* that the god of the enemy was stronger than their god, or that their god was not as trustworthy or as powerful as they had hoped he would be. As the Israelites sitting in captivity wondered how this could have happened to them, the chosen people of God, the great “I am that I am”, it was important that they not begin to doubt God or His faithfulness. They must realize that the captivity was simply, as Isaiah explained it, “the rod of Jehovah’s anger” (Isa. 10:5) to chastise the people for their sins in order to humble them and to bring them back to Him. The terrible curses of the covenant would actually serve “as a sign and for a wonder, upon thy seed forever” (Deut 28:46), just as promised by Moses many years before. This was a lesson the people would never forget; God is true to His word and there are serious consequences to breaking His laws. It would have been a terrible thing for the nation to receive the punishment but **misunderstand** the lessons they were to **learn from the punishment**. One of the major roles of all the prophets, especially those who wrote their messages down for posterity, was to make sure that the people understood their history properly.

Four things would characterize this judgment. It would be as follows: **irrevocable, deserved, severe, and unexpected**.

Judgment would be Irrevocable

It was not too late for the people to repent individually. In Amos 5:4 he pleads, “seek ye me, and ye shall live,” but, as a nation, God’s judgment was coming and was, at this point, irreversible. In chapter 4:6–12, Amos explains why and reviews their history as a nation and specifies all the previous calamities that had been brought on by Jehovah to bring Israel to repentance: famine, drought, crop diseases, pestilence, sword, cities overthrown, yet he insists, “ye have not returned to me saith Jehovah” (Amos 4:11).

Amos then concludes with the famous adage from Amos 4:12, "Prepare to Meet Thy God!" This powerful statement is most often misunderstood and misapplied; especially the way it has been used in some cases as a "proof text," and certainly the way it is used in the song of the same title are misuses. In the context, Amos is not saying to the nation, "Repent before it is too late," but instead, "Judgement is coming upon you for your sins and the sins of your forefathers, and there is nothing you can now do to change it." It is somewhat analogous to the way the American Indians would grab a white man by the scalp and say, "Prepare to Meet Thy Maker." The Indian was not saying, "Repent and I'll spare you," but, "Brace yourself, in a few moments it will all be over." Likewise, the verdict against Israel had been sealed. All the nation could do now is realize that this judgment was coming upon them as a just and righteous judgment from God Himself. It had absolutely nothing to do with Jehovah's being weak, but absolutely everything to do with Him being just and holy.

Judgment was Deserved

The vision of the plumbline illustrates this principle that there judgment was deserved. In Amos 7:7–9, we read:

Behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand. And Jehovah said unto me, ... Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them anymore; and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste.

In the context, Amos had pleaded that God not do this to them, and God answers with the vision of the plumbline to show why it was necessary. In construction today, builders use something similar, i.e., a chalk line, to make sure things are straight and level. In this case, the wall that is being objectively measured is Israel, and the plumbline is God's standard of judgment.

God had built the nation straight; they had become crooked and perverse. A slightly crooked wall can be shored up and repaired, but one that is too crooked to be repaired must be torn down completely so that the builder can start all over again. Amos, in seeing the vision, comes to realize that judgment cannot be put off any longer. It is the right thing to do. Israel had been given umpteen-second chances, and now the ultimate curse of the covenant was what she justly deserved.

Judgment would be Severe

Every punishment must fit the crime. Now, the sins of Israel had been so severe, and their punishment, so long in coming, that the wrath of God which would be poured out upon them was going to be great. In Amos 3:11–12, the mighty lion of Assyria is pictured as bringing “down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be plundered. Thus, saith Jehovah; “As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed.” The destruction would be so complete that only “two legs and a piece of an ear” would be left as residue by the time it was all over! Amos further describes how the judgment would totally overwhelm them when he says:

Behold, I will press you in your place, as a cart presseth that is full of sheaves. And the flight shall perish from the swift; and the strong shall not strengthen his force; neither shall the mighty deliver himself; neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself; neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself; and he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith Jehovah. (Amos 2:13–15)

Perhaps the most memorable part of the captivity that illustrates its severity and completeness was the warning that “the Lord Jehovah hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your residue with fish-hooks” (Amos 4:2). Judah would be marched into Babylon 150 years later with chains, but the **Assyrians, the most barbaric of all ancient peoples, would march the Israelites into captivity with hooks, sometimes in their noses or in their cheeks; other times in their shoulders** - a disgusting sight! These fat women of Israel, marching out of their luxurious homes which were destroyed after Samaria had fallen, would waddle in line under the guard of Assyrian soldiers as they were hooked together for the long trip into captivity. Some, probably, did not even survive long enough to finish the trip, but, no doubt, many of them would hear the words of Amos ringing in their ears as they marched, for he had warned them of the painful, humiliating fate they were now experiencing.

The punishment for the nation that had had a legacy of nineteen wicked kings in a row was severe indeed. Not only was the above true but also foreigners were put in their land so that the ones taken captive could not return and **the “two legs and the piece of an ear” which were left would intermarry and become the hated half-breed Samaritans.** Unlike the Jews that were later taken captive into Babylon, these northern kingdom Israelites would never return to their homeland. Their identity was lost; their land possessed by another; the nation was completely extinguished.

Judgment was Unexpected

As mentioned earlier, Israel’s primary enemy, who had trampled them under foot that they were “like the dust at threshing” (2 Kings 13:7) was the nation of Syria. But they were no longer a threat, and because they had never been bothered by a far distant world empire, they had felt secure. However, Amos warns them that they will go into captivity “beyond Damascus.” This is something they had not thought possible.

Sometimes we forget that Assyria was the first world power to take captives and to embark on a policy of international deportation of entire nations. From an historical perspective what Amos was prophesying seemed ludicrous, yet that is exactly what providence brought to pass.

Conclusion

Amos, like John the Baptist and most of the Old Testament prophets whose messages are extant performed no miracles. They were not necessary. His message is proven true by the irrefutable evidence of history itself. It is sometimes said that “God whispers to us with His blessings, speaks to us with His word, and shouts to us through the megaphone of pain and of suffering.” Indeed, though God spoke loudly, plainly, and at times very bluntly through Amos, only the bitter pill of captivity and national destruction would finally wake the people up and ultimately humble their proud spirit. But, alas, it was too late!

Amos was a great man and a role model for us in many ways. His message transcends time and still today has clear and important lessons that we must heed. It has been said that “It is never too early to repent, because you never know how soon it might be too late!” Even if it ever becomes too late for America as a nation, we may all individually choose to “seek the Lord” that we might be “saved by Him” rather than endure His wrath, before which no man can stand.²

² Hunter, B. (1989). [Amos: The Man and His Message “Prepare to Meet Thy God!” Amos 4:12](#). In M. Curry (Ed.), *Minor Prophets for Every Man* (pp. 143–156). Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore.

THE BOOK OF AMOS

PART ONE—The title verses of the book (1:1, 2)

In these two verses of introduction:

- I. AMOS IDENTIFIES HIMSELF**—Here he calls himself a “herdsman of Tekoa.” In 7:12, he is called a “seer” (a prophet).
- II. AMOS STATES HIS PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND HIS SECULAR CALLING**—He is a resident of Tekoa, a town in Judah, and is one of the herdsman of that town. In 7:14, he states that in addition to being a herdsman, he is a gatherer of sycamore fruit (wild figs).
- III. AMOS REVEALS THE MANNER OF RECEIVING HIS MESSAGES**—The messages of Amos to Israel were given to him through visions. He “saw” the words that he spoke.
- IV. AMOS GIVES THE TIME OF RECEIVING HIS MESSAGES**—He saw these messages in the days of Uzziah, the king of Judah (787–735) and in the days of Jeroboam II, the king of Israel (791–750 B.C.), two years before the earthquake (Zech. 14:5 speaks of this earthquake and it may be the one prophesied in Amos 9:1. It occurred probably around 760 B.C.).
- V. AMOS STATES THE ADDRESSEES OF HIS MESSAGES**—His messages concerned, and were delivered to, the people of Israel.
- VI. AMOS SUMMARIZES HIS MESSAGES**—God will, from his sanctuary in Jerusalem, pour out His wrath and judgment upon the Northern Kingdom and all the land will wither, from the pasturelands of the valleys to the vineyards and the oliveyards of Mt. Carmel (the last area to be affected in times of drought).

PART TWO—The proclamation of charges and judgments (against the nations) (1:3–2:16)

(In the way of an introduction to this section, 1:3–2:16, let us note the following things:

- I. THE PURPOSE FOR GIVING THE FIRST SEVEN CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS**—Amos gives them that his hearers, the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom, may hear them and “amen” them and then find it difficult to reject the eighth charge and judgment, which is addressed to themselves. He uses the approach that Nathan used in 2 Sam. 12:1–7 and that Paul used in Rom. 2:1–17.
- II. THE PROGRESS IN THE FIRST SEVEN CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS**—The charges and judgments progressively get closer to the nation of Israel. First, three *heathen nations* are addressed, then three *kindred nations* are addressed, and finally *a sister nation* is addressed. Amos draws his net tighter and tighter around Israel.
- III. THE BELIEF IN THE UNIVERSALITY OF GOD**—The liberal theologians teach that the Old Testament writers present God as *a tribal deity* or as *a national God* but in reality, as we have proof here in 1:3–2:16, they present Him as *a universal God*.

- IV. THE REPEATED USE OF THE PHRASE “FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS AND FOR FOUR”**—This is the Old Testament’s way of expressing an indefinite but full number, Exo. 20:5. Each of the nations addressed had filled its cup with lawlessness and was ripe, and even overripe, for judgment, Gen. 15:16.
- V. THE DETERMINATION OF GOD TO PUNISH**—“I will not turn away the punishment thereof” is used in all eight charges and judgments. God will not turn from His determination to punish these nations. Nations and individuals can fill their cups so full of sin that God will no longer pardon them but will *certainly* punish them, 2 Chron. 36:16, 17; Prov. 29:1.
- VI. THE USE OF LEADING CITIES TO REPRESENT NATIONS**—In the first three charges and judgments (those against the three heathen nations), a capital city or a chief city is used to represent a whole nation. This is commonly done in the Old Testament, for a capital city or a chief city usually reflects the moral and the spiritual condition of the whole nation.
- VII. THE COMMON CHARGE AGAINST THE FIRST FIVE NATIONS**—They are charged with mistreating God’s Old Covenant people, the people of Israel. One of the greatest sins committed by the unsaved is the mistreatment of God’s Old Covenant people, the Israelites, and His New Covenant people, the church, Gen. 12:3; Psa. 105:14, 15; Matt. 18:6; 25:45; Acts 9:4.
- VIII. THE DEFINITE SIN CHARGED AGAINST EACH NATION**—Whether it be in an individual or a nation, there is usually one sin which fills the cup and triggers God’s judgment, Num. 14:22, 23.
- IX. THE SYMBOLIC USE OF THE WORD “FIRE”**—The word “fire” is used as a symbol of warfare and destruction in regard to the first seven of the nations mentioned.
- X. THE USE OF NATURAL MEANS IN THE JUDGMENT OF NATIONS**—In judging the eight nations mentioned, God used another nation to punish the sinful nation. In judging nations and individuals, God seldom uses *miraculous means* but rather, *providential means*.
- XI. THE UNIQUE CHARGE AGAINST JUDAH AND ISRAEL**—God charges the first six nations with sinning against the light of *natural revelation*, while He charges Judah and Israel with sinning against the light of *supernatural revelation*. Therefore, their judgment was to be more severe, Luke 12:47, 48
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I. THE CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS AGAINST DAMASCUS (1:3–5)

(The city of Damascus is used to represent all of Syria)

A. THE CHARGE—Threshing the inhabitant of Gilead

The Syrians, under their Kings Hazael and his son Ben-hadad, had torn and mangled the bodies of the Israelites of Gilead by running iron threshing sledges over them, 2 Kings 10:32, 33; 13:3–7.

- B. **THE ANNOUNCED JUDGMENT**—Fire (warfare and destruction) and national captivity.
This judgment was inflicted by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser, 2 Kings 16:9. The brunt of the judgment fell upon Damascus. The bar of her gate was broken and her people were carried away captive to Kir, the original homeland of the Syrians, 9:7.

II. THE CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS AGAINST GAZA (1:6–8)

(Gaza, one of the five ruling cities of the Philistines, is used to represent the whole nation of the Philistines. The Philistines, coming from Crete, had settled on the shores of the Mediterranean to the southwest of Israel many centuries before Amos' day and had been persistent enemies of the Israelites from the time that they [the Israelites] settled in Canaan.)

- A. **THE CHARGE**—Delivering Jewish captives to Edom

The Philistines had conquered whole cities and districts of Judah and had sold the whole populations of the captured cities to the Edomites for resale to other peoples (they sold into slavery not only war captives but also whole populations of captured peoples made up of women, children, and men), 2 Chron. 28:16–18; 21:16, 17.

- B. **THE ANNOUNCED JUDGMENT**—Fire (warfare and destruction) and national destruction and oblivion

The Assyrians in 734 B.C., 711 B.C., and in 701 B.C. inflicted judgment upon the four Philistine cities here mentioned. In later years, the Philistines were gradually destroyed as a nation and today they are an extinct race.

III. THE CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS AGAINST TYRE (1:9, 10)

(Tyre is used to represent all of Phoenecia)

- A. **THE CHARGE**—Delivering Israelitish captives (probably obtained from Syria) to Edom, thus breaking her brotherly covenant with Israel, 2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:2–12.

- B. **THE ANNOUNCED JUDGMENT**—Fire (warfare and destruction)

This judgment was inflicted in 332 B.C. by Alexander the Great after a seven-months' seige of Tyre. Six thousand Tyrians were slain, two thousand were crucified, and thirty thousand were sold into slavery.

IV. THE CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS AGAINST EDM (1:11, 12)

- A. **THE CHARGE**—Having perpetual and pitiless anger against their brothers, the Israelites
The Israelites and the Edomites came from the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau. From their beginning as a nation, the Edomites hated their brothers, the Israelites, and down through the centuries, they nourished this hatred and constantly sought opportunity to vent it upon their brothers in merciless warfare.

- B. **THE ANNOUNCED JUDGMENT**—Fire (warfare and destruction)

The two chief cities of Edom (Bozrah in the north and Teman in the south) and the other cities of Edom are to be destroyed. This judgment was inflicted by the Babylonians, the Maccabees, and the Romans. Under the Romans, the national existence of the Edomites came to an end.

V. THE CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS AGAINST AMMON (1:13–15)

A. THE CHARGE—Ripping up the women of Gilead in her wars of territorial expansion

The Ammonites were the children of Lot through one of his daughters, Gen. 19:30–38, and were therefore related to the Israelites. They, in one of their wars to expand their territory, had ripped up (disemboweled) the pregnant Israelitish women of Gilead, a barbarous custom rather commonly practiced in that day, 2 Kgs. 8:12; 15:16.

B. THE ANNOUNCED JUDGMENT—Fire (warfare and destruction)

Rabbah (modern-day Ammon), the capital city of the Ammonites, is to be conquered and her rulers carried off into captivity. This judgment came upon the Ammonites several times in the succeeding centuries until finally the Ammonites were exterminated as a nation and as a people.

VI. THE CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS AGAINST MOAB (2:1–3)

A. THE CHARGE—Burning the bones of the king of Edom into lime

The Moabites were the children of Lot through one of Lot's daughters, Gen. 19:30–38.

They frequently were in conflict with the Edomites and in one of these conflicts, they apparently slew the king of Edom and then burned his bones into lime, showing an inhuman spirit of revenge.

B. THE THREATENED JUDGMENT—Fire (warfare and destruction) and the death of the nation

Nebuchadnezzar, around 581 B.C., crushed the Moabites and brought their national existence to an end.

VII. THE CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS AGAINST JUDAH (2:4, 5)

(The charges have been getting closer and closer to Israel. First, *her heathen neighbors*, then *her relatives*, now *her sister*, and next, *Israel herself*. Here we have an example of preaching that we today could follow with profit.)

A. THE CHARGE—Despising and breaking God's laws and walking after "lies" (idols, Psa. 40:4; Jer. 16:19, 20)

Note that the heathen nations and the kindred nations are charged with sinning against the laws of *natural revelation* but that God's Old Covenant people, Judah and Israel, are charged with breaking the higher laws of *supernatural revelation*, the laws of Moses. Nations and individuals are judged in accordance with the light given to them. Rom. 2:12.

B. THE ANNOUNCED JUDGMENT—Fire (warfare and destruction) upon Judah and her capital city, Jerusalem (God's impartiality of judgment upon all nations is revealed in His use of the same symbol, "fire," for his judgment upon Judah as for His judgments upon the six previously mentioned nations.)

This announced judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar devastated Judah and Jerusalem in 588–586 B.C.

VIII. THE CHARGES AND JUDGMENTS AGAINST ISRAEL (2:6–16)

(At last, Amos reaches his goal. Israel herself, the audience of Amos, is charged and judgment is pronounced, 2 Sam. 12:7. The remainder of the book is addressed to Israel and is chiefly an elaboration of the charges and judgments pronounced here in 2:6–16.)

In our present section, 2:6–16, we have four charges. Each of the first six nations was charged with *one* sin. Judah was charged with *two* sins and now Israel is charged with *four* sins.)

A. THE CHARGES (2:6–12)

1. The first charge—Perversion of justice (2:6)

The greedy judges of Israel commonly accepted bribes, resulting in perverted justice. *The righteous* refused to offer a bribe and *the poor* could not offer one, so these two classes received no justice.

Even a very small bribe, such as a pair of shoes could influence a judge to render an unjust verdict in Amos' day.

2. The second charge—Oppression of the poor and the meek (2:7a)

The rulers of Israel and the rich merchants of Israel could not rest until they had brought the poor down to the dust of the earth through oppression and had defrauded the meek because of their lack of forwardness. See Isa. 10:1, 2.

3. The third charge—Religious immorality (2:7b, 8)

Amos charges the Israelites with immoral worship. He makes a three-fold indictment:

a. Father and son visited the same temple prostitute

The Israelites mixed Baal worship with Jehovah worship and so worshipped God through immoral acts. At the religious shrines, fathers and sons went in to the same religious prostitutes.

b. Clothing held in pledge was used as a bed for immoral acts

Deut. 24:12, 13 commanded that a poor man's pledge be returned to him at sunset that he be not cold during the night, but in Amos' day, poor men's pledges were kept and used as beds for committing adultery.

c. Wine exacted in payment of unjust fines was drunk in the temple revelries

4. The fourth charge—Unthankfulness (2:9–12)

a. The blessings of God (2:9–11)

(1) God had delivered the Israelites from Egypt

(2) God had preserved the Israelites for forty years in the wilderness

(3) God had destroyed the Amorites and had given their land to the Israelites

Here the word “Amorites” has reference to all seven of the nations of Canaan defeated by the Israelites.

(4) God had provided the Israelites with prophets and Nazarites

So, God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, preserved them in the wilderness, given them the land of Canaan, provided them with prophets *to tell them how to live* (walk) and with Nazarites *to show them how to live* (walk). What more could God have done?

b. The response of Israel (2:12)

The Israelites had commanded their prophets to cease prophesying and had tempted their Nazarites to break their vows. Persons who have sin in their lives seek to silence or corrupt holy men.

Unthankfulness is always followed by unholiness, 2 Tim. 3:2.

B. THE THREATENED JUDGMENT (2:13–16)

Great privileges and blessings are associated with great responsibility and great accountability. Israel’s blessings had been great, so her wrong response demanded great punishment.

God says (in a correct translation of 2:13) “I will press you down as a cart full of sheaves is pressed down.” He in the day of judgment will judge Israel and in that day the swift runner, the strong archer, the expert horseman, and the most courageous soldier will go down in defeat. All hands will be feeble to resist.

Verses 2:14–16 speak of warfare. The remainder of the book of Amos unfolds and elaborates the judgment mentioned here.

PART THREE—The messages of condemnation and warning (chapters 3–6)

(In these four chapters, we probably have synopses of four of Amos’ sermons, each of the first three of these sermons beginning with the command to “hear this Word,” 3:1; 4:1; 5:1. These sermons may have been preached at different times at different places in Israel. In all of these sermons, we have the same threefold theme, *God’s faithfulness, Israel’s unfaithfulness, and the certainty of God’s judgment*. These chapters, like the whole book of First John, are difficult to outline because of the constant recurrence of the dominant themes.)

I. THE PROPHECY OF SOON-COMING JUDGMENT (chapter 3)

A. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE JUDGMENT (3:1)

This prophecy is spoken against the “children of Israel,” “the whole family— brought up from the land of Egypt” (the whole twelve tribes), but it is specifically spoken against the people of the ten-tribed Northern Kingdom.

B. THE SEVERITY OF THE JUDGMENT (3:2)

Amos implies that God will severely punish Israel for she has sinned against great privileges and great light.

Note in these verses the close connection of *privilege* (“you only have I intimately known of all the families of the earth”), *responsibility* (responsibility not to commit iniquity), and *accountability* (“therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities”). The greater the privileges, the greater the responsibility; the greater the responsibility, the greater the accountability, Luke 12:47, 48; Rom. 1:18.

C. THE CAUSE OF THE JUDGMENT (3:3–7)

Amos, by means of six questions, shows that every *effect* has its *cause*, then he, by means of a seventh question, reveals the fact that the soon-coming judgment upon Israel has a cause, the evil in the city of Samaria. The seventh question should be translated “Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord not do something” (see the center-column translation).

D. THE REVELATION (ADVANCE NOTICE) OF THE JUDGMENT (3:7, 8)

1. God chooses to reveal the soon-coming judgment (3:7)

God always through his prophets and His preachers warns sinners of His impending judgments so that those threatened may have opportunity to repent.

God through Noah warned of the flood; God through two angels warned of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; God through Joseph warned of the seven years of famine; God through Jeremiah warned of the seventy years’ captivity.

2. Amos is constrained to reveal the soon-coming judgment (3:8)

Just as a person cannot but fear when a lion roars, even so a prophet cannot but prophesy when the Lord speaks to him. God’s Word burns within him until the prophet transmits it to the intended recipients. The inner compulsion overcomes all fear of outward consequences, Jer. 20:9; 1 Cor. 9:16

E. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE JUDGMENT (3:9, 10)

If the heathen Philistines and Egyptians were called in to observe the conduct of the Israelites, they would be compelled to condemn the Israelites and to pronounce them worthy of judgment. If the heathen would condemn Israel and pronounce her worthy of judgment, how much more is God justified in doing so.

F. THE AGENT OF THE JUDGMENT (3:11)

Assyria, the agent of God’s judgment, 2 Kgs. 17:3–6, is not mentioned by name but is simply called “an adversary.”

G. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE JUDGMENT (3:12)

Just as only a remnant of a lamb is taken from the lion’s mouth, even so only a remnant of Israel will survive the onslaught of the Assyrians.

H. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ESCAPING THE JUDGMENT (3:14)

Under Israel’s laws, an Israelite was safe from an enemy or persecutor when he entered the sanctuary and lay hold upon the horns of the altar. Amos says that in the day of judgment, the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground. Amos in effect says that there will be no place of refuge from the attack of the Assyrians.

I. THE DETAILS OF THE JUDGMENT

1. The palaces of the oppressors and robbers will be spoiled (3:10, 11)
2. The majority of the luxury-living Israelites will be killed or taken captive (3:12)
3. The religious shrines at Bethel will be destroyed (3:14)
4. The mansions of the rich will be destroyed (3:15)

II. THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF DOOM (chapter 4)

(Now we have the second of the four sermons of chapters 3–6)

A. THE SINS OF THE ISRAELITES (4:1, 4, 5)

1. The sins of the rich and idle women of Samaria (4:1)

(Amos calls these women “kine (cows) of Bashan.” Just as the cattle of Bashan were fat and contented [with every animal lust gratified], even so were the society matrons of Samaria fat and contented.)

Amos charges these women with urging their husbands on to greater oppressions of the poor that their greedy animal appetites might continue to be gratified. Three sins were involved: (1) The society matrons were ruling their husbands; (2) the husbands of these women were securing their money unjustly; and (3) the wives were using the money wrongly, for self-gratification.

2. The sins of the religious worshippers of Israel (4:4, 5)

a. The invitation to these worshippers

In irony, Amos invites the Israelites “to come on to Bethel and Gilgal and go through your rounds of ceremonies, for this is what you delight to do.”

b. The sins of these worshippers

(1) Negative—Amos does not condemn ritualistic worship per se

Sacrifices every morning, Num. 28:3, 4, tithing every three years, Deut. 14:28, 29: 26:12, and offering leavened bread with thanks offerings, Lev. 7:12, 13, were all commanded by Moses’ law.

(2) Positive—Amos does condemn two things:

(a) He condemns adulterated worship (4:4)

Amos calls the Israelites’ worship “transgressions” (rebellions). Why? Because their worship of Jehovah was mixed with calf-worship (idolatrous worship), the worship introduced by Jeroboam I, 1 Kgs. 12:28–33. We find this mixture of Jehovah worship and idol worship throughout the period of “The Divided Kingdom” (933–722 B.C.), 2 Kgs. 17:41. God condemns this adulterated worship, Ezek. 20:39; John 4:22.

(b) He condemns selfish worship

To proclaim and publish their free-will offerings, this the Israelites loved to do (“this liketh you”). This selfish worship (Zech. 7:5, 6; Matt. 6:2) is “will worship” and is unacceptable to God, Col. 2:23.

So, Amos condemns, not *ceremonial worship*, but *adulterated worship* and *self-worship*.

B. THE UNREPENTANCE OF THE ISRAELITES (4:6–11)

1. God's reproofs

a. The enumeration of the reproofs

- (1) God had sent famine (4:6)
- (2) God had sent drought (4:7, 8) (note that God *times* and *directs* the rain)
- (3) God had sent plagues (blasting, mildew, and locusts) (4:9)
- (4) God had sent the pestilences (diseases) of Egypt (4:10a; Deut. 28:60)
- (5) God had slain their youth in warfare (4:10b)
- (6) God had sent other judgments (4:11)

b. The purpose of the reproofs

The chastisements were motivated by love and were sent to turn Israel from her sins and so eliminate the need for more and greater chastisements, Heb. 12:5–11.

2. Israel's unrepentance

Israel had stubbornly refused to repent. Five times it is said “yet have you not returned unto me.” See Prov. 29:1; Isa. 1:5; 9:13; Jer. 5:3; Hos. 7:9, 10; Rev. 9:20, 21; 16:11, 21.

C. THE DOOM FACING THE ISRAELITES (4:2, 3, 12, 13)

1. The doom facing the women of Samaria (4:2, 3)

After the proud women of Samaria (“the kine of Bashan”) have cast away the luxurious things of their palaces, they will be led by the Assyrians, single file and chained together with chains in their noses, through the breaches made in the walls of the city. They will be led away into captivity and slavery.

2. The doom facing the whole people of Israel (4:12, 13)

If we persistently refuse reproof, then only doom awaits us, Prov. 29:1. We must prepare to meet God in judgment if we keep on rejecting His correction (His reproofs).

The doom awaiting Israel is not here stated, but elsewhere in the book of Amos it is revealed to be *warfare, defeat, and captivity*.

The Person that Israel is soon to meet face to face in judgment is named and described in 4:13. He is “the Lord, the God of Hosts,” who is *omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent*. Israel had better fear.

III. THE CALL TO REPENTANCE (chapter 5)

(Now we have the third of the four messages, or sermons, found in chapters 3–6)

A. THE LAMENTATION FOR THE NATION (5:1–3)

Amos speaks to the nation of Israel a lamentation (a funeral dirge), a lamentation in which he considers the fall of Israel a past event. He sees Israel as a young woman raped and left lying upon the ground with no one to help her. Verse 3 means that only one tenth of her soldiers will survive the attack of the enemy forces.

B. THE SINS OF THE ISRAELITES

1. The sin of the people of Israel (5:5)

They practiced adulterated worship at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba. This worship mixed *calf-worship* and *Jehovah-worship*.

2. The sins of the judges of Israel

a. They practiced injustice and unrighteousness (5:7)

They turned justice into injustice, which is as bitter as wormwood.

b. They hated rebuke (8:10)

They hated those who reproved them for their injustice and they abhorred any who spoke the truth.

c. They oppressed the poor (5:11e, 12b)

They oppressed the poor with excessive fines and then used these fines to build luxurious houses and to plant for themselves pleasant vineyards.

d. They afflicted the just (5:12)

They accepted bribes and condemned the just.

e. They committed manifold transgressions and mighty sins (5:12)

This is a general charge covering all their unjust and unrighteous practices.

C. THE CALLS TO REPENTANCE

(Who knows the depths of God's grace and mercy? Even after the announcement of sure doom in 4:12 and the funeral dirge of 5:1–3, God may even yet be gracious unto Israel if she repents [God showed His grace to repentant Ninevah after He announced her doom, Jonah 3:10]. Note in 5:4–17 the repeated calls for repentance.)

1. The first call to repentance (5:4, 5)

a. The way of repentance—The people of Israel are to turn from the syncretistic, immoral worship practiced at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba and seek the Lord. It is far better to seek the Lord apart from religious centers and religious observances than to seek Him through false religious centers and perverted religious observances.

b. The results of true repentance—The repentant people of Israel will escape the destruction coming upon the religious centers and will “live” (both physically and spiritually).

2. The second call to repentance (5:6–9)

a. The way of repentance—The unjust and unrighteous Israelites are to seek the Lord, 5:6, 7, the Creator and Governor of the universe, 5:8, 9.

b. The results of true repentance—The repentant Israelites will escape the “fire” coming upon “the house of Joseph” and will “live” (both physically and spiritually).

3. The third call to repentance (5:14, 15)

a. The way of repentance—“Seek good and not evil (hate the evil and love the good, and establish justice [judgment] in the gate).”

In verses 4 and 6, the people of Israel are to seek *God* as the way of repentance. Now in verse 14, they are to seek *good* as the way to repentance. It is vain to seek *God* without seeking *good* and it is vain to seek *good* without first seeking *God* (religion and morality cannot be divorced but religion must precede morality. Godliness and righteousness cannot be divorced but godliness must precede righteousness).

b. *The results of true repentance*

The Lord will be gracious unto the repentant Israelites, 5:15, and they will live and have the Lord *truly with them* as they then *falsely claimed that He was with them*, 5:14.

D. THE CONSEQUENCES OF NON-REPENTANCE (5:16, 17)

If Israel does not repent, then Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, the Lord, says that there will be wailing in the streets, in the highways, in the fields, and in the vineyards. Both the non-professional and the professional mourners will have full employment.

E. THE CORRECTION OF THE ISRAELITES' MISCONCEPTION OF "THE DAY OF THE LORD" (5:18–20)

The Israelites believed that they were God's favorites and that "the Day of the Lord" (the day when God judges His enemies and rewards His friends) would bring judgment and cursing upon the Gentiles and deliverance and blessing upon the Israelites, regardless of their *spiritual or moral* condition.

Amos informs the Israelites that "the Day of the Lord" will be a day of judgment ("darkness") upon *all* transgressors, regardless of their *race or nationality*, Joel 2:1, 2; Mal. 3:1–5; 4:1.

Amos says to leave the present time of trouble and to enter "the Day of the Lord" would be like "escaping the frying pan to end up in the fire." This is a paraphrase of Amos' quaint illustration in verse 19.

F. THE WARNING AGAINST FALSE SECURITY (5:21–27)

1. *The Israelites trusted in their worship* (5:21–23)

Surely God would not let judgment fall upon a people who faithfully attended all the religious feasts, offered numerous *burnt, meal, and peace* offerings (the three *voluntary* offerings), and joined in all the songs of holy-day worship!

2. *The Lord rejected their worship* (5:21–26)

a. *He rejected their worship* (5:21–23)

He did not *smell* their holy-day worship, He did not *accept* their holy-day offerings, and He did not *hear* their holy-day music and singing. He *hated* and *despised* their feast days, Isa. 1:10, 15.

b. *He rejected their worship for two reasons* (5:24–26)

(1) *Because it was empty worship* (worship unaccompanied by a just and righteous life) (5:24)—Unless worship is accompanied by a life of justice and righteousness, the worship is unacceptable, Isa. 1:10–17. Verse 5:24 is a key verse in the book of Amos.

(2) **Because it was adulterated worship** (worship mixed with idolatry) (5:25, 26)—Just as the Israelites of the wilderness-wanderings' period mingled idolatry with Jehovah-worship, even so did the Israelites of Amos' day mix these two things.

3. **The Israelites will be judged in spite of their zealous worship** (5:27)

Because of their idolatry and unrighteousness and in spite of their worship, the zealous Israelites will be judged by the Lord the God of Hosts, and carried away captive into Assyria.

IV. THE PREDICTION OF WOE (chapter 6)

(Now we come to the fourth and final sermon found in chapters 3–6)

A. **THE PRIVILEGES OF THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL** (6:1, 2)

Amos addresses these leaders (priests, princes, nobles, judges, and officers) as the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come (for guidance, counsel, and justice). The leaders of Israel were the chief men of the chief nation of the world, the shepherds of the greatest people of the earth. What positions of privilege did these men occupy!

B. **THE CHARGES AGAINST THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL** (6:1–6)

1. **They trusted in military strength**—They were “at ease (secure) in Zion” (“Zion” is a title here used to refer to Israel’s capital city, Samaria) and they “trusted in the mountain of Samaria.” Samaria was built upon a natural fort. The armies of Assyria besieged the mountain of Samaria for three years before they were able to enter the city of Samaria on its summit, 2 Kgs. 17:5, 6.

Goliath, 1 Sam. 17:41–47, *Rabshakeh*, Isa. 36:18–20, and *Belshazzar*, Daniel, Chapter 5, all trusted in carnal things, failing to recognize that “the Lord saves not by many or by few,” 1 Sam. 14:6; “there is no king saved by the multitude of a host,” Psa. 33:16; “a mighty man is not delivered by much strength,” Psa. 33:16; and “a horse is a vain thing for safety,” Psa. 33:17. Gideon teaches us that victory comes through obedience to God and trust in God and not through human wisdom and military superiority.

2. **They failed to recognize Israel’s God-given greatness and the responsibility which came from this blessing** (6:2)—The greatness of Israel in comparison to the nations around about her is referred to in verse 6:2. Both the Israelites and their leaders failed to recognize that their high blessing obligated them to be to the nations around them examples of godliness and righteousness. Especially should *the shepherds of Israel* have been examples in religion and morality to the leaders of the pagan nations surrounding Israel.

3. **They were blind concerning the future** (6:3; Isa. 56:10; Ezek. 12:27)—In times of prosperity, danger signals are often not seen or not heeded. The leaders of Israel put the day of evil afar off but around thirty years after Amos’ prophecy, Israel was destroyed.

4. **They obtained wealth through violence (6:3b)**—They caused the seat (throne) of violence to come near (they enthroned violence as the rule of life in Israel). The whole book of Amos tells us that the wealthy in Israel had become wealthy through injustice and violence toward the poor.
5. **They practiced self-indulgence, showing heartless indifference to the poor (6:4–6)**—Note the luxurious life pictured in these verses.
The leaders of Israel became rich through oppression of the poor. They used their ill-gotten riches to gratify their carnal desires. They showed no concern for the Israelites made poor through their (the leaders') oppression and injustice.

C. **THE WOE (JUDGMENT) TO COME UPON THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL** (and upon the whole nation of Israel) (6:7–14)

1. **The reason for the judgment (6:8)**
God hates Israel's "excellency" (her pride) and the object of her pride, her palaces filled with the spoils of injustice.
2. **The necessity for the judgment (6:8)**
God's honor is at stake. God is a righteous God who must punish evil, so He has sworn by Himself that He will do so.
3. **The ability of God to administer the judgment (6:8)**
He is "the Lord God," "the LORD," "the God of Hosts." These names emphasize God's power, His power to judge.
4. **The severity of the judgment (6:7–10)**
 - a. **The city of Samaria and its inhabitants and spoils will be delivered up to the enemy (6:8)**
 - b. **The leaders of Israel will be among the first to be carried away captive (6:7)**
Their banqueting days ended, the leaders of Israel will *lead* the people of Israel into captivity.
 - c. **The majority of the inhabitants of Samaria will perish (6:9, 10)**
After the upper classes are carried away, most of the poor remnant left in the city will perish.
 - d. **The great and the small houses of Samaria will be destroyed (6:11)**
5. **The absurdity of expecting other than judgment (6:12, 13)**
Just as the things of the two illustrations do not go together, even so *injustice* and *blessing* do not go together. A proud, unjust, unrighteous people cannot expect blessing, but rather, cursing (judgment).
6. **The extent of the judgment (6:14)**
God will raise up a nation (Assyria) which will afflict Israel from its northernmost to its southernmost boundaries.

PART FOUR—The visions of judgment and doom (7:1–9:8)

(Now we have five visions of judgments coming upon Israel with a parentheses [recording a dialogue between the priest Amaziah and Amos] between visions three and four.)

I. THE VISION OF THE LOCUSTS (7:1–3)

A. THE SEEING OF THE VISION (7:1)

Amos saw larvae developing rapidly into locusts, which began to devour the year's second growth of grass, the crop belonging to the people, the first crop having been given to the king as tribute.

B. THE INTERCESSION OF AMOS (7:2)

Amos saw the nation of Israel facing total ruin if the plague continued, so he made intercession for Israel, beseeching God to forgive Israel for her sins and to stop the plague (Amos was not an unfeeling, heartless prophet of doom, as some picture him, but he was a man of tender concern and compassionate mercy, one of the great intercessors of the Bible, including Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, etc.).

C. THE RESPONSE OF GOD (7:3)

God repented. The plague was stayed.

D. THE LESSONS TO US

1. **God does repent**—God cannot act contrary to His holiness and His righteousness. When sin is present, God must condemn and punish. When we repent, turn from sin, either personally or through an intercessor, then God is free to repent, to turn from judgment, and bless us.
2. **God does hear and answer prayer**—Contrary to the teachings of some, this world is not “a closed universe.” God can be moved to supernaturally intervene on our behalf. Prayer does more than to provide an outlet for pent-up feelings. “We have not because we ask not,” James 4:2.

II. THE VISION OF THE FIRE (7:4–6)

A. THE SEEING OF THE VISION (7:4)

Amos saw a devouring fire which devoured the great deep (this probably has reference to a drought, a drought so severe that the underground springs of water ceased).

B. THE INTERCESSION OF AMOS (7:5)

Amos besought the Lord to cease, for “who of Jacob shall stand (see center column)?” Amos fears that Israel will be completely destroyed.

C. THE RESPONSE OF GOD (7:6)

Again God repented (turned from His purpose) and the plague was stayed.

III. THE VISION OF THE PLUMBLINE (7:7-9)

(In this vision, the prophet does not see the *means* of the judgment, as he did in the first two visions, but he sees the *agent of*, the *reason for*, the *certainty of*, and the *results of*, the coming judgment.

A. THE VISION OF THE AGENT OF THE COMING JUDGMENT (7:7)

Amos saw the Lord standing upon a wall built by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand.

B. THE REASON FOR THE COMING JUDGMENT (7:8)

God, who built Israel with the plumbline of His revealed righteousness, now tests Israel with this plumbline and finds Israel to be “out of plumb,” not living in accordance with the standards of His revealed righteousness. See 2 Kgs. 21:13; Isa. 28:17; Lam. 2:8; Rev. 11:1, 2.

C. THE CERTAINTY OF THE COMING JUDGMENT (7:8b)

God has repented two times because of the intercessions of Amos but Israel has failed to repent of her idolatry, her immorality, and her unrighteousness. Now, before Amos can intercede again, God tells him that He will repent no more, but is determined to punish, Prov. 29:1; Eccl. 8:11; Rom. 2:4, 5.

D. THE RESULTS OF THE COMING JUDGMENT (7:9)

1. “The high places” will be destroyed—“The high places” were the elevated places where idols were worshipped.
2. “The sanctuaries” will be laid waste—“The sanctuaries” have reference to the two centers of calf—worship at Dan and Bethel, originally set up by Jeroboam I.
3. The house of Jeroboam II will be cut off with the sword—This prophecy was fulfilled when Jeroboam’s son, Zachariah, was slain by Shallum, after Zachariah had reigned for only six months, 2 Kgs. 15:8–10.

IV. THE OPPOSITION OF THE PRIEST AMAZIAH (the priest at the king’s sanctuary at Bethel) (7:10–17)

(Now we have a parentheses between the third and the fourth vision)

A. THE CHARGE OF AMAZIAH AGAINST AMOS (7:10, 11)

1. The addressee of the charge—The charge of Amaziah against Amos was made to Jeroboam II, the king of Israel.
2. The unjustness of the charge
 - a. Amaziah lied—He said that Amos was conspiring against the king.
 - b. He altered Amos’ words—He (Amos) had said that *the house of Jeroboam*, and not *Jeroboam himself*, would be cut off with the sword.
 - c. He omitted some of Amos’ words—He did not tell the king of Amos’ plea for Israel’s repentance, 5:4, 6, nor of Amos’ intercessions for Israel’s deliverance, 7:2, 5.

3. *The two things revealed by the charge*

- a. *The prophet Amos was well known in Israel*—Amaziah assumes that the king will recognize Amos even though no qualifying description is added to Amos' name.
- b. *The message of Amos was well known in Israel*—Amaziah says “the land is not able to bear all his words.”

B. THE COMMANDS OF AMAZIAH TO AMOS (7:12, 13)

1. *“Go to Judah and there continue your hireling ministry”*—He implies that Amos prophesies for financial gain, Micah 3:11, and that his own people in Judah will gladly pay him to prophesy against Israel.
2. *“Do not prophecy here at Bethel anymore because the king’s sanctuary and one of the king’s residences are here at Bethel”*—The hireling priest Amaziah desires to protect his master, the king, but he unwittingly testifies to the *human origin* of the religious system at Bethel when he speaks of Bethel as *the king’s sanctuary* (and not *God’s sanctuary*).

C. THE ANSWER OF AMOS TO AMAZIAH (7:14–17)

1. *“God called me” (7:14, 15)*

Amos says that he is not a prophet *by trade or training*, nor a prophet *by hereditary calling*, but that he is a prophet *by divine calling*. God *called* (“took”) him, *commanded* him, and *commissioned* him.

2. *“God speaks through me” (7:16a)*

God called Amos, “*therefore*” his words are not *his words* but *the Lord’s words*.

3. *“God now prophesies through me against you” (7:16, 17)*

God told Amos to prophesy against Israel and Amaziah commands Amos to not prophesy against Israel, “*therefore*” the Lord says that because Amaziah is trying to stop His word to Israel, he will be punished in the following way: the invading enemy will publicly ravish his wife, will kill his sons and daughters, will possess his land, and will carry him, with all Israel, into a polluted land, where he will die.

V. THE VISION OF THE BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT (chapter 8)

(The third vision revealed that judgment is *certain*. Our present vision, the fourth vision, reveals that judgment is *near*.)

A. THE NEARNESS OF THE COMING JUDGMENT (8:1, 2)

Just as the gathering of the late fruit of summer (gathered in the latter part of September) marks the end of the harvest year, even so did Israel’s last fruits of righteousness mark the end of her national existence. God says in effect “I passed by (forgave) Israel twice, (7:2, 3; 7:5, 6), hoping she would repent of her unrighteousness and bring forth the fruit of righteousness but she did not repent, so I will pass by her no more. Her end has come.”

B. THE GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COMING JUDGMENT (8:3)

There will be wailings in the temple instead of singing, there will be dead bodies everywhere, and the bodies of the dead will be cast forth from the living in silence (see 6:10).

C. THE CAUSES OF THE COMING JUDGMENT (8:4–6)

(The one basic sin was *materialism*, serving *mammon* rather than *God*. From this basic sin came other sins)

1. Oppression of the poor (8:4)

The rich devoured the substance of the poor, causing them to perish from the land. The rich, in devouring the substance of the poor, devoured the poor.

2. Improper observance of holy days (8:5a)

The merchants of Israel impatiently awaited the close of holy days so that the pursuit of material gain could again be resumed.

3. Dishonesty and deceit in business (8:5b, 6)

a. They made the ephah (an eight-gallon measure) small (they didn't give the customer full measure)

b. They increased the weight of the shekel (they made the shekel heavy so that the buyer had to lay on extra silver to balance the scales)

c. They falsified the balances (they "weighed the thumb")

The above three things were expressly forbidden by God, Lev.19:35–37; Deut. 25:13–16.

d. They sold the refuse of the wheat (they sold the wheat chaff, which should have been discarded)

4. Economic Enslavement of the poor (8:6)

For paltry sums, the rich sold the poor into slavery to collect defaulted debts.

D. THE NECESSITY FOR THE COMING JUDGMENT (8:7)

Since sin was present in Israel and no repentance was forthcoming, God's righteousness demanded judgment. So, He swore by Himself ("the excellency of Jacob") that He would not forget, but judge, Israel's evil works.

E. THE MORE-DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COMING JUDGMENT (8:7–14)

1. The land will be destroyed in a flood of judgment (8:8)

There will be a trembling, a mourning, and then a flood of judgment.

2. The sun will go down at noon (8:9)

This is a metaphor, which means that in the midst of prosperity, calamity will suddenly come, joy will suddenly be changed into heaviness, Jer.15:9; Micah 3:6.

3. The land will be filled with mourning, lamentation, and bitterness (8:10)

The two oriental symbols for grief, *sackcloth on the loins*, Ezek.7:8, and *a shaved head*, Isa. 3:24; Jer.16:6, will be seen everywhere. The mourning will be as great as the mourning for an only son, the heir in whom the family name was to have been perpetuated.

4. **The word of the Lord and the Spirit of the Lord will be in short supply (8:11–13)**

The divine retribution for the rejection of light is the withdrawal of the light. Men often reject God's word (light) in times of prosperity and then seek His word in times of adversity but are then unable to find it. Saul rejected God when all was well and then was unable to find Him in a time of great distress, 1 Sam. 28:6. See Ezek. 7:26; Micah 3:7; Luke 17:22; John 7:34; 8:21.

5. **The idol worshippers will perish (8:14)**

They who swear by the idols of *Samaria* (Bethel), *Dan*, and *Beersheba*, using a formula reserved for Jehovah, will perish. There is no greater insult to God than to turn from Him and worship idols (man-made gods).

VI. THE VISION OF THE SMITTEN SANCTUARY (9:1–8)

A. **THE VISION OF THE COMING JUDGMENT (9:1a)**

Amos sees the Lord standing upon the altar saying "smite the lintel that the posts may shake and break them in pieces upon the heads of all of them."

The vision pictures the idolatrous worship system of the Israelites crashing down upon the heads of the Israelite worshippers and destroying them. Both *the worship system* and *the worshippers involved in this system* will be destroyed.

B. **THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ESCAPING THE COMING JUDGMENT (9:1b–4)**

Verses 2–4 expand the last sentence of verse one. These verses declare the omnipresence of God in judgment. None can go from His presence and so escape His judgment, Psalm 139:7–12.

God has set His eyes upon the Israelites for evil, so neither Sheol, the heavens, the caves of Mt. Carmel, the bottom of the sea, nor the land of their captivity will be a hiding place from God's wrath.

C. **THE ABILITY OF GOD TO INFLICT THE COMING JUDGMENT (9:5, 6)**

The Lord (Jehovah), the Lord God of hosts, the creator-sustainer God, is able to judge and inflict punishment upon all sinners, 3:13–15; 4:13; 5:8, 9, 16; 6:8; 7:2, 3.

D. **THE IMPARTIALITY OF GOD IN ADMINISTERING THE COMING JUDGMENT (9:7)**

God shows favor to all nations and God judges all nations who abuse His favors. Israel's selection to special favor will not excuse her from punishment for her sins.

This verse, as does chapters one and two, clearly teaches *the universality of God* and *the impartiality of God in administering judgment*.

E. **THE MERCY ASSOCIATED WITH THE COMING JUDGMENT (9:8)**

Here in verse 8, we have the first gleam of hope for the future. In chapter 5, the Israelites were given a hope of deliverance from judgment if they would repent. Now they are given a hope for the future even though they don't repent and the judgment does fall. God will destroy "the sinful kingdom," the Northern Kingdom, but in mercy, God will spare a remnant of its people and include them in the restored house of Jacob (all the twelve tribes).

PART FIVE—Prophecy of restoration and blessing (9:9–15)

I. THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL WILL BE SIFTED (9:9, 10)

(The last sentence of verse 8 is explained in verses 9 and 10)

God will disperse all the house of Israel (all the peoples of the twelve tribes) and will sift them (cause them to move here and there) among the nations, destroying the sinners among the Israelites but preserving the righteous.

II. THE DYNASTY AND KINGDOM OF DAVID WILL BE RESTORED (9:11)

The hut (“tabernacle”) of David (this term has reference to the then low and degraded condition of David’s dynasty and kingdom) will be raised up (to its former glory and power in the days of David and Solomon) and its breaches will be repaired.

III. THE RUINED CITIES OF ISRAEL WILL BE REBUILT (9:14)

The Lord will regather the Israelites from the lands of their former captivity and they will rebuild and inhabit the cities of Israel that have lain in ruins, Isa. 61:4; Ezek. 36:9–11; 36:30-38.³

The book of Amos

The Book of Amos is divided into 4 parts

1. The Roar of Judgment of God (Chapters 1-2)
2. The Reason for God’s anger (Chapters 3-6)
3. The Three Visions of Amos (Chapter 7)
4. God’s Judgment and Hope (Chapters 8-9)

³ Gingrich, R. E. (2004). [*The Books of Amos, Obadiah and Jonah*](#) (pp. 5–24). Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing.

The earthquake cited in Amos 1:1 may be the same as that attested by excavations at Hazor dating to approximately 760 BC. Since Amos claimed not to be a professional prophet, he ministered in a short span of time rather than stretching over several decades. Although sometimes tenuous, there's much to be learned reading between the lines. Obviously, the book was compiled after the earthquake. Since the earthquake is in the date formula, it must then have been a substantial event, because three centuries later the memory is still hurting (see Zechariah 14:5). Predicting the earthquake in chapter eight & chapter nine cemented Amos' credentials as a true prophet (see Deuteronomy 18:22) despite his own professional denials.

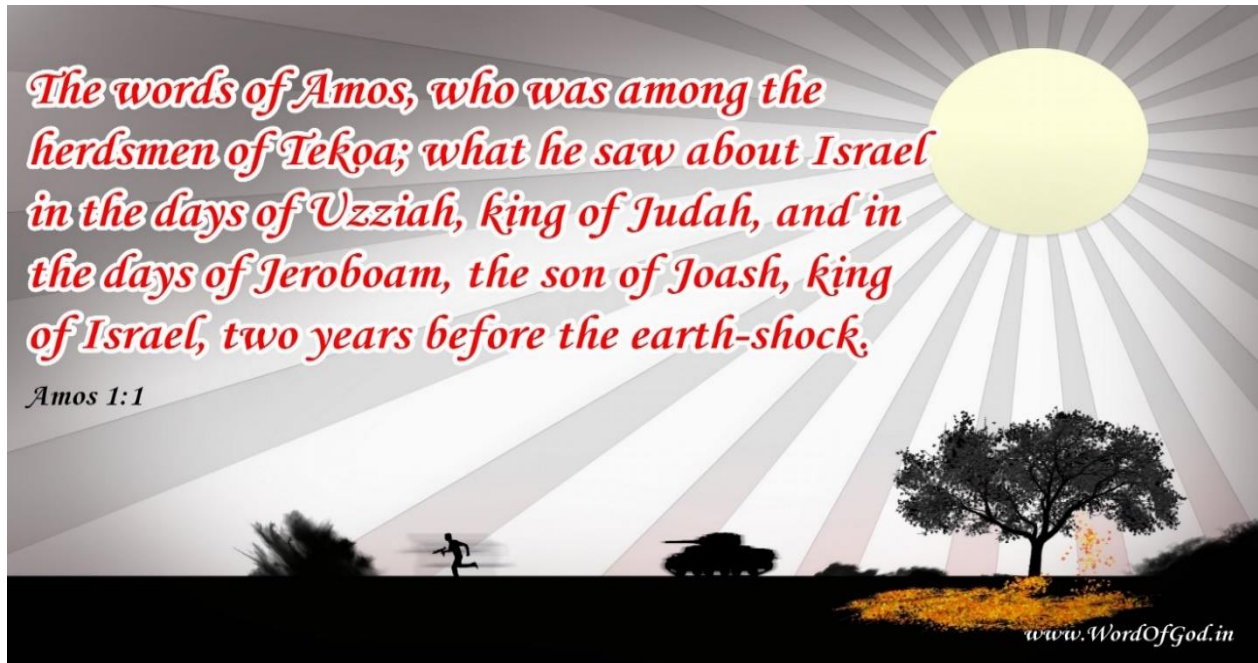
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The words of Amos, who was among the herdsman of Tekoa; what he saw about Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earth-shock,

Amos 1:1



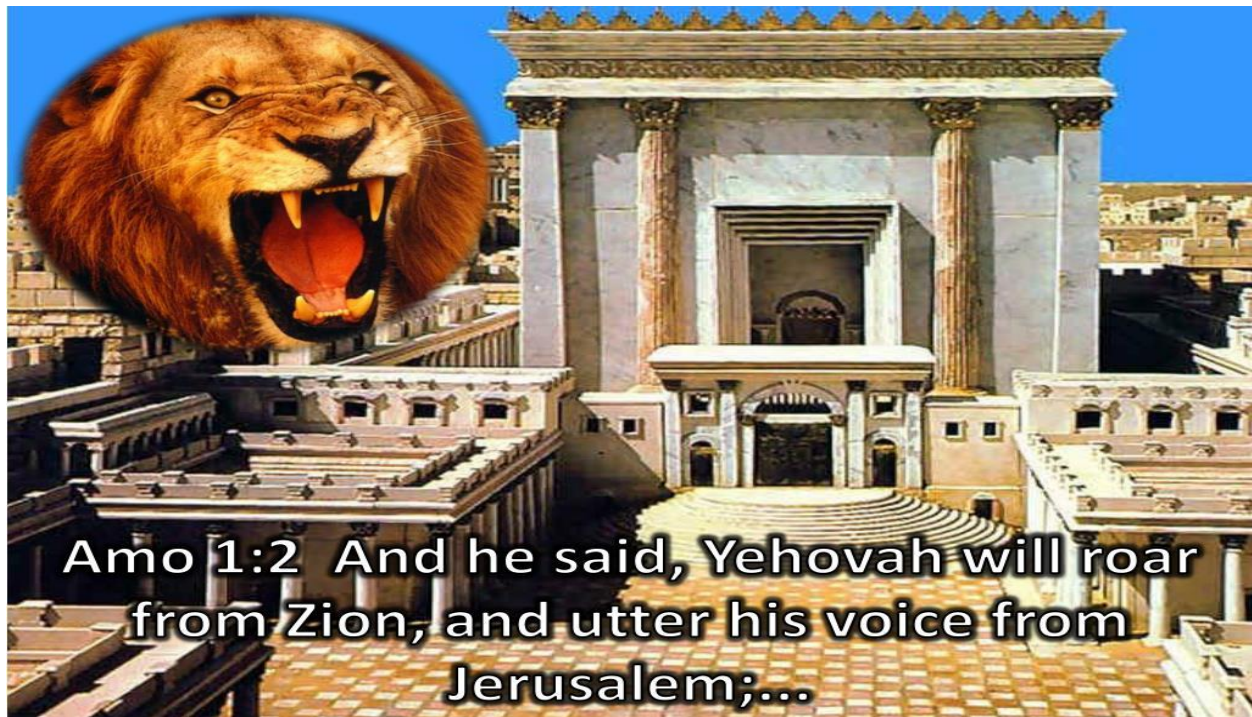
The Lord Roars From Zion (1:2)

The prophecy begins with a statement of power and fear. The Lord roars from Zion. The imagery is of a lion roaring because God is about to attack. The prey is in its grasp and therefore the lion roars. The imagery goes beyond the lion metaphor. The Lord's voice roars depicts amazing power being brought against the people.

The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. (Joel 3:16 ESV)

Notice that the same effect occurs in Amos 1:2. The pastures of the shepherds mourn and the top of Mount Carmel withers. God's wrath is seen as a withering drought against the green hills and pastures of the land. The roar is intended to send a shockwave through the nation. Where God roars from is also important. He roars from Zion. God speaks from his temple in Jerusalem, not from the Israelite temples in Dan and Bethel.

“The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers.” (Amos 1:2 esv) That is a sound no creature can hear without the fear of impending doom. This is the image Amos uses to open his oracles. Amos lived his life as a shepherd. I would imagine, to a shepherd at pasture, the most terrifying sound was the roar of the lion. When Amos wanted to sanction the power of God’s word, he likened it to a lion’s roar. That is a sound that cannot be ignored. The roar is actually felt as well as heard.



Judgment On The Surrounding Nations (1:3-2:3)

The form of Amos' prophecy is interesting. The declaration does not begin with Israel. Rather, the prophecies of judgment center on the surrounding nations initially. The oracle concerning these nations would cause the audience to think that Amos is delivering a message of salvation to Israel from the nations. One can see these judgments would curry favor for Amos as an outsider.

There are seven nations that are brought under God's judgment before God turns his message of judgment upon Israel. Six of these oracles are against the heathen nations, those who were not under the law of Moses and were not in a covenant relationship with the Lord. For each of the nations God's judgment came based upon how they treated others. Cruelty toward others is the cause for God to act against them. There is a formula that Amos uses. He identifies the sin and the punishment that will come because of the sin. You will also notice the repeated refrain for each oracle against each nation: "For three transgressions and for four." Their sinfulness is a pattern and they continue to go over the limit. They are compounding sin upon sin and judgment is therefore deserved.

Before we read the specific sins we need to consider what God is teaching. God is patient in the midst of our sins. It is not for one sin that God reigning down his wrath on any of these nations. God is giving time to repent. God is being merciful and allowing the sins to continue with the desire for them to turn back to God. However, time did not change the hearts of the people. Rather than turning to the Lord, the people have compounded their sins. Though God is patient in our sins, there will be a time of judgment. The Lord must roar and wrath must come now. But God's patience prevailed until they had filled up their sins to the uttermost (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:16).

Notice the sins that the nations committed worthy of their judgment.

1. Syria (Damascus was the capital) was condemned for their harsh cruelty toward the people they conquered. Amos says that they rode over the defeated Israelites with threshing boards. Threshing boards had iron teeth which was used to separate the grain from the stalk. But the Syrians used these boards on the people they conquered. Clearly God does not subscribe to the idea that all is fair in war. Syria had gone too far.
2. Philistia (Gaza) was condemned for kidnapping peaceful people for the purpose of turning a profit. They were willing to injure others and sacrifice their morality and humanity for the sake of making money.
3. Phoenicia (Tyre) followed the same error as Gaza. They apparently cooperated in selling slaves to other nations. There was a callous disregard for humanity, sacrificing human rights for business profits.
4. Edom (the Petra Site today) was condemned because of its treatment of the people of Israel. There was to be a brotherhood between the Hebrews and the Edomites because Jacob and Esau were brothers.

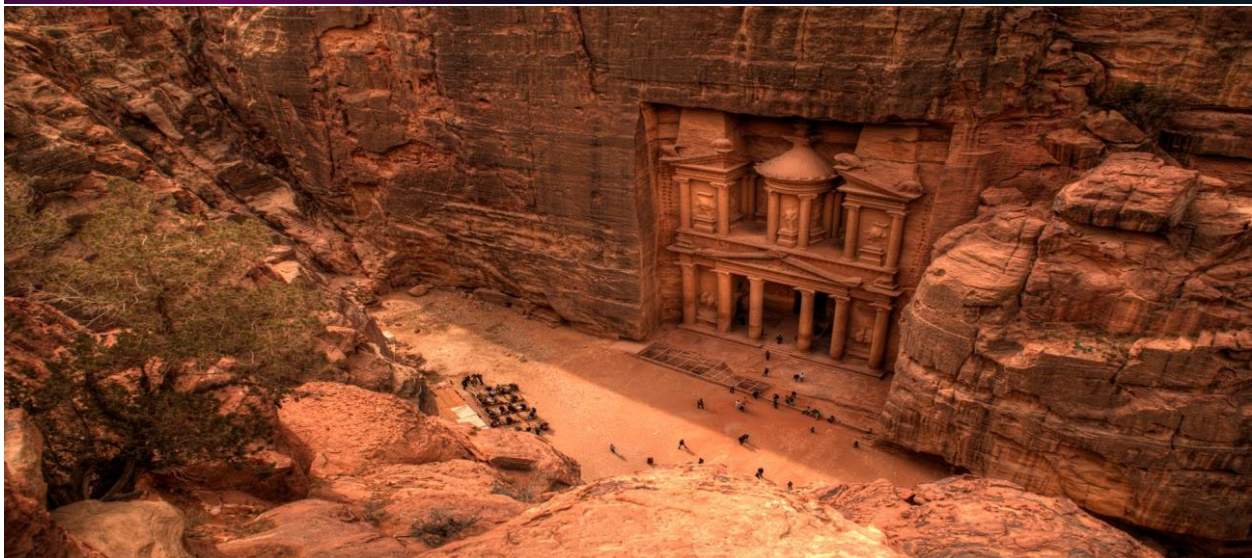
5. Ammon was brought under judgment for massacring innocent and defenseless pregnant women. This is also extremely egregious. To kill the innocent so that they could expand their border is the reason for Ammon receiving God's wrath.
6. Moab was condemned for their total disrespect for the dead.

These condemnations teach us that God holds all nations accountable for their acts of inhumanity against individuals. Every nation that does not respect human life will come under God's judgment and they will be held accountable for their atrocities.

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:

Amos 1:11

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Judah Condemned (2:4-5)

Now the judgment turns to the people of God. God pronounces judgment on Judah, but for different reasons than what we read in the previous judgments. Judah is condemned because they refused to follow God's stipulations and instructions. They rejected the law of the Lord. Judah had been given a covenant which they violated. Instead of obeying God, they turned to lies, false gods who led them astray just as their ancestors followed before them.

Israel Condemned (2:6-16)

The condemnation finally arrives on Israel. One can feel the weight of the prophecy. Israel is acting like the nations. They're committing the same sins as these nations who don't have a covenant relationship with God.

They oppressed the weak and poor. Verse 6 describes the merciless selling of destitute people who could likely have paid their debt if given a bit more time. They unnecessarily foreclosed on small loan amounts (like a pair of sandals). They abused the helpless and weak. Verse 7 says that they “turn aside the way of the afflicted.” Powerful people were manipulating the weak and afflicted, using their power against them. They forced people to do things that they did not want to do and made life miserable for them. Verse 7 describes the sexual abuse of a servant woman by both the father and son. God condemns the mistreatment of a hard-working household employee.

We can commit the same sin when we take the power or authority we have and use it to force others to do what we want. We see this abuse in marriage and friends, where through our words or actions we will punish each other until we make them do what we want them to do. We will ignore them, be rude to them, be angry with them, or act in some other sinful way to force the other to do something. We do not have the right to force anyone to do anything. Not even our Lord forces us to do anything. Husbands, you do not force your wives to do things by being loud or threatening. Wives, you don't force your husbands to do things by withholding affection. Friends, you are not to make another to do what you want through manipulation. Neither are we do use our power to compel people we do not know to do what we want.

Notice how God describes these actions in verse 7. He says that his holy name is profaned. This is God's view of our sins. We must not see our sins as nothing or small indiscretions. We are disrespecting, corrupting, and defiling the holy name of the Lord when as the supposed people of God we force people to obey our wishes.

In verses 9-11 God gives the reason why we cannot use force and oppression on others. God graciously cared for his people when they were oppressed. God reminds the people how he took care of his people when they were oppressed in Egyptian slavery. God does not abuse the oppressed. God does not take advantage of the weak. God calls us weak and helpless in our sins. God came for deliverance.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6 ESV)

We cannot forget the grace of God toward us. We are to be thankful to God and obey his covenant because of his grace. The purpose of God's past actions of grace are to generate grace toward others and obedience toward God. Grace isn't given to be wasted but is provided to encourage a positive response of thankfulness and service.

God's grace is also seen in sending messengers to warn his people of impending judgment. Restoration is possible only if people are open to God's gracious attempts to convict them of sin and his gentle prodding to discipline those who need correction. If people are not affected by God's grace, they will one day stand accountable before his face. We cannot rebel against God's grace and plunge ourselves into sin. Further, we will not encourage others to sin. But this is what these people did. They forgot God's grace and encouraged sinful behavior.

Verses 12-16 reveals how they made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to speak the words of the Lord. The Nazirites were outstanding examples of lives consecrated to the Lord, providing a visible testimony of the humility of heart and purity of life the Lord expects. They encouraged people to break that holiness and purity and commit sin. Therefore, Israel and her army will be defeated - not surviving the coming day of the Lord.

Conclusion

Rebellion against God's design for healthy relationships erodes God's holy reputation. We are to have a concern for God's holy name just as Moses had on Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:12). When we act like the world, how can the world learn about the holy God? We have covenant relationship with God and we know what God expects from our lives. We must not defile the holy name of God. We must see God's grace as the means for us to show grace to everyone we know and meet.

Amos 3—The Logic of God’s Judgment

A. The logic of God’s judgment [3:1–10]

1. God’s love for Israel makes judgment unavoidable (1–2)

a. **Against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt:** Israel’s rejection and disregard of God is all the more inexcusable in light of God’s great deliverance. In His bringing Israel **up from the land of Egypt**, God proved His love and care for Israel; for God to speak **against** them shows He must have been sorely provoked.

i. The central act of redemption in the Old Testament is Israel’s exodus from Egypt. All through the Old Testament, God calls Israel to look back and remember Him as the one who freed them from Egypt. The central act of redemption in the New Testament—and in God’s whole plan of redemption—is the work of Jesus on the cross. In the same way, we are called to constantly look back and remember what Jesus did on the cross and to live in light of that great fact.

b. **You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities:** God makes a clear connection between the great *privilege* of Israel (**you only have I known**) and the great *responsibility* this privilege brings (**therefore I will punish you**). If Israel thought that their standing as a specially chosen nation made them *less* responsible before God, they were tragically mistaken.

i. “The false deduction which is too often made is that if we are the privileged people of God, *therefore* we may look for His mercy, He will not punish us. That is not so. The measure of our privilege, in the Divine economy, is the measure of our responsibility. Therefore, if we fail to fulfill that responsibility He will not pass over our sins, but rather will visit upon us all our iniquities. It is well that those nations who boast of the Divine favor, should lay this lesson to heart.”
(Morgan)

2. The inescapable logic of God's judgment (3–6)

a. **Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?** In this section, Amos connects six statements that are obvious true. In our manner of speaking he might have said, “Is the Pope Catholic?”

b. **If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?** The six statements of the obvious lead into a seventh statement, each one reinforcing this final point. When judgment comes against the cities of Israel, everyone should know that it was the **LORD** who has **done it**. It won't be an accident, fate, or “bad luck.” It will be the hand of the **LORD**.

3. The inevitable message of the prophet (7–8)

a. **Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret:** In context, Amos speaks of the coming judgment upon Israel. God revealed this **secret** to His prophets, and it was prophesied for years and years before it happened so Israel would have every opportunity to repent.

i. God especially reveals the secrets of His coming judgment, so that men will have time to repent and no reason to be surprised. “Such *secrets* of God are revealed to them, that they may inform the people; that, by repentance and conversion, they may avoid the evil, and, by walking closely with God, secure the continuance of his favor.” (Clarke)

ii. We must remember the context of the prophet Amos, and understand that this *does not* mean that God does nothing without revealing it to a prophet first. In Ephesians 3:5 Paul describes how God deliberately hid the nature of the church (being a new body, not Israel and not Gentile) from Old Testament prophets. This is one example of something that God didn't announce or explain until it happened, without giving a prior revelation to a prophet.

b. **A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?** Amos is saying, “Don't blame me. I'm only the messenger.” As natural as it is for a man to **fear** when a lion roars, that is how natural it is for the prophet to **prophesy** when the **Lord God has spoken**.

4. The message of judgment against Israel goes to the surrounding nations (9–10)

a. **Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt:** The city of **Ashdod** was a leading city of the Philistines. God invites the nations—represented here by Philista and Egypt—to come to **Samaria** (the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel) and see their sin (**great tumults in her midst, and the oppressed within her**).

i. Hubbard on the choice of the Egyptians and Philistines as witnesses: “Their reputations for injustice and brutality would be resented by the Israelites, who would consider themselves in every way morally superior to those whom God had summoned as witnesses.” It will also “show that covenant law is not the only criterion for testing Israel’s behavior but that by any standards of international decency they have become culprits.”

b. **Who store up violence and robbery in their palaces:** The rich and powerful of Israel used their wealth and power to oppress and steal from others. God invites the nations to see the sin of Israel, so they can understand the judgment He will bring upon Israel.

B. The destruction God’s judgment brings [3:11–15]

1. Israel will be conquered and exiled (11–12)

a. **An adversary shall be all around the land:** This was fulfilled in the Assyrian invasion of Israel, less than 30 years after Amos made this prophecy. For ten years, Israel was a subject state in the Assyrian Empire.

b. **As a shepherd takes from the mouth of the lion:** Exodus 22:10–13 says that if an animal dies in the care of another man—such as a shepherd—that the shepherd must make restitution to the owner of the animal, *unless* he can bring remains that demonstrate the animal was attacked by a predator. “Amos’ comparison, then, makes the sarcastic point that when invasion strikes Israel’s devastation will be so complete that all that will be rescued is proof of death in the form of scraps of furniture.” (Hubbard)

c. **So shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria:** This was fulfilled in the Assyrian exile of Israel, less than 40 years after Amos made this prophecy. After a little more than ten years as a subject state in the Assyrian Empire, Israel was completely conquered by Assyria and the people of Israel were taken from their land and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire.

2. Judgment on wicked places (13–15)

a. **I will also visit destruction on the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground:** The altars of dedication to idols would be destroyed by God’s judgment. When we build a place of idolatry, we invite God to destroy it. The **horns of the altar** at each corner and were thought to represent the “strength” of the altar, just as horns represent the “strength” of an animal.

b. **The great houses shall have an end:** God’s judgment would not stop at places of idol worship; it would also extend to places built and enjoyed through oppression and robbery.

i. In the age prior to Jeroboam II, the houses in Israel’s cities were roughly the same size. But archaeologists find a change starting in the eighth century B.C.—ancient cities like Tirzah have a neighborhood of large, expensive houses and another neighborhood of small, crowded structures, smaller than the houses from previous years. The larger houses are filled with the marks of prosperity, and the oppressive rich of Israel thought they could find safety there—but God’s judgment came against those houses as well, just as Amos promised.⁴

⁴ Guzik, D. (2000). [Amos](#) (Am 3). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

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With Privilege Comes Accountability (3:1-2)

Notice the privileges that God expresses to the people. “I brought you up out of the land of Egypt” (3:1), “You only have I know of all the families of the earth” (3:2), You were the chosen people of God. You saw God work to redeem you and deliver you. You were the only people to have this covenant relationship with God. “Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.” The result is not that God is going to overlook their sins. Rather, God will punish them for every sin.

Their chosen status doesn't mean they are protected from judgment.

Their chosen status meant they had greater accountability to God.

They knew what God required. They were to be to the Lord as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). With the privilege of knowing God came responsibility of acting like the people of God.

The same accountability is described to us. Consider the message found in the parable of the talents. Everyone was given a degree of wealth from the master and each were accountability for what they were given. Israel was the one talent man who had taken the blessings and privileges of God and did nothing with them. Listen to the words of the apostle Peter:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

You are the chosen people of God, a holy nation. The purpose is not to think that we are special because of ourselves. Our status before God is not because of ourselves, that we can boast in our works. Seeing what God has done for us is to cause us to proclaim the excellencies of Christ. He called us out of darkness. Christ is the light who is shining in the darkness. We proclaim him because we were blind and without the light of Christ we would continue to be blind.

The Lion Has Roared (3:3-8)

Amos now introduces a series of rhetorical questions to lead Jews to grasp two important conclusions. The first message is that the judgment of God is coming with cause. Notice how the rhetorical questions in verses 4-6 to see God make this point. Does a lion roar when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry if he has taken nothing? Does a bird fall in a snare if there is no trap? Does a trap snap shut if there is nothing to spring the trap? The answers to all of these questions is no. These things only happen with purpose. **The victim has been trapped.** Look at the questions in verse 6. Are people to be afraid when the trumpet sounds in the city? Yes, they are because that is the alarm to the people warning of invasion. Does disaster come to a city unless the Lord does it? The cities of Israel only fell when the people were in rebellion. God would cause their defeat because of their sins. Think about the success of the conquest of Jericho and the failure of the attack at Ai. Disaster comes when you are not faithful to him. What is the point? The beginning of verse 8 is the answer. "The lion has roared; who will not fear?" **The Lord has spoken.** Judgment is coming. Amos is calling for the people to make a decision to respond appropriately to the revealing of God's plan. God's plan will be revealed in verses 11-15. But before revealing God's plan, Amos is preparing the hearts of the people for listening to the message of God. The trumpet has sounded. The trap has shut. The lion has roared. You need to listen and hear the message of the Lord.

Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing
without revealing his plan
to his servants the prophets.

Amos 3:7

The second point is that Amos is carrying the message of the Lord. Amos needs to validate that he indeed is God's messenger. Look at verse 3. "Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?" Amos' message is not a coincidence or an accident. Amos has been called by God to make this declaration. Verse 7 continues this point. "For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets." Amos declares that his message is from God. Amos proves his relationship with God because God has revealed his plan for the nation of Israel to him. Notice the end of verse 8 for the second conclusion to be drawn from these questions. "The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?" The Lord has spoken. Who can refuse to proclaim God's message? God has called me to walk with him and has revealed his plan to me. I must speak God's plan to you.

God is the lion and his prophecy is roar!

God calls for us to pay attention to the declaration of his word. When God speaks, his voice roars through the earth. It is very easy to lack intensity when listening to God's word. We can pay attention to everything else and get distracted when trying to read God's word or listen to its proclamation. The voice of the Lord should grab our attention. The voice of the Lord must cause us to respond attentive, like the blowing of the trumpet sounding the alarm. God has spoken. Be at attention and focus on what God has to say.

The Downfall and Devouring of Israel (3:9-15)

In verse 9 God through his prophet Amos calls Egypt and Philistine to be witnesses to the wickedness in Israel. These two nations were past oppressors of Israel. Yet these immoral heathens are called to judge the morality of Samaria. See how wicked God's people are! The nations are called to be a witness against the people of God. Verse 10 defines the problem. They are morally warped. They do not even know how to do what is right. Their storehouse is not full of mercy and grace, but violence, robbery, and oppression. This is an accurate description about the nature of sin. We look at sin is a harmless act. **The problem is that sin warps our thinking, our hearts, and our consciences. We lose our innocence and develop depraved hearts and minds.**

Sinful act after sinful act leads us to a point that we can no longer even do what is right because we have lost all sensitivity to the will of God. We look at people and perhaps ourselves and wonder how people can get so steeped in sexual sin. The path is very simple: dabble in it a little and lose sensitivity to the sinfulness of what you are doing. Soon you need a little more to satisfy the desire you have awakened. Before long you will get so far down the path that you will be consumed by these sins. What began as a hobby or an occasional act now has become a vice. You have become imprisoned to the sin and it then feels like you cannot stop. You engage in it even when you do not want to and even if you know better. Finally, you will be at the point where it can be said that you do not even know what is right. **This is why it is so important to guard our hearts.** The danger of allowing our hearts to stray from the right paths of the Lord are very serious.

The final verses of this chapter describe the coming doom against the nation. All of their defenses will not help and their strongholds will be plundered. Verse 12 pictures the ferocity of their doom. Like a shepherd rescuing a sheep from the mouth of a lion with only two legs or a piece of an ear, so will be the people of Israel. There will be nothing left of their former lifestyle. **There will only be fragments left, just enough to prove who the victim was.** Their lavish living will suddenly perish. All that will be left is part of a bed. Your comforts and conveniences will all be taken away. Your wealth will be gone. You will have nothing left but a fragment. **Life apart from God may yield temporary material gain, but will surely result in eternal loss.** Their houses of ivory and summer and winter homes will be taken away (3:15). Your pleasures in comfort and wealth will come to end. How foolish to plunge ourselves into what makes us comfortable when God will destroy all these things!

The Heart of Materialism (4:1-3)

Perhaps one of my favorite images in the book of Amos. Amos calls the women, “cows of Bashan,” and tells them to pay attention. The cows in Bashan were particularly known for being excellent cattle and were fed well. Amos calls them cows of Bashan because these are pampered, self-indulgent ladies.

These women maintain their lifestyle by crushing the poor and speaking demandingly to those around them. In fact, notice the poor treatment of the husbands. **They demand their husbands to wait upon them and provide them luxuries so that they can indulge themselves in satisfying their pleasures.** This problem isn't unique to that society. This same materialistic drive brings out these same attitudes today. We materialistically want for things of non-necessity and often we will even harm others so that we can have those consumer luxuries. **Amos pictures women who do not have a quiet and submissive spirit that God commands (cf. 1 Peter 3:3-5; 1 Timothy 2:9-12), but have seized control and are bossing the husbands around. They are demanding of husbands because they have a taste of luxury and comfort.** It simply is not enough to work to pay the bills and provide a home. Instead, the command is to crush the poor so that we can have our luxuries.

Therefore, God makes an oath against this attitude. Notice in verse 2 that God swears in his holiness. The holy Lord cannot lie and sin can't go unpunished before his holy eyes. Judgment is coming upon this nation because they are so consumed by wealth and comfort. **God declares the comfort these people will experience. A nation will take them away with hooks. Amos is prophesying the means of Assyrian captivity. Each prisoner was connected to a rope by a hook through the nose or lip.** They are going to go out through the breaches, which means that the walls of the city will be destroyed. In fact, the walls to their cities will be so demolished they will be able to walk straight out ahead. They will not have to weave and wind through the rubble. The destruction will be so extensive that they will be taken by hooks straight out of the city. Being cast out to Harmon symbolized being taken off of their land and being sent to a far-away land.

Wealth and comfort are sources of false security. God will take away the things that we put in our trust in. Listen to the New Testament writers make the same point.

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. (1 Timothy 6:17 ESV)

3 Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. 4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. 5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. (James 5:3–5 ESV)

The way we use, own, acquire, and disperse material goods symbolizes and expresses our attitudes about ourselves, other people, and God. **How we handle our wealth and pursue our comforts reflects our depth of heart. Do we really trust God? Is our hope in our things? Is comfort our greatest desire? The use of our goods reveals the answer to these questions and more.**

Sinful Worship (4-5)

The second indictment is the sin in their worship. Amos calls for the people to go to their centers of worship and continue to sin. It is a sarcastic call to worship. Instead of Amos calling to worship with the traditional words, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise” (Psalm 100:4) and “Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord” (Psalm 95:1), Amos begins, “Come and sin.” Bring on your sacrifices! Bring your tithes! While they do these things they are sinning. Their sacrifices do not bring forgiveness but adds to the people’s sinfulness. These people are very religious! But worship that is not God-focused is sin. **Notice that these people keep these religious practices so that they can brag about them to everyone.** We do the same thing where we think we are so holy and pious because we come to worship every time the doors are open. But if boasting then you are not worshipping God but yourself. You are not worshipping for the glory of God but for the glory of self.

Further, **God does not care about external religion.** Notice that the people were bringing their tithe every three days. Moses declared that the tithe of the produce of the land would be paid in the third year (Deuteronomy 14:22,28; 26:12). **These people are over religious!**

Is this a bad thing? No, except that they are not doing this because they love God but love the attention of others. Don't think that you are impressing God with the number of religious acts that you do. We are not impressing God. **God wants worship when it is motivated from a thankful and gracious heart. He does not want checklist religion. He wants grace-driven obedience.**

You Did Not Return To Me (6-13)

God now declares all the things that happened in an effort to try to generate repentance in their hearts. Events were happening to them in an effort to cause them to turn to God rather than continue down their sinful path. Verse 6 says that God gave them cleanness of teeth. This is not good hygiene, but is an idiom to speak of having a lack of food to eat. You have clean teeth because you have nothing to eat. There was famine (vs. 6), drought (vs. 7-8), blight, mildew, and locusts (vs. 9), pestilence (vs. 10), and destruction (vs. 11). God is teaching us something important about these events. We are to consider our ways and dedicate ourselves to God. Luke 13:1-9 teaches that God does not punish individuals presently for their sins. However, this does not mean we are blind about the things that go on around us. **When bad things do happen, we are supposed to use those times turn our hearts to God.** This is a key teaching by James and by Peter in their letters. Trials and suffering are to produce within us God-like characteristics that will draw us to him. Trials are meant to humble us so that we are prepared for repentance. We are to see these things as God's grace to try to stop us plummeting away from God.

However, notice the repeated phrase in this section by Amos. "Yet you did not return to me, declares the Lord" (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11). **They refused to turn their eyes to God.** They refused to see that they needed the Lord in their lives. They were blinded by all of their religious acts and desires for wealth and comfort that they couldn't see that they were lacking. Therefore, God has a response for the people. "Therefore, thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" If we won't prepare to meet God in holiness, then prepare to meet God in judgment. Prepare to meet your glorious God. Prepare to encounter God.

Prepare To Meet God

We do not want to meet God in judgment. Instead, we need to make preparations to meet God on good terms, which can only occur with the blood of Jesus covering our sins.

Bring our hearts to worship.

God does not want our attendance, but our hearts in worship. Our acts of worship are not to interfere with each other but draw our hearts closer to God. We are engaged with God. Our hearts and minds are so engaged with song that we are joining with God. We do not want to interrupt that but facilitate it. The Lord's Supper brings us to the next stage of worship as we orient our minds to the great sacrifice of our Lord. Then we are offered an opportunity to show our thanksgiving as we give back to God a portion of what he has given us. We do not want to interrupt but to engage hearts so that this doesn't just turn into just getting acts of worship out of the way. **When we do not bring our hearts then we are multiplying our sins as we worship.**

Worship is a loving response to God, not a means of impressing God or pleasing ourselves.

The people of Israel are worshiping for what they get out of it. They were getting proud and arrogant. They were even bragging about the frequency of their worship. Frequency of worship comes from a desire to worship, not for selfish fulfillment. Worship is not about us but is about God. **We need to consider our hearts before worship and prepare our hearts for worship.** Proper worship is difficult when we have not given ourselves every opportunity to attain it. Clear your obstacles so that you can meet and engage God.

Don't be cows of Bashan.

Do not allow yourself to be consumed by your comforts and wealth. Do not make decisions based on your comfort and your wealth. Our choices must be based on what is godly and good for the kingdom of God. We spend too much of our time and too much of our effort not on godliness but worldliness. Too many important decisions neglect to calculate the spiritual impact it will have on us, our spouses, our children, our church, and God's kingdom. Think clearly. Think godly.

Death Of A Nation (5:1-3)

Amos begins his next message with startling words. Amos takes up a lament over the house of Israel. Do not forget that at the time Amos is preaching the nation of Israel is experiencing prosperity, wealth, and power. Israel has not had this kind of wealth and power since the reign of Solomon, two hundred years previous to this time. However, Amos is taking up a funeral song. The Hebrew word “lamentation” in the ESV which you read in verse 1 was a song or poem mourning the death of a relative, friend, or national hero (Expositor’s Commentary). The NLT and NET properly translate this as a “funeral song.” The HCSB captures this meaning with the translation of verse 1, “Listen to this message that I am singing for you, a lament, house of Israel.” Israel is at the height of its power and Amos is singing a funeral song for the nation. The song is being sung as if the nation is already extinguished. It is over for the nation. The nation has fallen and will never rise again. Israel is described as a virgin, which implies that she is like a young girl in the prime of life. The once vibrant woman now lies totally helpless on the ground with none to help. Verse 3 depicts the armies of Israel being decimated. Though the nation thinks things is great, in actuality they are enjoying their final few days.

It is important for us to be able to see our true status before God. We cannot be deceived by prosperity and power. Just because things are going well in life does not mean that we are in right standing before God. The nation of Israel is back at its pinnacle of wealth yet Amos is singing a funeral song for the nation. It is during our good times that we must carefully evaluate ourselves. It is when we are experiencing the blessings in life that we must make sure that we are not blinded from seeing our spiritual flaws.

Seek Me And Live (4-15)

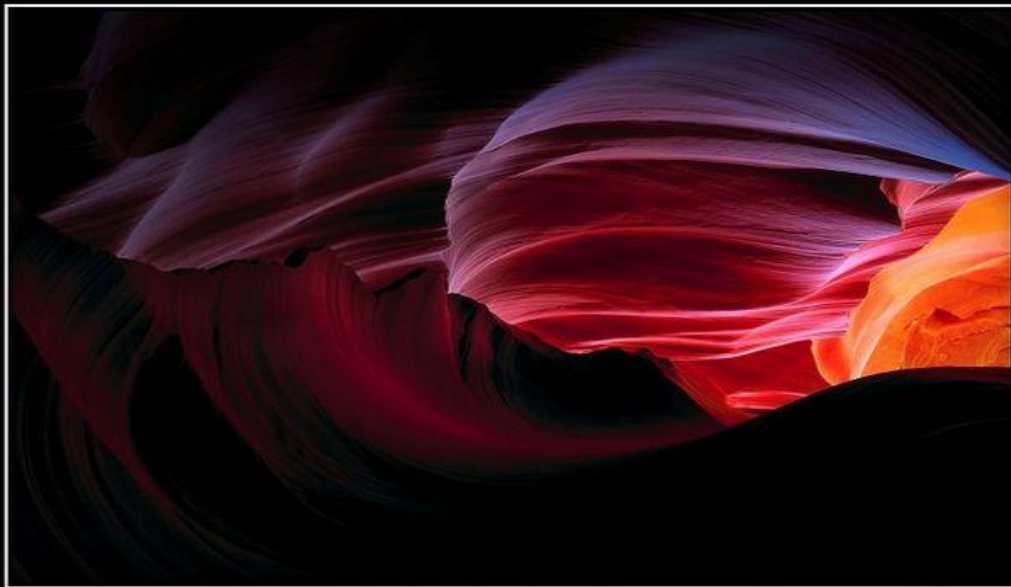
The requirements are God are very simple. Seek the Lord and you will live. But we need to seek the Lord properly. There is a right way to seek the Lord. In this section Amos is going to explain how the people were supposed to seek the Lord to find life, yet failed.

How active is the Lord in nature?

*"I also withheld rain from you, ...
I made it rain on one city,
I withheld rain from another city...
Yet you have not returned to Me,"
Says the Lord.*

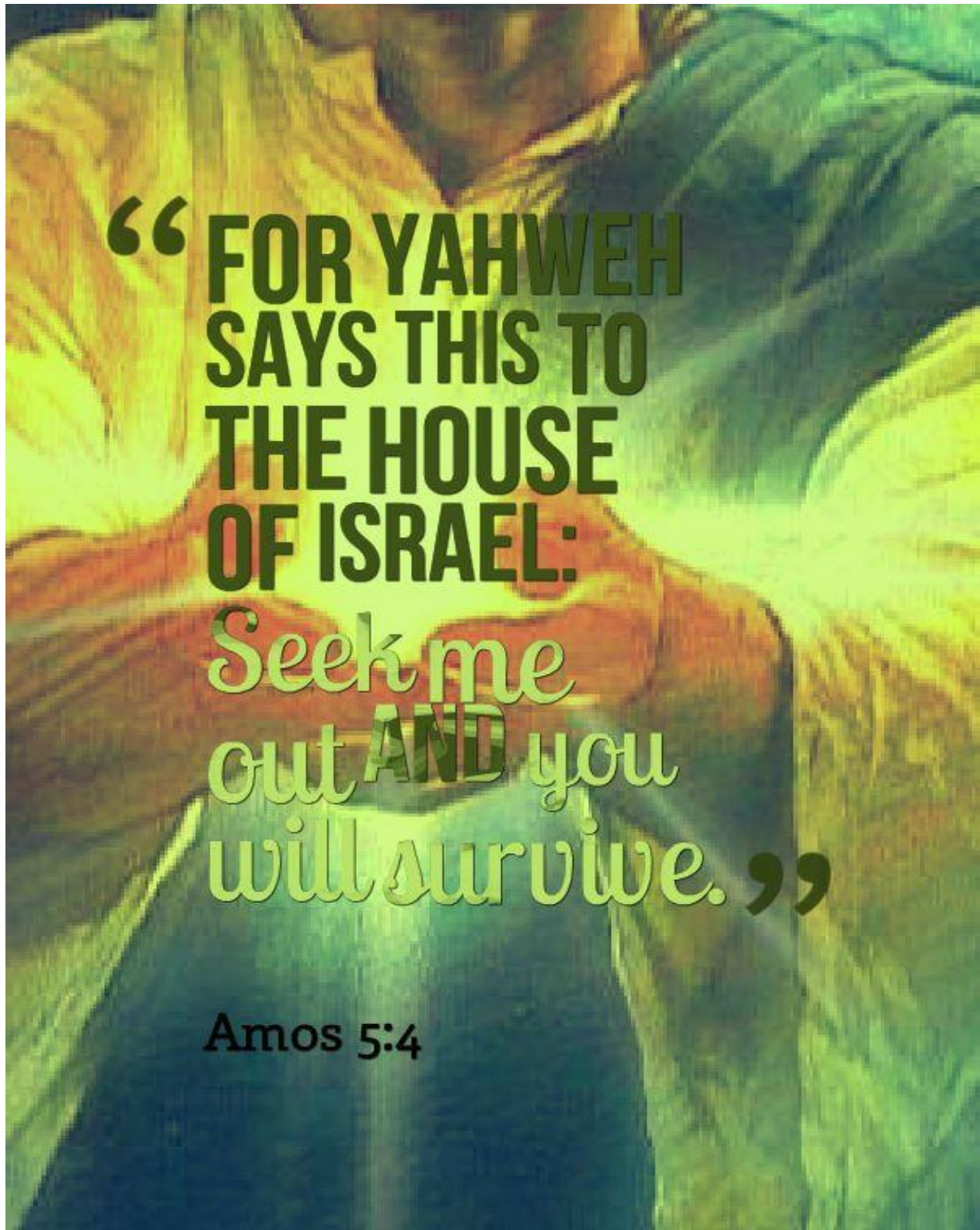
*"I blasted you with blight and mildew
When your gardens increased,
Your vineyards,
Your fig trees,
And your olive trees,
The locust devoured them;
Yet you have not returned to Me,"*

Amos 4: 7 - 9



MOUNTAINS AND WIND

*"He who forms mountains and creates the wind...
The LORD God of hosts is His name."
Amos 4:13*



**“ FOR YAHWEH
SAYS THIS TO
THE HOUSE
OF ISRAEL:
Seek me
out AND you
will survive. ”**

Amos 5:4

Not in false worship (5:5-7).

The Lord declares to seek him and live. Notice that God says not to seek Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba. The people are seeking religion. They are seeking the performance of sacrifices and temple worship. But they are not seeking God. Do we see the difference? There is a difference between seeking the church and seeking the Lord. There is a difference between simply singing songs and the engaging of hearts so the songs draw us closer to the Lord. There is a difference between hearing the words of a sermon and listening to the lesson and seeking to know God through his word. There is a tremendous difference. Seek the Lord. Seek to encounter the Lord in worship. Seek to know the Lord and live! The goal is not worship. One of the worst teachings we have presented is that there are only five acts of worship that must be done. Completing the five acts is not the goal. **These five acts are the tools used to draw us to God. The goal is the seeking of the Lord. Prayer, singing, fellowship, giving, preaching, teaching, and the Lord's Supper are all tools for us to reach that goal of seeking the Lord and drawing closer to him.** Worship is not the goal. *Israel's religious activity amounted to nothing because they were not seeking the Lord.* Amos warns that there is no security in worshipping in those locations. **The people are not truly seeking or worshiping God at these temples. Therefore, God would not accept their offerings.**

God's call to seek him and live does not mean that if you will seek him you will not get killed. Rather, seek the Lord to find true life. Seek the Lord to experience the blessings of God. We must always remember that God's definition of "live" is not just the opposite of death, but is the opposite of a destructive life lacking true joy and bringing one into God's eternal life. As Paul said in 1 Timothy 5:6, some are dead while they yet live. Jesus said that if we lose our life for His sake, we will find life. **However, rather than seeking the Lord, the people are turning justice into poison and bitterness. Wormwood was a bitter tasting plant that had poisonous extract.** Instead, they are turning justice upside down rather than seeking the Lord in righteousness and dealing with others in the righteousness of God.

In humility (5:8-13).

Seek the Lord by seeing the power of God. Seek the Lord in humility because he is the one who is in charge. The power of God is seen in the constellations. Not only did God create the stars, he put them in an order so that you can see designs in them. He has the power to turn the deep darkness into morning. He calls for the waters of the sea and dumps them on the surface of the earth. The Lord is his name. He causes there to be light. He causes the rain to occur. He put the stars in their place. Seek the Lord in humility because he is in charge.

Second, seek the Lord in humility because he knows your actions. In verses 10-11 God is able to recount what the people are doing. God knows our actions. He knows what we are doing on this earth. God says that he sees that they hate being corrected and hate the person who tells them the truth of God's word. He sees they are trampling the poor. He sees that the poor are being taxed. He sees that you are living in luxury and wastefulness. But notice God's subtle statements. But have built these houses but you will not live in them. You have planted vineyards but you are not going to drink their wine. Your time has come and your days are numbered. We seek the Lord in humility because he knows what we are doing.

Third, seek the Lord because God has tallied your sins against you. Notice the chilling declaration of God in verse 11. "I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins." Your sins are mounting against you. I see your actions and your sins are being counted against you. I know what you have done. We seek the Lord in humility because we know our hands are crimson stained with sins. Our sins are great and tallied against us. Only when we see this truth can we have an appreciation for Jesus. Only when we understand the tally of sins marked against us can we appreciate mercy and grace. Humble living comes when we grasp this being our true spiritual condition and grasp what God has done to deal with our violations. There is no room for pride when our sins are ever before our faces. There is no room for self-seeking when mindful of the enormous list of sins that stand against us. There can only be humility when we see the blood of Jesus cleanse us from our sins.

In goodness (5:14-15).

The final way we need to seek the Lord from this text is by seeking what is good, not evil. Seek what is good to find life. **God cannot have a relationship with us when we love evil.** Notice the middle of verse 14. Seek good “so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you.” **Seeking good is the only way we can maintain a relationship with God.** God is only with us when there is a return to godly behavior. We can't claim to be the people of God and then engage in ungodly actions. Seeking the Lord is to hate evil and love good. We cannot love evil and seek God. These two things do not work together. You may think you are seeking God while loving evil, but you are not going to find God. You will not have a relationship with him.



Seeking the Lord through living a holy life cannot be lip service like these people are doing. The people were preaching to seek the Lord and he will be with them. However, they were not doing this. They were claiming this truth but not living it. It is easy to say, “Seek the Lord” but it is another thing to truly seeking the Lord by hating evil.

Conclusion

Seek the Lord in righteousness and humility. Do not seek the Lord in false worship. Religious activity is not seeking the Lord. Truly desire to know God and pursue him in all you do. This pursuit will lead to desiring what's good and hating evil.

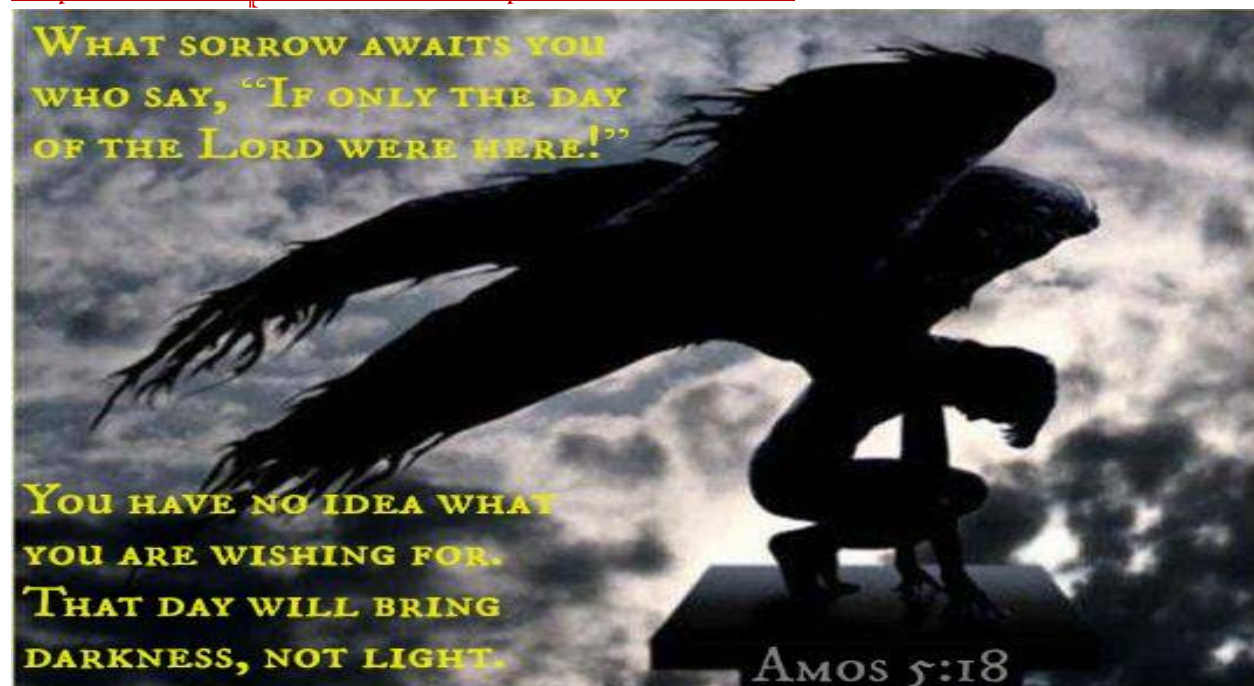
The Day of the Lord. Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you? It will be darkness and not light: As when a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, or then goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him. Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light, even gloom with not any brightness in it? (Amos 5:18–20) **The term “day of the Lord” is repeated twenty-five times in eleven different books throughout the Bible, including the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Malachi, Acts, 1st & 2nd Thessalonians, and 2nd Peter. Israel’s fervor for the Day of the Lord is emphasized in the phrase translated long for, which elsewhere is translated hunger and thirst or greed in the Proverbs. Amos corrects their understanding that it will be a dark time instead of bright. The illustrations here are concepts of disaster and safety instead of those clarifying righteous and wicked.** To the Northern kingdom, they believed it announced a time of vengeance on enemies when the Lord will fight on their behalf. Eagerly anticipating the day, these people didn’t realize judgment would fall on them as well as the wicked nations surrounding them. The truth Amos proclaims is Israel had also become God’s enemy. The old verbiage, “out of the frying pan into the fire” is an apt concept for verse 19. **These verses remind one of the coyote and road runner cartoons where any planned escape instead falls into something far worse. Running from a lion into an angry bear then finding a place of rest get bitten by a snake.**

Rushing, Charles. *God's Redneck Social Justice Warrior: A Bible Study in Amos* (pp. 78-79). Xulon Press, Kindle Edition.

Don't Look Forward To The Day Of The Lord (5:16-20)

There is going to be great amounts of wailing because the Lord is going to pass through their midst. This statement reminds of the exodus when God passed through the nation of Egypt on the day of the Passover. When the Lord passed through Egypt that night it was a triumphant moment for God's people. But now God will pass through the midst of Israel and it will instead be their doom. The destruction will be so great that everyone, even down to the farmers, will be wailing.

The people of Israel were looking forward to the day of the Lord, believing that in that day the Lord would bring them victory and blessings. They considered themselves to be God's people and worthy of God's rescue. Amos gives the warning that the day of the Lord is not light for you, but darkness. Contrary to their expectations, the day of the Lord will bring their doom. Further, there is no escape from this coming day. **Amos likens the day of the Lord to a man who fled from a lion only to run into a bear and die. Or like a person who went into the house thinking he was safe only have a viper bite him.** Notice that Amos again is not offering any hope for the nation. There is no rescue. There is no deliverance. The day of the Lord will not be a day of redemption, but a day of destruction.



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THE ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT OF
THE DAY OF YAHWEH

By G. VON RAD, Heidelberg

The concept of the Day of Yahweh has often been made the subject of thoroughgoing and sometimes far-reaching investigations. Thus it might appear presumptuous to take up the question again, and especially in so short an essay.¹ Unfortunately it cannot be said that a generally satisfying solution has been achieved. Efforts to obtain a better understanding should therefore not be discontinued, since the concept in question is of central significance for the entire message of the prophets. In the case of so controversial a subject even the most modest new viewpoint may be significant. It would appear that research has hitherto adopted too broad a basis for the foundation of its investigation, and included too many ideas and concepts whose connexion with the concept of the Day of Yahweh still remains to be proved. There are only a limited number of passages in which the concept of the Day of Yahweh is found, and of these some have to be at once eliminated as they do not provide the interpreter with any sure exegetical basis.² Yet an investigation must not allow itself to be discouraged by the relative scarcity of material evidence; above all, in view of the fact that the problem is so little clarified, it should not be tempted to go beyond the material evidence which mentions the concept of "Day of Yahweh" *expressis verbis*. Certainly it might easily be assumed

¹ Of more recent literature we mention here S. Mowinckel, "Jahves dag", *Norsk teologisk Tidsskrift*, LXX (1958), 1-56; L. Cerný, *The Day of Yahweh and Some Relevant Problems* (1948).

² If we narrow the circle of passages on the basis of which an interpretation had to be established, it might consist of the following: Isa. ii. 12, xiii. 6, 9, xxxii. 5, xxxiv. 8; Jer. xlvi. 10; Ezek. vii. 19, xiii. 5, xxx. 5; Joel i. 15, ii. 1, 11, iii. 4, iv. 14; Amos v. 18-20; Ob. 15; Zeph. i. 7, 8, 14-18; Zech. xiv. 1.



Ten Percent Remnant. Unrepentant, a thousand will march proudly out, crawling back with a ninety percent loss even though she was warned in stark unmistakable terms. The destruction is so vast that the entire population mourns and wails. Village streets and farms are involved in the misery. Notice that even professional mourners cannot be hired, so the farmers are called from the fields to mourn the dead. The mourning of the dead is so universal that there is not enough personnel to fulfill the normal funeral rites. Chapter five, verse seventeen uses two very unique verbal images. Harvest time was a time of song, feasting, and of rejoicing especially in the vineyards (see Isaiah 16:10). God “passing through” their midsts references the Passover in Egypt where God passed through the Egyptians, killing the first born. This emphasized that there is no special redemption for the Hebrews of Israel.

Plague Post-Apocalypse. Then it shall come to pass, that if ten men remain in one house, they shall die. And when a relative of the dead, with one who will burn the bodies, picks up the bodies to take them out of the house, he will say to one inside the house, “Are there any more with you?” Then someone will say, “None.” And he will say, “Hold your tongue! For we dare not mention the name of the Lord.” For behold, the Lord gives a command: He will break the great house into bits, And the little house into pieces. (Amos 6:9–11 nkjv) Verses nine through eleven proclaim even the survivors don’t survive. Our redneck paints a picture of the languishing plague from an extensive siege of Samaria. The dead are exhaustive and overwhelm both the rich and poor, powerful and powerless. Death is the great equalizer for social justice! - Redneck S.J.W.

FORMALISM AND FALSE RELIGION

Foy Vinson

Definition of Subject

Formalism is defined as “strict or excessive attention to outward forms and customs” or “an over-emphasis on ceremony or outward form, often without practical meaning.” For our purposes, formalism simply refers to a spiritual cardiectomy in which the worship and spiritual life of an individual or people have been dispossessed or deprived of its heart, and all that remains is that which is outward or external. We shall see that this sin or condition applied especially to worship.

False religion is somewhat more general in its meaning and may take various forms. I find it interesting that, in the New Testament, the word *threskeia*, which is translated “religion” in Acts 26:5 and James 1:26, 27, is rendered “worship” in Colossians 2:18. Further, a form of this same word is translated “will-worship” in Colossians 2:23. So “false religion” is tantamount to “false worship.” Thus both parts of my subject bear a direct connection to worship.

What Constitutes Worship

There are four component parts to worship, any worship, and they are (1) an object; (2) a subject; (3) an attitude; and (4) a form. We have rightly affirmed through the years that scriptural or acceptable baptism consists of three things, i.e., a proper subject, a proper action, and a proper purpose or design, and that if any one of these three parts is missing, we no longer have the “one baptism” of the New Testament. So it is with worship. It takes all four of the above-mentioned parts, and each must be the right part to constitute true or acceptable worship, and if any part is missing, such an omission vitiates the whole. Hence, let us examine these essential components of true worship as they applied to Israel then as well as to us now.

The Right Object

Obviously, in worship the principal concern has to do with whom or what is being worshipped. This concern determines the very nature and character of the action of worship. Therefore, in examining what constitutes true worship, we, properly, begin with a consideration of the right object of such worship. God left the people neither in the days of the prophets nor in this present age to wonder or doubt or to have to discover for themselves who the proper object of man’s worship is.

In the very first words to Israel that He thundered down from Sinai, God said:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. (Exod. 20:3–5)

When Jesus during his temptations was asked of Satan to worship him, the Lord cited a statement penned by Moses to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy, which said, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve” (Matt. 4:10). Notice the exclusivity of that statement! The devil had not said, “Quit worshipping God and begin worshipping me.” Satan is content merely to share the homage that properly belongs to the Creator. But Moses taught, and Jesus reinforced, the vital truth that Jehovah is the *only* acceptable object of divine worship.

In the sad and yet ultimately beautiful story unfolded in the book of Hosea, we see that God cannot tolerate polytheism even though He may be included! In that story, Hosea symbolizes Jehovah, and Gomer represents Israel. Gomer’s lovers are a picture of the other gods Israel worshipped. The scenario that is portrayed is not that Gomer (Israel) wholly and consciously forsakes Hosea (God), but that she becomes an adulteress and, hence, unfaithful to Him. Israel is described as having a divided heart (10:2). Boice in *The Minor Prophets* comments as follows:

No doubt, when Hosea’s wife Gomer went off with her lovers, she would have said that she was not being entirely unfaithful to Hosea. She may have said that she did “still love him.” But “love” like that has no place in marriage. By its very nature and by the law of God marriage is an exclusive affair. It is one man and one woman, faithful to each other—“in plenty or in want, in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, until death us do part.” When another comes into the marriage what happens is that love is betrayed and the vacillating partner is seen to be unfaithful. This is what Israel was doing. She was coming to the shrines of Jehovah and was pretending to worship Him. She would have said that Jehovah was her God. But even while saying this, Israel was multiplying false altars and dedicating “sacred stones.” She would have said that these were for God. But God had not commanded them. He did not desire them. Israel was really committing spiritual adultery with the idols of the land. (68)

The psalmist said, “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before *the Lord* our Maker. For *He* is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (Ps. 95:6, 7). In the New Testament, Jesus without argumentation states as a matter of undeniable fact that the true worshipper will worship God (John 4:23, 24). That was true before the cross, and it has been true ever since. One of the severe condemnations of the Gentiles of old was that they “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). When the apostle John was inclined to pay special reverence to the angel who had shown him the wondrous visions of Revelation, he was rebuked with these words, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God” (Rev. 22:9). Therefore, if the object of worship is wrong, the worship is false.

The Right Subject

A second essential ingredient of true worship involves the worshipper himself. Many, seemingly, think that God accepts worship from anyone. The Jews often made this mistake, but such is an inexcusable presumption on the part of man. Solomon, even before the days of the minor prophets, proclaimed, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight” (Prov. 28:9). Later, God, through Isaiah, said:

Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. (Isa. 1:13–15)

Another poignant passage, found in Amos 5:21–24, reads:

I hate, I despise your feast days. And I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream.

What God was saying was: “Get your life in order. Treat your fellowman as you should and respect My will. *Then* you may acceptably worship Me.” Jesus made the same point in the Sermon on the Mount when he cautioned: “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matt. 5:23, 24).

Note, again, that the worship described in the foregoing passages was not rejected or condemned because it was directed to the wrong object. God was the One being worshipped. The problem was not with the One being worshipped, but with the ones doing the worshipping. They were the wrong subjects! God desires the devotion and homage of “the upright,” i.e., those who continue to “hear the law,” (Prov. 28:9), but the incorrigibles who persist in following their own way rather than submitting themselves to the will of the Lord may as well save themselves the effort of offering any act of worship, for He will not have it! Worship directed to our Maker should only proceed from a heart of love, devotion, and humble submission to the divine will. If worship comes from any other source, it is but a sham and a cheap substitute for the real thing.

Interestingly, in the New Testament only a certain class of people are described as the proper subjects of worship—the people of God, those who have been reconciled to God in the one body. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, the apostle asks, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” In the days of the prophets, the earthly temple in Jerusalem was looked upon as the symbol of the divine presence. The Jews went to Jerusalem to worship, for the temple was the place in particular where such worship was proffered. Paul, therefore, is teaching that the church—a relationship, not a geographical location—is the place for divine worship in this age. The children of God in Christ Jesus constitute a divinely authorized worshipping society. The apostle Peter corroborates this conclusion by affirming to Christians that “you also, as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.... But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). In Rev. 1:6, John says that Christ “has made us kings and priests to His God and Father.” Under the first covenant, the Levitical priesthood was ordained to minister in the temple, to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people, to function in their behalf in the matter of divine worship. If you will, they were the only authorized worshippers (in a direct sense) in behalf of the people.

Under the new covenant, this distinction between priest and people has been discarded, and the people of God, all of them, together make up this “holy priesthood” and every Christian individually is a priest in his own right. However, still only priests can scripturally perform the divine service.

Now, having said this, we raise the question: Is this an arbitrary arrangement on the part of Jehovah or is such a system logically related to the kind of worshipper whom, we have seen, God desires? The latter is the case. Christians as priests are individuals who formerly “were servants of sin,” but now they “have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine” (Rom. 6:17). The sometimes radical transformation that occurs in life and character when one becomes a Christian is dramatically delineated in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, where Paul observes:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such *were* some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (italics mine, FV)

These washed, sanctified, and justified people are the only ones who *now* may properly worship their God. Peter said that the ones who should proclaim God’s praises were those who had been “called out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

This principle which distinguishes the qualified worshipper from the unqualified one was continually missed by the Israelites in the days of the prophets. They thought that as long as they followed the external rituals of the law and regularly offered such worship to God, He would accept both them and their worship in spite of their ungodly and grossly immoral lives. The prophets were sent repeatedly to warn them that nothing could be further from the truth, and that they were following the path to certain destruction. Yes, God desires to be praised and adored by His creatures, but only by those who come to Him out of a pure heart and who are characterized by holy living, for, says Jesus, “The Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23).

The Right Attitude

This third characteristic of acceptable worship is closely associated with the one just considered, for, certainly, if one does not possess the right attitude, he is most assuredly not the right subject. Paradoxically, then, one might be characterized generally by a life that is upright and respectful of divine law regardless of whether he be an Israelite under the first covenant or he is a Christian under the second covenant, and yet in the *exercise* of worship itself be lacking in the right attitude. Men always find it easier to do than to be. Like rivers we tend to follow the course of least resistance rather than to expend the necessary mental effort that must always accompany true worship. Consequently, almost without fail, ritual evolves into an end within itself. W. Robertson Smith, as quoted by John Paterson, has written, “What in one generation is a living truth becomes in a later generation a mere dead formula, part of the religion learned by rote” (151).

Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the acts of worship. That which in earlier days had been a *meaningful* exercise of faith becomes with the passage of time and generations a *meaningless* exercise of automation and futility! Also, the continual repetition of a rite, if not closely watched, may lead to a dulling of one's spiritual sensitivity so that, like driving down the interstate highway, we put it on "automatic" without engaging the mind. This routinization of the vital was a constant problem among the Jews, and when Jesus walked among them, the "tithing of anise and cummin" and the cleansing of "the outside of the platter" had come to constitute the essence of their religion. They had learned through experience that an external religion was much easier than one that always involved the heart or soul, i.e., the depths of one's inner being. Like committed singles, they did not want to become "emotionally involved."

Such worship or religion leads to a largely unconscious change in one's attitude toward God in which His sovereign will and one's continual obligation to conform *every* facet of one's life thereto are forgotten. Instead, one comes to regard Him much as the idolater of old did his god, i.e., as one to be appeased, bargained with, yea, manipulated with certain minimal requirements. This is formalism or legalism at its worst, and the concept of total commitment with the whole heart to such practitioners does not even register on their mental Richter scale.

Jesus spoke to this problem in the fourth chapter of John, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23, 24). The phrase "but the hour is coming, and now is" is transitional and denotes the removal of the old system, the worship of which had largely degenerated into empty externalism. Thus, this system was to be replaced by the worship of a spiritually renovated people who would offer the sacrifices of "a broken and a contrite heart" (Ps. 51:17). His statement is somewhat reminiscent of Jeremiah's when he says:

"After those days," says the Lord, "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." (Jer. 31:33, 34)

To worship God "in spirit" is to worship Him *with* the spirit, which is the same as the mind, the soul, or the heart. Since God is Spirit, and man also is a spirit clothed in flesh, the human spirit, in true worship, reaches out and communes with the Spirit of spirits. The outward forms or rites of worship are but the means or instruments by which the human spirit contacts the divine one. So, without the activity and participation of man's spirit, no actual worship ever takes place, for the form does not worship God, but the spirit that employs the form. In referring to two forms of worship, praying and singing, the apostle Paul teaches that both should be done "with the spirit" (1 Cor. 14:15). The same apostle, further, says of singing that it should be offered "with grace in your hearts to the Lord" or with the "making (of) melody in your heart to the Lord" (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).

The most incisive passage in the New Testament on the necessity of heart-involvement in worship is 1 Corinthians 11:27–30, which reads:

Therefore, whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

Two things are learned from this passage in addition to the fact that God finds heartless worship repugnant. First, the worshipper who lacks the right attitude actually does himself great harm in the very act of worship. Paul says in this instance that he "eats and drinks judgment (condemnation, FV) to himself." No wonder that he declares at the outset of this discussion that, in assembling, they were coming "together not for better but for the worse" (v. 17). God had long ago declared through Isaiah and Amos that he "hated," "despised," and looked upon as an "abomination" ritual without reverence or form without fervor. This kind of profanation or sacrilege, undoubtedly, hastened the day of God's judgment upon Israel. The Christian should not think that he will fare any better when he is guilty of the same conduct.

Second, the effect that mere formalism in worship has upon the worshipper's spiritual life and vitality is to kill them off. The worship of God was designed not only for the glory of God but also for the good of man. Every act of worship which Jehovah has ordained, whether in the days of the prophets or in this present dispensation, has in mind the strengthening and upbuilding of man before his God. When, however, man ravages these acts by robbing them of his heart, he obliterates any, and every, benefit which otherwise would have accrued to his soul. This is precisely what had happened at Corinth. No more meaningful form of devotion has ever been devised for mortal man than that institution ordained by the Lord on the night of his betrayal, a memorial feast for those who have been redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus. Immeasurable power for the Christian may be derived therefrom by a humble, grateful, and reverent participation therein. But the carnal Corinthians had forfeited this power by the desecration of the Lord's Supper, and "for this reason many are weak and sick ... and many sleep." And let us not think that just because we don't go to the extreme the Corinthians did of turning the supper into a drunken feast, we don't have to be concerned with eating and drinking unworthily. Paul's indictment of them concerned their failure to "discern the Lord's body," and we may be guilty of this even when surrounded by quietness and apparent reverence and with a very serious look upon our countenance. Without the right attitude our worship is for naught!

The Right Form

The fourth and final constituent of true worship is the right form. Jesus stated that God was to be worshipped "in spirit *and* truth." Generally we have understood the Lord to be setting forth two requirements here: one, the right attitude; and the other, the right form. Some, however, have contended that only one requirement is actually mentioned in the passage, and that He is merely saying that we should worship God in spirit and in fact or genuinely. 1 John 3:8 is adduced as an example of this particular meaning of the expression "in truth" where John exhorts, "Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." We are told that if Jesus had meant to say in John 4 that we are to worship God upon the basis of truth or according to truth, He would have used the preposition "epi," which means "on the basis of," instead of the preposition "en."

Now, this all may be true, but something else is also undeniably true, and that is that acceptable worship must be offered in the form revealed in the word of God. The forms or outward expressions of true worship have always been determined by God, never by man. Worship does involve ritual or the performance of a rite. That is what is meant by an “act” of worship. But God always tells man what “act” to perform in the worship of Him. Paul said, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). In failing or refusing to do *what* God requires in worship, men repudiate the essence of worship, namely, showing honor and respect to God! How can a man show true reverence for God if in the very act he employs for worship, he goes beyond or outside the will of God?

In worship, as in other areas, man tends to resist any limitations or restrictions imposed upon him by God. Some years ago, Pat Boone recorded a song that included the words, “Me and Jesus have our own thing going.” This was the thrust of the entire song, and it was an effort to justify individual freedom of expression and nonconformity in religious matters. Well, if one has in mind human tradition and the tenets of man, that is one thing, but far too many have this feeling toward God’s expressed will.

Cain “had his own thing going” when he changed the form of worship from the sacrifice of an animal to the offering of vegetables! Nadab and Abihu “had their own thing going” when they “offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them” (Lev. 10:1) and thereby altered the form or outward expression of worship divinely authorized! King Saul “had his own thing going” as well as they when he changed the right form of worship by presuming to act in the capacity of a priest in offering a burnt offering (1 Sam. 13). Saul sought to justify his action in the absence of Samuel by saying, “I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering” (v. 12). And what were the results of such nonconformity and freedom of expression? Cain’s offering was rejected; Nadab and Abihu were devoured by a fire that “went out from the Lord; and Saul lost his throne! There seems to be a lesson here somewhere.

Even the idolatry of the northern kingdom condemned by Hosea began with the alteration of form. Boice in his comments on Hosea 8:4–6 makes the following observations:

God condemns the worship of the “calf-idol” at the cult centers of the northern kingdom as idolatry, but we miss the point if we think of this calf-worship as an outright rejection of Jehovah for idols. The sin was far more subtle. What had happened was quite similar to what had happened in the days of Moses and Aaron when the people clamored for a god like the gods of Egypt, and Aaron made them a little calf out of the gold they had brought from Egypt. Aaron did not think of this as an idol—that is the point. He thought of the calf as a representation of the strength of Jehovah and even proclaimed the dedication feast (which turned into an orgy) as a “festival to the Lord” (Exod. 32:5). But the people missed the distinction, identified the calf with the fertility bull-gods of Egypt, and behaved accordingly.

Now it was all happening again. In theory the calves of the cult centers were not gods. They were actually calf-pedestals on which the true and invisible God was supposed to stand. But because the people could not see the invisible God, while they could see the calf, it inevitably happened that the true God was debased and the “idol” worshipped. (57)

He goes on and cites an authority to the effect that, among the idolatrous nations of that day, the gods were nearly always represented as standing on the back of an animal or as seated on a throne borne by animals, but never as themselves in animal form.

Thus, in rejecting the forms of true worship ordained by God or in adding to them, we engage in a kind of idolatry in that we have elevated our will and desires above His and such corruption of the right form may well lead even to further and more overt forms of idolatry. Remember that you do not have to say, “I am worshipping an idol,” to be worshipping an idol! You might say you are worshipping God and even believe that to be so while in fact you are worshipping an idol.

Formalism and false religion were indeed problems that were faced and dealt with by those Old Testament troubleshooters of God. And though we live in terms of time so far removed from them, we still owe a great debt of gratitude to these godly men who at great cost to themselves boldly enunciated principles that are as much needed now as they were then. Their stern rebukes and sobering warnings are as timely today as when first uttered nearly three millenniums ago. As long as men fail to respect the sovereign will of God concerning the proper object, subject, attitude, and form of worship, these problems will work their spiritual havoc and ruin. May we as God’s people today be alert to these dangers—all of them—and recommit ourselves to always, and only, being “true worshippers” of our great God.

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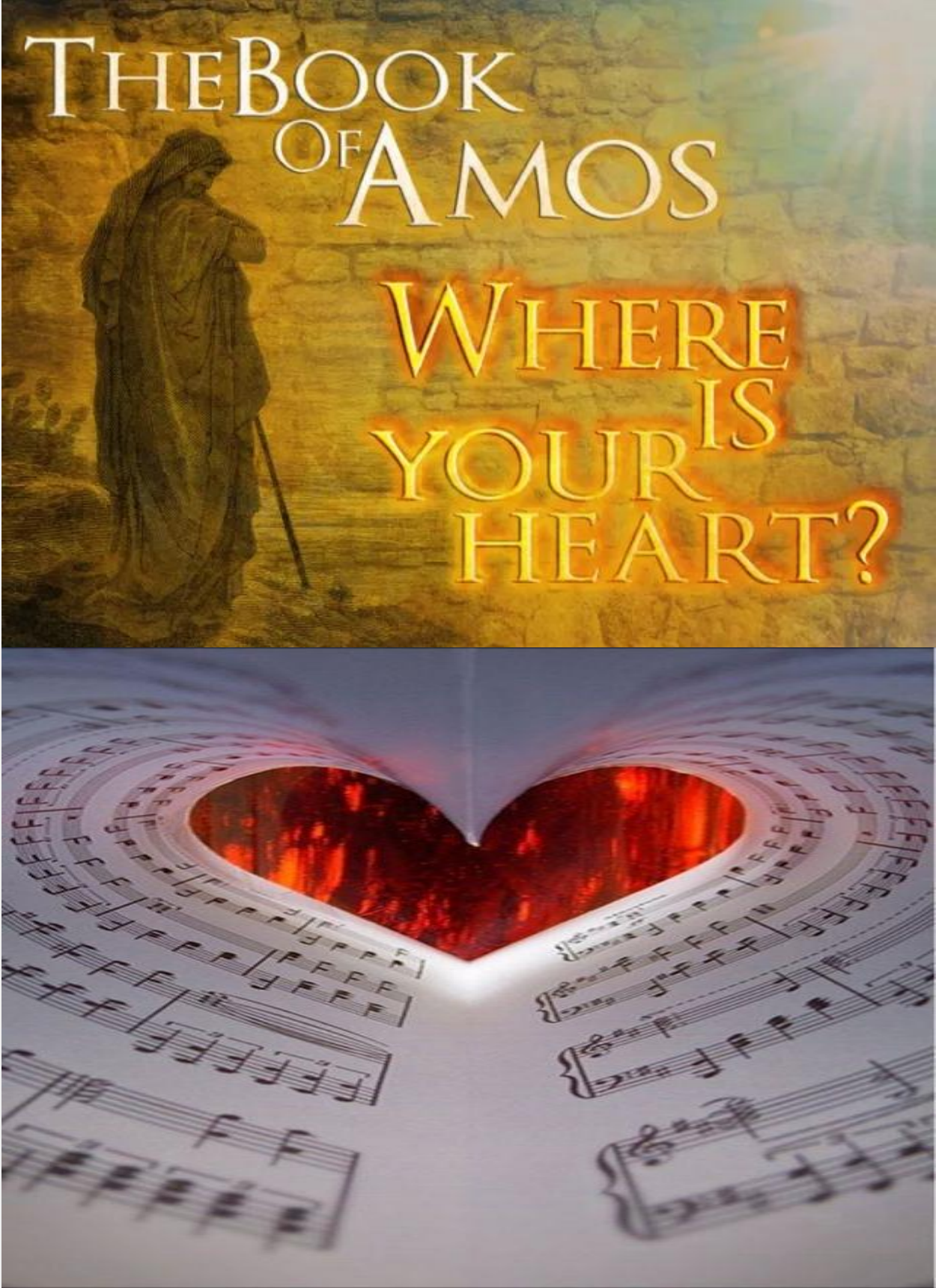
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God Hates Your Worship (5:21-27)

In verses 21-27 Amos declares that God hates Israel's worship. Once again God turns his attention to the worship of Israel. What amazing words! "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies." Listen to the utter rejection and disdain God has for their worship: "I hate" (5:21), "I despise" (5:21), "I take no delight" (5:21), "I will not accept" (5:22), "I will not look upon" (5:22), "take away from me" (5:23), and "I will not listen" (5:23). God says he hates their worship assemblies, their sacrifices, their songs, and their music. He hates all of it. He will not accept it. He will not listen to it. He won't look upon it. He wants it all taken from his sight. Can you imagine if we heard those words today? What if God said to us, "I hate your worship assemblies, your Bible studies, your Supper memorial, your singing, and your prayers. I will not accept any of it. I do not want to hear it. Take it all away from me!"



The question is why? Why does God hate these things? What was happening that caused this anger from the Lord? Verse 25 contains the answer as God asks a rhetorical question: "Did you bring to me your sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?" The point of the question is that God did not merely want their worthless sacrifices in the wilderness. God demanded their heart that would lead them to obedience. This is what God was calling for in the wilderness. God wanted them to love the Lord, the first and the greatest of all the commandments. God wanted them to seek the Lord and not live in rebellion. Yet the people of Israel are doing just that. Verse 26 reveals that the hearts of the people of Israel are filled with idolatry. Take your idols all the way into exile!



Keil and Delitzsch Biblical O.T. Commentary

This threatening judgment will not be averted by Israelites, even by their feasts and sacrifices ([Amos 5:21](#), [Amos 5:22](#)). The Lord has no pleasure in the feasts which they celebrate. Their outward, heartless worship, does not make them into the people of God, who can count upon His grace. [Amos 5:21](#). "I hate, I despise your feasts, and **do not like to smell your holy days.** [Amos 5:22](#). For if ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, I have no pleasure therein; and the thank-offering of your fatted calves I don't regard. [Amos 5:23](#). **Put away from me the noise of thy songs;** and I do not like to hear the playing of thy harps. In [Amos 5:23](#) there the two kinds of sacrifice, 'ōlah and minchâh, are divided between the protasis and apodosis, which gives rise to a certain incongruity. The sentences, if written fully out would read: When ye offer me burnt and meat-offerings, I have no pleasure in your burnt-offerings and meat-offerings. To these two kinds the shelem, the health-offering or peace-offering, is added as a third class in [Amos 5:22](#). מְרִיאִים, fattened things, generally mentioned along with bâqâr as one particular species, for fattened calves (see [Isaiah 1:11](#)). In הִסֵּר ([Amos 5:23](#)) Israel is addressed as a whole. הַמִּוֶּן שְׂרִיד, noise of thy songs, answers to the strong expression הִסֵּר. **The singing of their psalms is nothing more to God than a wearisome noise, which is to be brought to an end.** Singing and playing upon harps formed part of the temple worship (vid., [1 Chronicles 16:40](#); [1 Chronicles 23:5](#), and [1 Chronicles 23:25](#)). Isaiah in ([Isaiah 1:11](#)) also refuses both the **heartless sacrifice and worship of the people, who have fallen away from God in their hearts.**

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs,.... The ten tribes, very probably, imitated the, temple music at Jerusalem, both vocal and instrumental, and had their songs and hymns of praise, which they sung to certain tunes; but the music of these is called a noise, being very disagreeable to the Lord, as coming from such carnal and wicked persons; and therefore he desires it might cease, be took away, and he be no more troubled with it: for I will not hear the melody of thy viols: which may be put for all instruments of music used by them, as violins, harps, psalteries, the sound of which, how melodious soever, the, Lord would turn a deaf ear unto, and not regard.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Take thou away from Me - Literally, "from upon Me," that is, from being a burden to Me, a weight on Me. So God says by Isaiah, "your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth; they are a burden upon Me; I am weary to bear them" [Isaiah 1:14](#). **Their "songs" and hymns were to God but confused, tumultuous, "noise," since they had not harmony of love.**

Augustine in [Psalm 119](#) (n. 9. T. v. p. 470. Old Testament) L.: **"How many are loud in voice, dumb in heart! How many lips are silent, but their love is loud! For the ears of God are to the heart of man. As the ears of the body are to the mouth of man, so the heart of man is to the ears of God. Many are heard with closed lips, and many who cry aloud are not heard." Dionysius: "God says, 'I will not hear,' as He says, 'praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner' (Ecclesiasticus 15:9), and, 'to the ungodly saith God, what hast thou to do, to declare My statutes?' [Psalm 50:16](#), and, 'he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination' [Proverbs 28:9](#).**

THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMAND



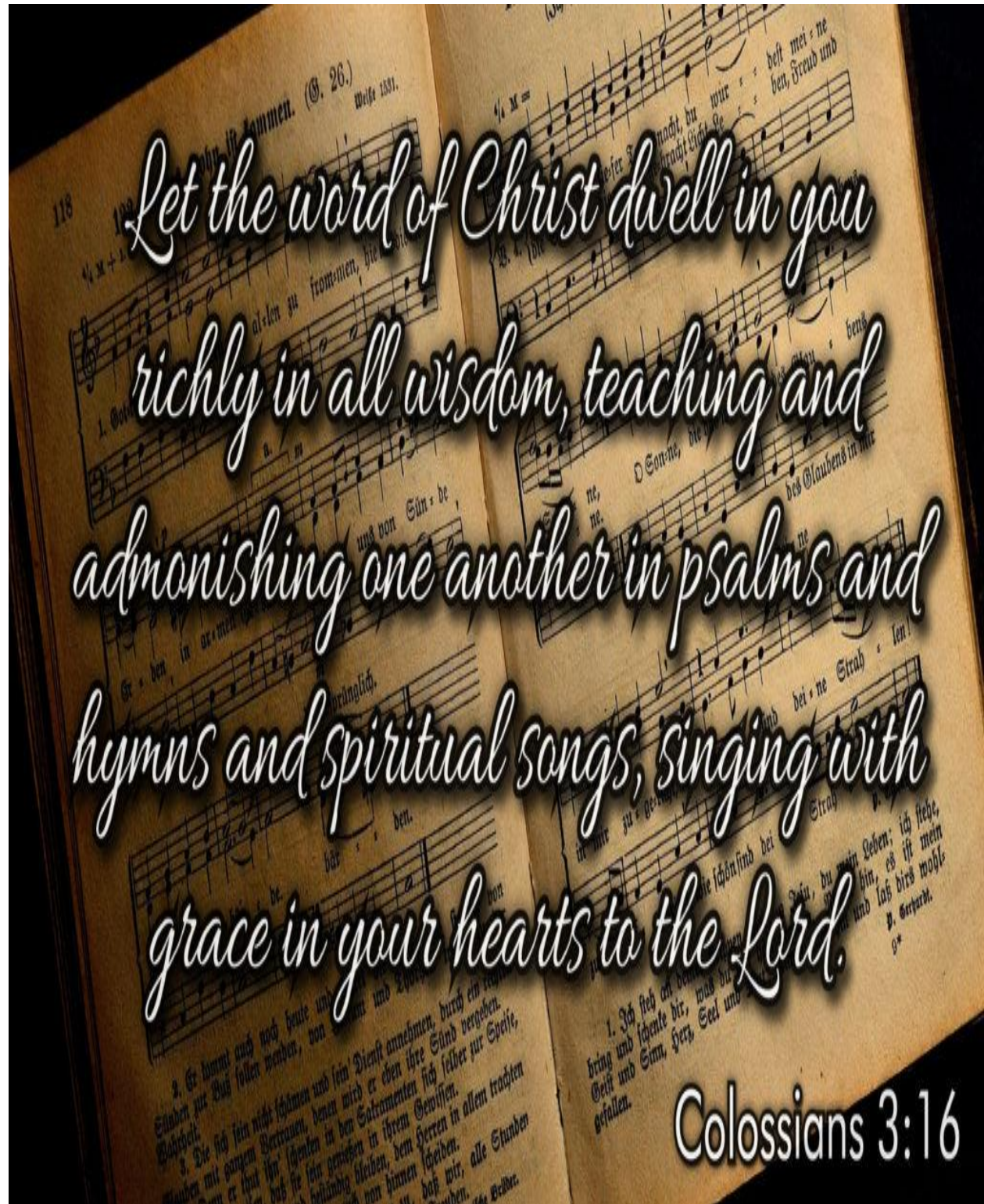
**SPEAKING
TO YOURSELVES
IN PSALMS AND
HYMNS AND
SPIRITUAL SONGS,
SINGING AND
MAKING MELODY
IN YOUR HEART
TO THE LORD;**

EPHESIANS 5:19

Psallo. In Ephesians 5 19 we have "psallontes en te kardia" -- "making melody with the heart" or "praising with the heart." The instrumental case "te kardia," preceded by the preposition "en," plainly excludes any other instrument because the instrument, the heart, is here named.

The Old Testament passage in the Septuagint says in Psa. 71:22, "psallo soi en kithara." A translation of this would be, "I will praise thee with the harp." Here the material instrument's named. In the New Testament the spiritual instrument is named. Compare these two sentences. The Old Testament says "psallo en kithara" and the New Testament says "psallo en kardia." I believe the instrument is given in the New Testament in "te kardia" (with the heart), "to pneumati" (with the spirit), and "to noi" (with the mind). So, we have the idea of *psallo* lifted into the spiritual plane of the New Testament. Since the instruments in the New Testament (heart, spirit, mind) are given in preceding passages -- we must exclude all material instruments by including the spiritual named instruments, heart, spirit and mind.

In comparing the "en te kardia" (with heart) and "en kithara" (with harp), this Greek expression "en kithara" in the Hebrew text has the idea of the instrumental preposition "be" where the Greek uses the preposition "en." The idea expressed in the word "psallo" when it stands alone without any modifying word, is "to praise or "to sing praises." When the instrument is named we would say, "I praise with the (instrument)." The material instrument may be named in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament the spiritual instrument may be named. — Foy Wallace



Colossians 3:16

Singing



g grace! How sweet the sound - that sav

If we worship God then we must walk in his ways. Worship is supposed to change our lives, bringing repentance and renewal into our hearts. God hates our worship when our hearts are not engaged on him but have been stolen by the idols of this world. When our passions are for worldly things rather than for his glory and his Son, Jesus, then God does not receive our worship. We must develop the heart that desires to worship, not merely worship because we think such an act pleases God. Sunday pew sitting is not acceptable! God wants lives of worship that are daily living sacrifices. Otherwise, our assemblies are hated by our Lord.

3-6 MESSAGE TO ISRAEL & ITS LEADERS

3:2 "I CHOSE YOU, ISRAEL, FROM AMONG ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH, AND THIS IS WHY I WILL PUNISH YOU FOR ALL YOUR SIN."

ALLUSION TO GENESIS 12 ISRAEL SHOULD BE A BLESSING TO ALL NATIONS.

EXPOSURE OF RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

IT'S ALL A SHAM!

LET JUSTICE FLOW LIKE A RIVER, AND RIGHTeousNESS LIKE AN UNFAILING STREAM... (5:24)

HEBREW: MISHPAT

HEBREW: TSEDAGAH
RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS
EQUITY DESPITE SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

GREAT CALLING + GREAT RESPONSIBILITY = GREAT CONSEQUENCES



Woe To Complacency (6:1-7)

The second woe is against the complacency and affluence of the people. The people think they do not need God for anything. They have everything they could ever want. They believe they are secure and satisfied because of their wealth. They take their ease. They live for their comforts. The condemnation is not the wealth itself, because God had made them prosperous. The condemnation is that the people found their security and joy in their wealth. The people felt secure because of the wealth they possessed. They thought judgment day and disaster would not come because they had their wealth (6:3).

We easily do the same thing as these people in the days of Amos. One way we do this is by making comparisons in wealth. We want to make sure that we are equal to or greater than our neighbors. If they get a new car, then we need to get a new car because we think we deserve it more than they. We compare the new toys they buy versus ours. We compare the size of our homes, the niceness of our yards, or some other standard by which we find our value. Rather than finding our value in God and his grace, we care about what we have. We find our security in accumulating possessions, keeping things nice and as new as possible, and always keeping up with the neighbors. What we fail to see is that our wealth is causing us to be complacent toward God. We lose our passion and our zeal for him and his word because we are caught up in the things we have. We are entangled in having the comforts and ease that this world has to offer. Rather than being uncomfortable to the glory of the Lord, we want to be comfortable for the glory of ourselves. Instead of seeking and saving the lost, we will sit and watch the television show, *Lost*. Our efforts turn to our comforts and we lose our purpose and mission given to us by God to passionately pursue his kingdom. Verse 6 shows that this was the trouble with Israel. They are enjoying drinking wine from the bowl rather than being grieved over the spiritual condition of Israel. Spiritual things no longer drive our hearts nor direct our actions. Comfort and wealth become the drive and the decision-maker. We think we have all we need without God.

Woe To Pride (6:8-14)

This complacency and enjoyment of wealth leads to pride. In this section of Amos God declares that he will take their pride away. God decrees, "I will deliver up this city and all that is in it." If ten are in the house, they shall die. Fear will strike the nation so severely that they will be afraid to even utter the name of the Lord lest the wrath of God come against him. How proud do you think you can be when you stand before the Almighty? Job's pride was brought low when the Lord visited him in the whirlwind. We too easily are trusting in ourselves on the basis of our wealth, our work, and wisdom. We need to seriously consider if we are trusting our lives to God or if we are trusting in ourselves. Can we honestly say that we have put our lives in the hand of God or are we still running our lives? God tells Israel that they think they are something when they are actually nothing.

They were rejoicing because they had conquered Lo-debar. God makes fun of them because Lo-debar literally means "nothing." God makes a play on words telling the people that they think they are something when they conquered nothing. How can we possibly think that we have power before God? How can we think that we have any room for pride or selfish ambition before God? Who do we think we are? Trust in God, not in yourself. To think that we do not need God's direction and do not need to obey his words is the highest point of selfish pride. We aren't that wise or that smart. God possesses wisdom and we are arrogant to think that we know better how to live in this world than what he has revealed to us.

Conclusion

God has promised another "day of the Lord" is coming. **"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." (2 Peter 3:10 ESV)** We need to carefully consider if we are truly ready for the coming of the Lord thinking that the day of the Lord is something to look forward to when it may be not. We must prepare our hearts!

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Vision #1 — Locusts (7:1-3)

The first vision is an image of utter devastation. The timing of this plague is critical. The latter growth was the final harvest until the next season. The king has already taken his portion (likely as taxes) and so the harvest that is left is now reserved for the people. Yet, the judgment is a mass of locusts coming and wiping out the food for the people. Amos recognizes that this judgment is severe and that no one would survive. **The people will die from starvation if the final harvest is destroyed by the locusts.** The use of locusts was one of God's tools of judgment as a warning for the nation of Israel if they broke the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:42). We have observed in our study of this prophecy the fiery nature of Amos' words against the nation of Israel. But even at seeing this vision of judgment, Amos prays to God for him to not do this. Notice Amos' words, "O Lord, God, please forgive!" Amos is calling for an act of pure grace. The people haven't repented. **There is no basis upon which Amos can make a plea to God because the people have not changed at all (which is the irony of this chapter as we will see as we progress through this chapter). Amos simply cries out, "Forgive," depending completely on God. There is no reason for God to act. But notice what God does: "The Lord relented concerning this. 'It shall not be,' said the Lord."**

Vision #2 — Fire (4-6)

The second vision is similar to the first vision. The vision is of an all-encompassing, all-consuming fire upon the nation, devouring sea and land. Once again Amos surprisingly intercedes on behalf of the people of Israel, asking the Lord to relent. Once again there is no basis for God to relent of this judgment. There has been no change in the hearts of the people. Yet Amos begs for grace and the Lord relents of this judgment.

We must never underestimate the value of prayer and intercessions of the righteous. As much as Amos is angry with these people for their sins, there is compassion for the souls of these people. His compassion for these people has led him to proclaim God's word to them and his compassion has led him to intercede on their behalf. Such intercession requires a love for the souls of the people. **We must learn the value of intercession on behalf of others.** We should see the power of personal prayers in the hands of our God. God is influenced by our prayers. It is a truth that is difficult to see and perhaps even more difficult to accept. But the repeated message of the scriptures is that we have the ability to speak and influence the Almighty God. **We can even ask for God to act graciously in the lives of others without basis or cause.** What an amazing and compassionate God we serve! Israel was worthy of these judgments because of their sins. Yet, Amos begs mercy and grace, and the Lord, without cause, relents. **God is long-suffering and surprisingly patient. We must appreciate this in how we pray and treat others. God has been gracious and compassionate toward our own sinfulness. On that basis we must cry out to God to act similarly toward others because we love God's creation and want their souls saved from the coming judgment.**

Vision #3 — Plumb Line (7-9)

The third vision is of a plumb line. A plumb line is a standard by which a wall's vertical trueness is tested. It determines if the wall is straight and in line, or if it is leaning. **The plumb line is being set in Israel to determine its moral straightness.** God exposes the true state of his people's character and faithfulness to his covenant with the plumb line. **It is a call to the people to measure up. God is going to test them for their moral uprightness.** The plumb line is placed and God will not overlook or pass by the sins of the people any longer. God has overlooked the sins of Israel for hundreds of years. But this is no longer the case. It is time for judgment. **The people have not measured up. Therefore, the judgment is described in verse 9.** The places of their pagan sacrifices and sanctuaries will be destroyed. Further, the dynasty of Jeroboam will be brought to an end.

Notice that this is a merciful change from the previous two visions. In the first two visions, all the people were going to die. Now the picture is of being taken into exile and the death of the royal family and leadership (7:11). Even in judgment, God is being compassionate toward the people.



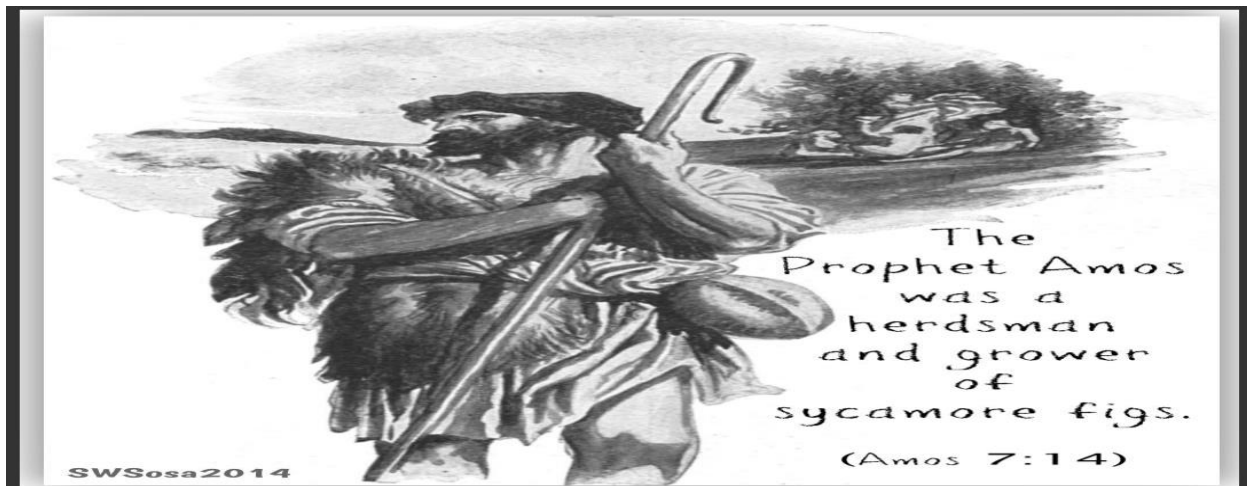
Accusing Amos (10-17)

In the middle of Amos revealing the visions that the Lord gave him, we have an interruption. You will notice that chapter 8 continues the rest of the visions Amos saw from the Lord. But verse 10 records an interruption to Amos' preaching. Amaziah is a priest at Bethel. Recall Bethel is one of the locations where the first king of Israel, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, erect golden calves and sanctuaries for worship. This was an abomination to God.

Amaziah is priest at this false temple and sent a message to King Jeroboam (please note that this is a later Jeroboam, often called Jeroboam II, to differentiate him from Jeroboam the son of Nebat). The summary of Amos' message is this: "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land." Amaziah can't handle listening to Amos' message against sin and the coming judgment for sins. Amos is preaching a counter-cultural message. We make an enormous mistake and commit a grave sin whenever we examine God's law through the lens of culture.

Please notice how Amaziah frames the message of Amos to the king. “For thus Amos has said” (7:11). Amos was saying, “The Lord said to me.” But Amaziah does not see this as a message from God, but the words of a man. How many times people will do this with God’s word! You will not believe how many times I will read a passage of scripture and the person I am studying with will say, “Are you trying to say...?” Or “So what you are saying is...” I always answer the same: “I am not saying anything. This is what God said.” This isn’t my interpretation. This is not my words. This is the word of the Lord. This is what God’s word said. All I did was read it and make some passing comments of interest about what God said.

Finally, notice what Amaziah says to Amos in verse 12. Amaziah calls Amos a prophet for hire. Basically, I know you have a job to do and that is why you are preaching, but go do your preaching somewhere else. Stop preaching against Bethel. Amos responds that he is not a prophet for hire. He was a herdsman and a grower of figs. **Amos was not doing his job for the money.** He was prophesying because he received the word of the Lord. We need preachers, teachers, elders, and leaders among God’s people who don’t work for the money, but because work needs to be done. We shouldn’t have to bribe people to do the Lord’s work and people should not be working because of the money. Preacher, do not preach because of the pay check. Don’t preach because you do not know what else to do with yourself. Preach because you are compelled and you feel like you must proclaim God’s word and not for any other reason.



The irony of this chapter is staggering. Amos has been the one who has interceding on behalf of these people to not be fully destroyed by locusts or by fire. The thanks that Amos receives is to be called a prophet for hire and told to go home. Do not tell a person who is declaring God's word to not speak it. Everyone must proclaim God's word and we cannot listen to those who tell us not to. We cannot listen to people who want a softer, more culturally acceptable, and more politically correct message. God's word still is God's word and we must declare God's word, even in the face of both rejection and opposition. This is the consistent example of the scriptures from the prophets to the apostles. People will reject, but we must obey God rather than humans by continuing to proclaim God's truths.

Notice the retribution God brings on those who reject and torment those who are proclaimers of God's word. Amos responds to Amaziah that he will die in an unclean land, his land would be divided up and given away, his children would be killed by the sword, his wife would turn to prostitution, and Israel will surely go into exile. We cannot be shaken when people tell us to adjust our message in order to match the culture. We cannot give up when people do not want to listen to God's word. We must keep teaching, knowing that God will pass his judgment on those who try to interfere with the work.

Conclusion

Notice how compassion and the proclamation of truth fit together in this chapter. We are compassionately praying to God on the behalf of others, meanwhile teaching them the way of the Lord. We must proclaim the truth of God's word, unchanged, unfiltered, and undiluted. This is a compassionate reaction to the world, and then pray for them to receive and accept the good news that God has extended to the world.

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The Vision of Summer Fruit (8:1-3)

The fourth vision is a basket of summer fruit. This vision contains a play on words. The Hebrew word for “summer fruit” sounds very similar to the word for “end.” The play on words brings about the idea that the fruit is ripe for harvest, that is, **Israel is ripe for God’s judgment.** As God declared in Amos 7:8, God restates that he will not spare the nation from judgment any longer. The nation is worthy of judgment and God cannot overlook their sins any more. The songs in their idolatrous temples will become the sound of wailing. Here is what Amos sees: dead bodies, thrown everywhere, and total silence. It is a gruesome scene of judgment because people have rejected God.

Dark Hearts (8:4-6)

God does not judge without cause. God is not acting out of emotional anger but out of justice because the sins of the nation have become so great. Verses 4-6 describe the condition of the people’s hearts. Listen to what they are doing. They have become so worldly and materially minded that they do not want to keep the feast and holy days to the Lord. In verse 5 they are asking when the new moon will be over so they can get back to selling grain. **They want to get back to regular schedules. They want the Sabbath to hurry up and end so that they can get back to making money.** In the process they are acting unjust, they are destroying the poor and oppressing the needy as they strive to acquire more for themselves. **“When will worship be over? We want to get back to our schedules.”** Can you see these people as being **clock watchers**, hoping for the Sabbath to end so they can get back to their idol - money? There is no joy in worship. There is just the desire to get the worship over. Hurry up and get through it because we have things to do. There is supposed to be a life change that comes from worship because we have entered the presence of God. Too often we come with a “leave me alone and let me get back to my life.”

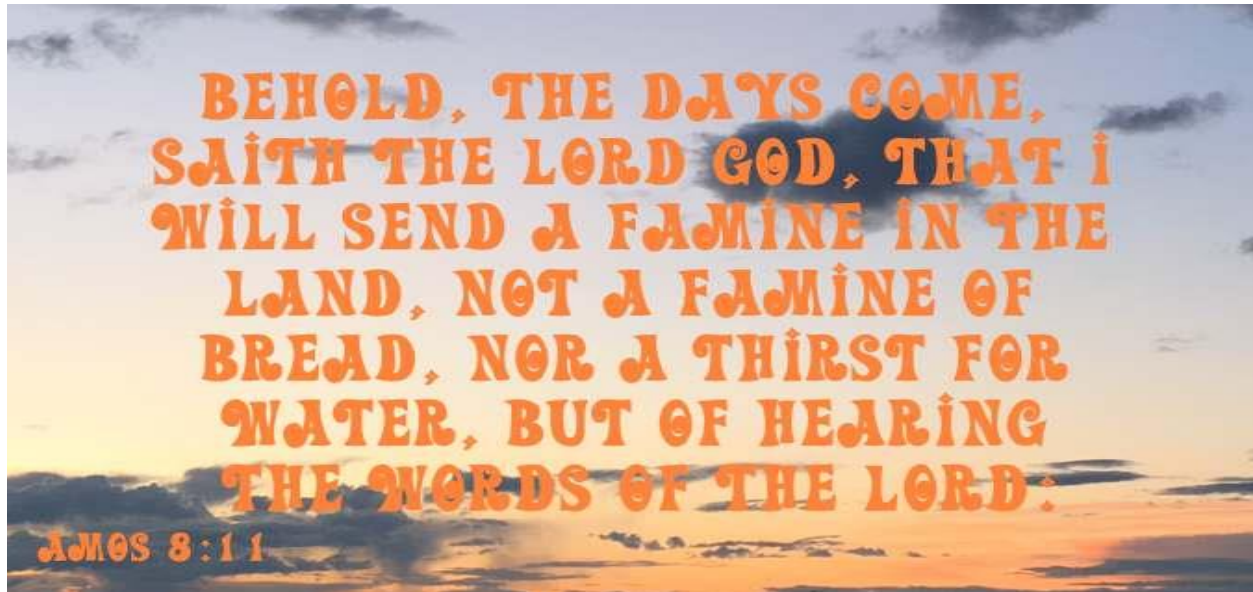
Silence From God (8:7-14)

These are chilly words of judgment: "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds." Judgment is coming for every sinful act they have committed. These people will not get away with abusing the poor and cheating the oppressed. These people will not get away with swindling others. They will not avoid judgment for desiring their own schedules and wealth over worshiping the Lord.

Verse 9 describes the nation falling while at its peak. We have noted through our study of Amos that the northern nation called Israel is at its peak in power and wealth. It is like the sun at noon in terms of the greatness of the nation. But in its greatness of wealth and power God is going to darken the earth. It is the end of the nation, even though it seems to be in its pinnacle. Bitter mourning and wailing is coming.

Further, the Lord is going to send a famine, but it is the most fearful famine you can experience. It is a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. You have rejected the word of the Lord now, so that when you see the word of the Lord you will not find one. You will not have the Lord to rely upon anymore because you have relied on your wealth and despised the word of the Lord. God will be silent toward these people. They will look for a prophet but they will not find it (8:12). Even the strong or the young will not have the word of God (8:13-14). **Now they will reap the harvest of the whirlwind** for their rejection of God's word.

How often this happens to us! How often we live how we want to live and reject the counsel and the commands of the Lord. Then we experience suffering, depression, desperation, and misery from our foolish decisions. Because we have rejected the counsel of the Lord we experience terrible consequences in our lives, our families, and in our relationships. Then we start running to God's word looking for some magic words to fix our problems. Yet so often it's too late. The damage of sin has been inflicted and now we must suffer the consequences. Suddenly we turn our eyes upward only to see the darkness of our sins coming down upon us. We pay the temporal consequences for our sins.



Vision of the Lord Besides the Altar (9:1-10)

The final vision reveals the Lord standing beside the altar. God here declares that there is nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Try to go to the tops of the mountains or the depths of the sea but judgment is surely coming (9:2-4). There's no escape for rejecting the word of God.

Listen to the power of the Lord in verses 5-6. Do not suppose that we can hide ourselves from God. This reminds me of the foolishness of Adam and Eve thinking they could hide themselves from the Lord after they committed the sin of eating from the tree. Israel is not protected. Israel does not have special status before the Lord (7-10). The surrounding nations are going to shake Israel so that their sinners are punished with the sword. God sees this sinful nation!

This is a grave warning against being arrogant. Israel was arrogant, believing that they were special which led them to being immune to God's judgment. Notice in verse 7 that the Lord points out that Israel was not the only nation that he delivered from a land. The Lord governed the migration of Israel just as he had governed the migration of these other neighboring nations. We have no special standing before the Lord. The apostle Paul warns us against this kind of thinking in his letter to the Romans.

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, 18 don't be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it isn't you who support the root, but the root that supports you. 19 Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So don't become proud, but fear. 21 For if God didn't spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. **Otherwise, you too will be cut off.** 23 And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has power to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, to a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. (Romans 11:17–24 ESV)

Observe this line located in verse 22: Notice "God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off." When we forget God's kindness toward us, then we are liable to become arrogant. Further, we must continue in his kindness based on his kindness toward us. Israel had lost their way and **we can lose our way when we presume our place in the kingdom of God.** As soon as we think we stand without the grace of God and without our standing fast in the faith, then we are also ripe for judgment, rather than ripe for receiving God's blessings.

Restoring David's Kingdom (9:11-15)

Amos begins with the phrase, "In that day," and in verse 13 says, "The days are coming." These are words used by the prophets in reference to the coming of the Messianic age. "In those days" points to those events leading up to and including the dawning of the new age when the Messiah would come and bring victory and deliverance. So, the days are coming, Amos says, when the Lord is going to restore the kingdom. Notice the language of verse 11, "raise up, repair, rebuild."

The kingdom is described as merely **“the booth of David.”** It is not described as the temple of David or as the great kingdom of David. **Now it is pictured as a fallen, damaged tent.** We are to perceive the kingdom as insignificant, in a powerless and weakened condition. The devastated nation is going to be restored. It will be rebuilt “as in the days of old” (9:11). The glory of the coming kingdom will be returned and it will stand in glory like in the reign of David.

Further, this coming glorious kingdom will possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name. David’s dynasty would be reestablished in that day and the rebuilt empire will include the remaining portion of Edom and control many nations. Edom was historically an enemy to the nation of Israel. But when the Lord rebuilds this kingdom, this kingdom will possess the enemies that stood against her. Israel was to look forward to a day when they would be so great that the nations would be subject to them.

Amos is foreseeing the conversion of the nations, as “all the nations who are called by my name.” God will possess the nations and they will submit to him. God’s character will be seen in the people that are named. God will rule over them and they will become his people.
The possession of Edom and the nations must not be understood as a military subjugation, but as their *spiritual incorporation* into the restored kingdom of David.

Verses 13-14 describe a time when the kingdom is plentiful. Rather than experiencing the famine and drought that Amos prophesied would happen shortly (4:6-8), there was a time coming when there would be abundance. **The new Messianic era will usher in a time of abundance and a reversal of fortunes. This is exactly the promise God made to Moses in Deuteronomy 30:1-3. After the disobedience of the nation and its judgment, God would restore the kingdom yet again.**

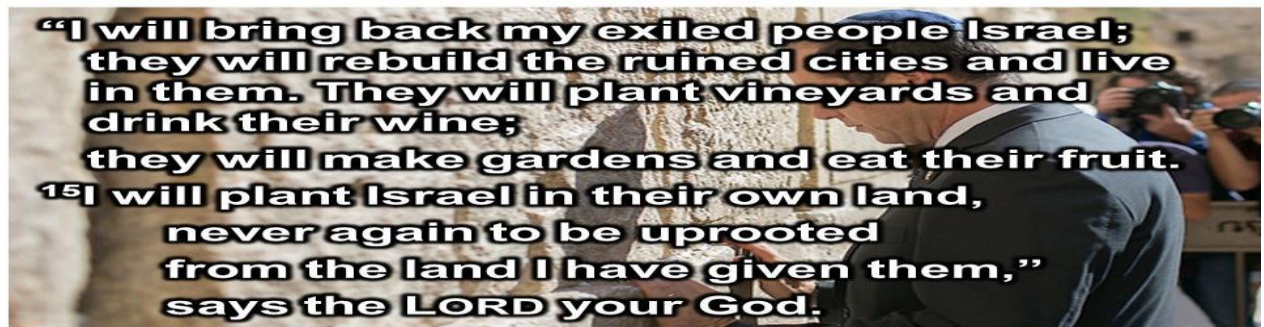
Finally, verse 15 pictures the kingdom with eternal security. The Lord would plant these people and they would never be uprooted. God’s forgiveness to Israel is pictured as permanent and these blessings would continually flow from God.

The restoration of covenant blessings is offered as an unconditional promise. **Notice that they would be planted on their land and never uprooted reflects a fulfillment of the land promise given to Abraham by the Lord. Therefore, we are reading about a reversal of destiny! In Amos 5:2, the Lord declared that the nation was fallen and never to rise again. But in those coming days a restoration would occur where this kingdom could never fall.**

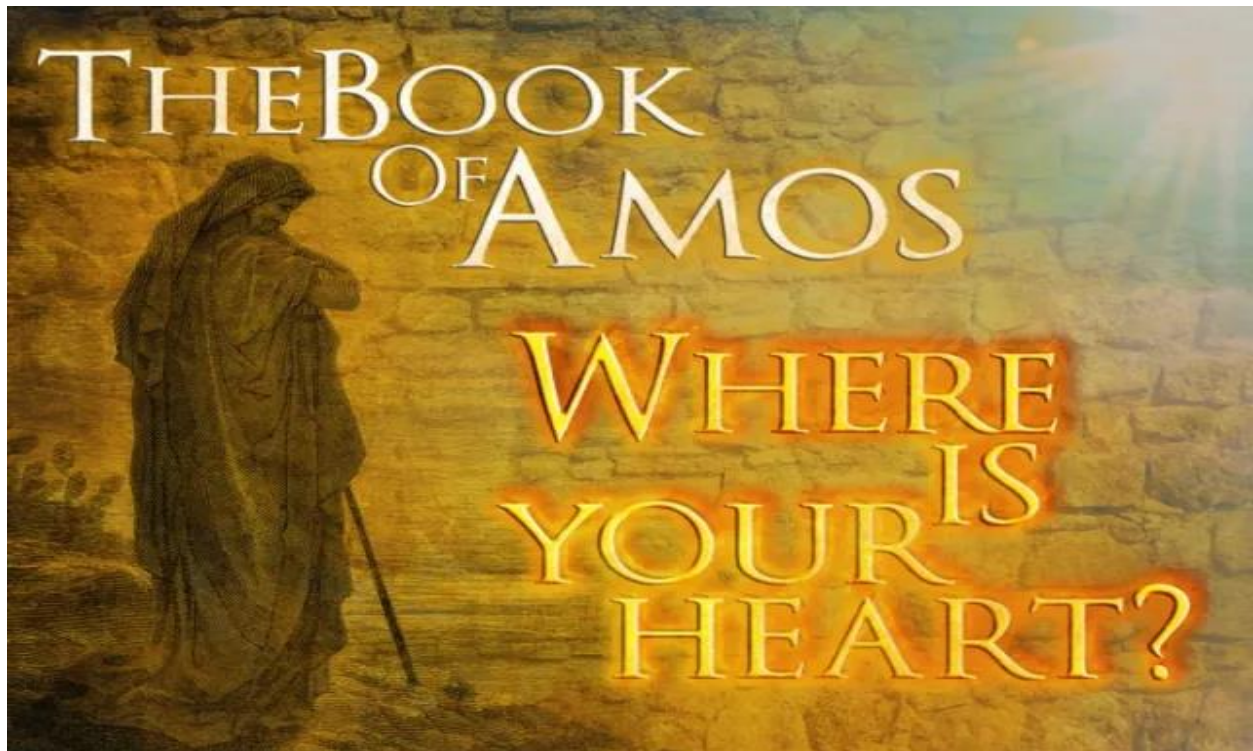


Amos 9:14-15 (NIV)

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The question that surely would have been on the minds of the people, not only after Amos prophesied, but more importantly, after physical destruction of Israel, how could this happen? How can this restoration occur? Israel is decimated by Assyrian invasion. Judah, the southern Jewish nation, will also be wiped off the map. Nothing will be left. The people will be removed from their land and sent into exile. Yet, Amos prophesies that it isn't over. Somehow, the kingdom of David would be rebuilt to the glory of its former days and would even possess the nations. The blessings of God would pour out again toward the people, their fortunes would be restored, and in this coming kingdom - they would have an eternal security. **What is Amos predicting? The answer is in the N.T. book of Acts where we read this prophecy's fulfillment.**



Acts 15:13-21 and Amos' Prophecy:

Before we begin, we need to set the context of Acts 15, Christians were teaching that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be part of the kingdom of God and receive salvation. Recall that in the Old Testament circumcision was a sign of covenant between God and Abraham, and all his descendants. This was a mark to show the covenant relationship between God and his people. So, there is a meeting in Jerusalem over this question concerning the Gentiles entering into covenant relationship with God without circumcision. Peter argues that God had poured out the Holy Spirit on them in a visible way to show that Gentiles were part of the covenant and part of the Messianic kingdom. Paul and Barnabas further point out that God was with them by performing miracles as they were preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. What they're implying is that if the good news of the kingdom was not for the Gentiles, then why would God performing miracles through them as they preach to the Gentiles?

James, the brother of Jesus, adds to these points by quoting from Amos, the very passage under our examination. James teaches that what is occurring with the Gentiles is what Amos said would happen.

The Remnant of Edom vs. The Remnant of Mankind.

You will notice that there are two differences between what Amos said and what James quotes. The two differences are in this phrase: Amos said the restored kingdom would possess the remnant of Edom while James says that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord. Consider, however, that Amos and James are teaching the exact same thing. **Edom stood as a symbol for wicked humanity.** Homer Hailey wrote a useful book on this topic called, "The Edomites: Symbol of The World." He points out through several prophecies how Edom became a symbolic reference for Adam, that is, the wicked and the opponents of the Lord and his people. You will see this when you read through the prophets. Note how Edom and Esau are always pictured as enemies of the Lord and of his people (cf. Obadiah 18-21; Malachi 1:2-4; Lamentations 4:21-22; Isaiah 34:5-6). Just as Jacob/Israel stands for the people of God, Esau/Edom stands for the wicked who oppose God. Therefore, James is simply expressing the symbol.

Possessing the Remnant of Edom vs. Remnant of Mankind Seeking

The second difference is also important to observe. Amos said the restored kingdom would possess Edom while James says that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord. **James is teaching the N.T. explanation of this prophecy. The way the restored kingdom would possess Edom was to give them the right to seek the Lord.**

The restored kingdom would not militarily or politically possess the physical land, but by offering the right to seek the Lord, they would become part of this restored kingdom. Therefore, Gentiles (nations) and the wicked opposition (Edom) would be possessed because they will seek the Lord becoming part of this glorious, restored kingdom. This is how God would raise up the glorious kingdom of David. This is the point James is making in Acts 15. **The kingdom was now being extended to the Gentiles as they were, not by them becoming Jews or trying to keep the Law of Moses. The Gentiles who call on the name of the Lord would belong to the restored kingdom of God.**

The Unshakable, Glorious Kingdom

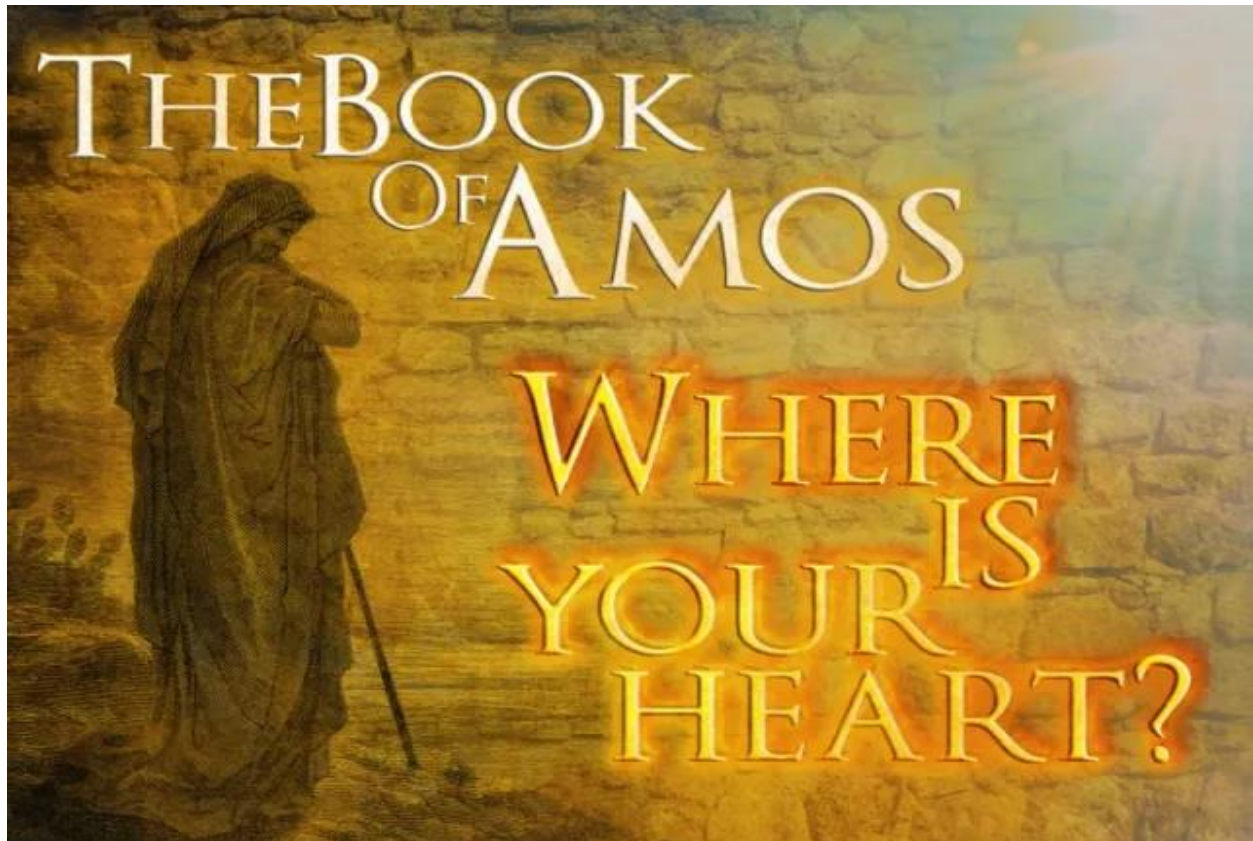
Coming back to Amos, let's apply these images of Amos to the kingdom we have received. The kingdom has been restored as the dynasty of David has been reestablished with Jesus as the king (cf. Matthew 1). The blessings are given to those who are in his kingdom and a reversal of fortunes has occurred. Rather than lost in our sins as part of wicked Edom, we are able to be part of righteous Israel. God is continually pouring out his blessings on his people. The Lord has restored his covenant blessings to those who will seek the Lord. This offer of God's forgiveness is permanent and we enjoy the eternal security that he promised. Nothing can separate from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35-39). **To conclude, listen to a few writers of the New Testament. . . .**

Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God's a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28–29 ESV)

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:10–11 ESV)

We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:12 ESV)

He has delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14 ESV)



❖ **Bible Says You Are In Charge Of Your Own Heart**

❖ *Jeremiah 4: 4 – “Remove the foreskin of your hearts”*

❖ *Jeremiah 9: 13 – “Stubbornly followed their hearts”*

❖ *Jeremiah 18: 11 – “Act according to his evil heart”*

❖ ***Ezekiel 18:31 – “Make Yourselves
A New Heart & A New Spirit!”***

SOCIAL SINS AND PERSONAL MORALITY

James W. Ward

Israel did not know God; that is the fundamental error exposed by the prophets. Perhaps none said it plainer or more often than Hosea as he pointedly asserts, “There is no ... knowledge of God in the land” (4:1); “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6); “They do not know the Lord” (5:4); “For I desire ... the knowledge of God” (6:6).

Thus, their need to know God explains why Amos “identified” the Almighty repeatedly in the following statements: “The Lord God of hosts *is* His name” (4:13); the Lord *is* His name (5:8); the Lord, whose name *is* the God of hosts (5:27); the Lord *is* His name (9:6). He is speaking of Jehovah’s nature, not of something to be stuck on Him like a tag on a conventioner. He is pleading for Israel to “know” God. What, then, do the prophets reveal of God’s nature that Israel might know Him? Many things, of course, but we can note only those few which seem to illuminate our topic.

The first is this: God is a moral being. The people were immoral because they connected Jehovah with rituals, not with life. Isn’t that what God meant when He said, “Israel will cry to Me, My God, we know you! Israel has cast off the good” (Hos. 8:2, 3)? How can she “cast off the good” if she knows God, the very Essence of Goodness? But how frequently she made this error! It caused her to rationalize that in “all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that *is* sin” (Hos. 12:8). Harrison says that for Hosea “the chief difficulty encountered in the ... relationship between God and Israel was the fact that the nation had no real intellectual awareness of the moral and ethical qualities of her God, and the way in which the Sinai covenant made these binding on the Chosen People” (212).

Micah joins in this indictment by saying that Israel’s leaders are guilty of the most atrocious evils, “yet they lean on the Lord, and say, ‘Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us’ ” (3:11). Zephaniah accuses complacent Jews of challenging God’s moral judgment by saying, “The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil’ ” (1:12).

Malachi's peers ask rhetorically how they have wearied God, but He stops them cold with the following explanation, "In that you say, 'Everyone who does evil *is* good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighted in them,' or, 'Where *is* the God of justice?' " (Mal. 2:17; 3:13-16).

A second thing Israel needed to know about God is that He calls them both by blessing and calamity. When they, on the one hand, prospered, they saw it as their own doing. Calamities, on the other hand, they took as evidence that God didn't care about them. They were wrong on both counts! God's first great blessing of Israel was in freeing her from Egypt. Perhaps the tenderest passage on this is Hosea 11:3, 4, where God remembers lovingly, "I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped *and* fed them." Further, Jehovah gave them leadership and shielded them from enemies. "For I brought you up from the land of Egypt," writes Micah, "I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.... remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him ... that you may know the righteousness of the Lord" (6:4, 5). Recognizing God's motivation in His blessing, Hosea "was the first of the seers to grasp the truth that God is love, and that Israel's sin of sins was not to have recognized the love of God" (Robinson 16).

But God expressed His love in calamity as well as in blessing. Still, the end He sought was the faithfulness of His people, for He says that "in their affliction they will diligently seek Me" (Hos. 5:15). Further, He said that He sent them famine, drought, "blight and mildew," locusts, plague, sword, and burning—all of these in order to bring them back to Himself. But He laments over and over, "Yet you have not returned to me" (Amos 4:6-11). G. L. Robinson, commenting on Zephaniah, states this point well that the prophet "is deeply sensitive of the sins of his people, and of the moral need which impels Jehovah to visit them with discipline and judgment. His gospel is 'simple and austere.' A moral sifting is necessary (3:7-13)" (134).

A third facet of God's nature explored by the prophets is His longsuffering. Because "the Lord *is* slow to anger" (Nah. 1:3) and full of loving-kindness, blessings continued long, and calamity was often slow in coming. This then is one of the main themes of both the Major and Minor Prophets. God gave Israel repeated opportunities to repent, but she would not. Even the captivity, as is clear from Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, did not bring her fully to her senses. That is the reason she never regained her former glory. For this reason, God's words in Hosea throb with the poignancy of His love and patience as follows:

"How can I give you up, Ephraim? *How* can I hand you over, Israel?... My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I *am* God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror. They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars ... they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses," says the Lord. (11:8–11)

But God's longsuffering is merely long, not endless! Remember Nineveh? Spared in Jonah's book, she fell in Nahum's. God's people would have their turn. And it came when they fell to Assyria and went shackled into Babylon. And though Judah returned, she was barely more faithful than before. She did not revert to open idolatry, but still her heart did not belong to God. It was full of ritual and ceremony and became the climate which confronted Jesus years later.

Finally, God revealed His constancy when He declared through Malachi, "For I *am* the Lord, I do not change" (3:6). Commenting on this, Hailey says, "The root of their action was clear: they did not fear Jehovah. When this respect for Jehovah is gone, there is no restraining force against evil. Here is declared an immutable principle on which man can depend in all ages and generations: 'I, Jehovah, change not' " (420).

Having touched on four aspects of the nature of God, we are now better prepared to understand the message of the Minor Prophets on social sins and personal immorality. Our pursuit of this message explores yet a fifth point on God's nature, reserved for the main body of the study.

First and Greatest Consequence of Sin

The first mark against sin is not what it does to man, as horrible as that is. Neither is it what evil does to society, though that too is sickening. The first and deepest stain on iniquity is simply but profoundly that it hurts a pure and loving God. Scholars debate the passibility of God, i.e., whether God suffers. Have they not read the prophets? To them the point is hardly moot. If God cannot suffer, what is the meaning of Hosea? For example, if God loves Israel as deeply as the prophet declares, does He not suffer just as deeply at their rejection of Him? Yes! The understanding of sin and “godly sorrow” starts here: to see sin for what it does to God and to see it as God does; to see evil not as the breaking of a ritual taboo, but as a moral affront to a righteous God; and to see it as the destroyer of everything good, especially man’s relationship with his Maker.

The righteous man will also perceive the moral necessity of judgment. If sin, in violating God’s nature, causes Him and all creation untold suffering, how can He not judge? His sovereignty is vindicated in balancing the scales of justice. An essential corollary to this principle is His impartiality; if God’s character requires the former, it also requires the latter.

But knowing God and His impartiality and understanding sin at its basest, the holy man will next realize that any covenant with God brings greater, not lesser, responsibility. Amos put it this way, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2). God’s universal rule, which is either stated or implied in all the Minor Prophets, did not exclude Israel. She took comfort when God held the nations accountable for their inhumanity to her, but she did not see that her responsibility was greater than theirs.

Referring to a list of judgments in Amos 1:3–2:6, G. L. Robinson says that this “whole series (is) teaching the fundamental principles of biblical sociology, namely, (1) the universal sovereignty of God; (2) the sin of inhumanity; and (3) the moral responsibility of all mankind” (53). The point is that Judah and Israel are on the list of accountable rebels! Universal sovereignty is just that—universal! And it implies impartiality; hence, even God’s people are not exempt.

Though the prophets hammered on this point, God's bride did not get it. And years later, Paul will confront the same spirit in Romans 2. Thus, sin is seen in its consequences! At its deepest, it breaks the great heart of our sovereign and loving God.

Sin Starts in the Heart

Next, we must have some grasp of the nature of man in order to understand the Minor Prophets. They record an enactment of that nature in its relation to God and His essence. Jehovah is sovereign and righteous; man is free to choose or reject Him. The prophets illuminate the implied covenant God made in creating man: "I will leave you as I make you—free. I will call you through love ('I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love,' Hos. 11:4). I will draw you through fear ('Surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction,' Zeph. 3:7). I will not win you by making you less than man. If I cannot win you by blessing or calamity, I will destroy you. Amen!" So, the prophets' definitive word on man is that he is free. His corruption is his own doing. James pens the same precept under Christ, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (1:14).

The Minor Prophets show that sin starts in the heart and can be cured only by changing the heart. Thus, Israel's evil was premeditated. Micah said that they "devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it" (2:2). Writing on Hosea, H. W. Robinson, with Macbeth as an example, said that sin begins in "dwelling on the thought of selfish ends, till evil aims are designed to gratify the lust and the heart is ready for its external opportunity" (28).

This inner alienation is highlighted by Hosea in the phrase, "spirit of harlotry," which he uses twice in 4:11, 12 and 5:4. So consumed are they with this spirit that he says, "Ephraim *is* joined to idols, let him alone. Their drink is rebellion, they commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor" (4:17, 18).

Idolatry knew little, if anything, of such a concept. Sin had no moral content but consisted mainly in broken taboos or violations of non-moral rituals. It did not grow out of breaking the legal expression (i.e., law) of the moral nature of the god. But the Jew was to consider the Torah as an extension of God's moral essence and sin as a violation of that essence.

God pleases, “Now, therefore . . . Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So, rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God” (Joel 2:12, 13). However, Israel clung to rituals, such as “rending her garments,” and rejected true repentance. With implacable determination, “they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit” (Zech. 7:12).

What “external opportunities” in which to express their hard, corrupt hearts do these chosen ones find? A list will be easy to compile if we have the stomach for it. The core is selfishness; the outworking is the abuse and exploitation of their fellows. Amos reveals with telling images the depth of their depravity, “They sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.” He continues as follows:

They pant after the dust of the earth *which is* on the head of the poor, and pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the *same* girl, to defile My holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, and drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god. (2:6–8)

Thus a representative list of their iniquity would include swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery (Hos. 4:2); corrupting Nazarites and intimidating prophets (Amos 2:12; cf. Mic. 2:6); hating honest magistrates (Amos 5:10); perverting justice and taking bribes (Amos 5:12); cheating with false scales and selling bad wheat (Amos 8:6; cf. Mic. 6:12); living in luxury while crushing the poor (Amos 4:1; cf. Hag. 1:4); and dealing treacherously by divorcing their wives (Mal. 2:13–16).

But Micah penned the saddest words of all when he warned them of their sorry state in this way, “Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion; Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom. For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies *are* the men of his own house” (7:5, 6). The ultimate meaning of these words is that every Jew was on his own, completely alone. God was the only friend left (v. 7), and yet most of them refused Him.

Jehovah's people turned to debased gods and became themselves debased. Out of their free, but wicked, hearts, they filled their cup to the overflowing with personal immorality. A man could trust no one; no one could trust him. And the pity of it all was that their God yearned for their return!

Social Sins

The term "social sins" could be taken in at least two ways: the sins that men commit against their fellows, i.e., their society, as examined in the previous section; and the sins that are fostered by society and her institutions. Simply put, sin is nurtured socially; this principle lies behind God's early demand that Israel drive the Canaanites completely from the promised land. Later Moses said, "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert *justice*" (Exod. 23:2). An echo of this idea also sounds from the wisdom literature, "Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them" (Prov. 24:1).

Haggai restates the principle by getting the priests to admit that while holiness is not contagious, unholiness is. He asks them:

"If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?" Then the priests answered and said, "No." And Haggai said, "If *one who is* unclean?" So, the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean." Then Haggai answered and said, "So is this people, and so is this nation before Me," says the Lord, "and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean." (2:12–14)

The proverbial vicious cycle begins. Their individual beliefs and actions shape their institutions, and their institutions ratify and legitimize their beliefs and actions. These institutions, and Jewish society as a whole, the Minor Prophets examine under numerous figures and representative generic terms. For example, Hosea's image of the nation as a mother turned to whoredom, with individual Jews as her children, is shocking. Also, later he wrote that Ephraim's "rulers dearly love dishonor" (4:18; cf. 7:3–7).

Earlier we noted that Israel's fundamental error was in not knowing God. Hosea lays part of the blame on the priesthood, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (4:6). Further, this statement that "they eat up the sin of My people; they set their heart on their iniquity" means that the priests encouraged the people to sin in order to increase their own profit. To emphasize this point, Hailey exclaims, "What a parody on the religion of Jehovah!" (149)

Naturally, institutions soon turn on those who lack power. Near the beginning of this prophetic period, Jeroboam II brought the North to new heights of prosperity and peace, which fostered luxury and indulgence. Soon another common cycle was at work, namely, the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. Those lacking wealth, power, and representation such as widows, orphans, aliens, and the poor were exploited by these who had no lack of those things. Justice evaded those with little money; they could not pay off judges. They often had to sell their land and themselves with the result that their property was absorbed by the rich land owners.

First, consider the following prophetic denunciations of such things. Zechariah warns about this very thing, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother' " (7:9, 10). Second, Amos takes up the cry:

Woe to you *who are* at ease in Zion, and trust in Mount Samaria, notable persons in the chief nation ... (Woe to) you ... who cause the seat of violence to come near; who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall; who chant to the sound of stringed instruments, *and* invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. (6:1-6)

Third, at the risk of being tedious, we offer the following lengthy text from Micah:

“Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel: (Is it) not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from *my* people, and the flesh from their bones; Who also eat the flesh of My people, flay their skin from them, break their bones, and chop *them* in pieces like *meat* for the pot, Like flesh in the caldron”.... Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who make my people stray; who chant “Peace” while they chew with their teeth, But who prepare war against him Who puts nothing into their mouths. (Mic. 3:1–5)

Fourth, Zephaniah joins the chorus,

“Her princes in her midst *are* roaring lions; her judges *are* evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning. Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law” (3:3, 4).

And, fifth, Micah makes the most biting indictment when he accuses the leaders of doing “evil with both hands” and then adds, “The best of them *is* like a brier; the most upright *is sharper* than a thorn hedge” (7:3, 4). In short, social evil was rampant!

Sin and Sinners Self Destruct

And, finally, the people are blind to another terrible cycle: inner alienation leads to evil deeds, which lead to greater alienation. God long before set in motion the law of sowing and reaping. Israel now experiences what that means as Hosea said:

You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men. (10:12, 13)

What a sad irony fills the following words of Amos:

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find *it*.” (8:11, 12)

Commenting on this text, Hailey says, “From the north even to the east would they seek for it, but they would be left to stumble in their own self-created darkness” (122).

But the bitter harvest refers to more than the external consequences of sin. Much more deadly is the internal damage; that is, the sad fact that “the sequel of disobedience is the growing inability to obey” (H. W. Robinson 44). A Major Prophet asked, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? *Then* may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil?” (Jer. 13:23) The practice of sin deadens the will. And the shame of it all is that the sinner is insensitive to what happens to him. Ephraim (the principle applies to individuals) withered within as Hosea graphically says, “Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know *it*”; yes, “gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know (it)” (Hos. 7:9), and, “They became an abomination like the thing they loved” (Hos. 9:10.) And they didn’t even know it! So, the people of Israel “lie in wait for their *own* blood, They lurk secretly for their *own* lives” (Prov. 1:18, 19).

Inferences for our Time

The words of the prophets are timeless! Raymond Calkins wrote:

Because the sins, social and personal, which the prophets condemn are in root and essence the same as those which still degrade the soul of man and society; because the truths which have their source in the holiness and justice of God are immutable and eternal; because the way of repentance and of a return to God’s Word and will remains the only hope of redemption and of salvation—therefore, the inspired messages of these prophets are not for their time only but for our time and for all time. (10)

What, then, do the prophets say to us? Many things! We can only briefly touch a few.

First, morality is grounded in the existence and nature of God. Deny that He exists and morality perishes; debase His nature and you debase man. When Israel exchanged Jehovah for idols, her decline came like a flood. This is the error of humanism; it exchanges God for man. It denies the existence of absolute authority.

Second, we may not pigeonhole life by lavishing this part upon ourselves and doling out that bit to God. Life and religion are not separate. We work “as to the Lord and not to men” (Col. 3:23). We love our wives “as Christ also loved the church” (Eph. 5:25). We submit to our husbands “as is fitting in the Lord” (Col. 3:18). We obey rulers “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Pet. 2:13). We “maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs” (Tit. 3:14) because loving our neighbor is the second commandment (Matt. 22:39). Our days and our nights, both our waking and sleeping hours, belong to our Savior. Our entire being belongs totally to our Maker and Redeemer. He wants us down to the core, i.e., to our very hearts. Mere rituals and lip service no more please Him today than in the time of the prophets.

Third, God allows us no attitude toward sin except hate. That means that we must exert every bit of strength at our command to avoid sinning (1 John 2:1). It also means that if we sin we cannot propitiate our guilt by making excuses. It will not do to say, “After all, nobody’s perfect,” or, “Well, I’m only human.” The one attitude God permits us toward our own sin is penitence; the one action, confession (1 John 1:9). His goodness must lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4); otherwise, our sin appears as black as that of ancient Israel against the backdrop of His grace. May we hear the petition of Amos as though he were speaking to us, “Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the Lord God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken. Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate” (Amos 5:14, 15).

Finally, this means that we cannot give in to the pressures of our society but must maintain a clear conscience amidst corruption. Other ages violated moral standards; ours denies that there is a standard. Though we are surrounded by relativism, we must commit ourselves to an unshakable faith that God’s word is absolute and everlasting. We must believe that we will—one by one, face to face—meet our God to be judged. Only thus can we keep the conscience clean!⁶

⁶ Ward, J. W. (1989). [Social Sins and Personal Immorality](#). In M. Curry (Ed.), *Minor Prophets for Every Man* (pp. 189–200). Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore.

Who Are the Pure in Heart?

What is the meaning of the expression “pure in heart,” in Christ’s promise that the “pure in heart” shall see God? Does this mean that sincerity alone is sufficient to finally obtain heaven?

By Wayne Jackson | [Christian Courier](#)

“What did Jesus Christ mean when he said, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God?’ Does this mean if a person is sincere before the Lord, and tries to keep his mind pure, he will be saved?”

As we begin a response to this question, bear in mind this vital truth. No single passage may be isolated from the larger context of the Scriptures, and have a meaning forced upon it that’s at variance with other clear portions of the Word of God.

In one of his “beatitudes” in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8).

The Pure

The Greek word for “pure” is *katharos* (used 27 times in the New Testament). Fundamentally, it signifies that which is clean, or free from contaminating substance (cf. Danker *et al.*, [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament](#), 489).

The term is used literally, for instance, of the “clean” cloth in which Jesus’ body was wrapped after his death (Mt. 27:59). In the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the word is employed in a ceremonial sense of the purification from leprosy. It also can apply to the release of certain unfortunate individuals from “unclean spirits,” i.e., demons, the persons then, by implication, become “clean.”

On the other hand, the *katharos* may be engaged in a higher sense. William Barclay contended that with a *spiritual* import, “pure” may describe the heart that is free of unadulterated “motives.”

“Seeking” God

Then there also is that aspect of the promise which declares that those who are pure in heart shall “see” God. Since it is rather clear that upon the final day of history, at the time of Judgment, all human beings of all time will “see” God (cf. Eccl. 11:9; Rom. 14:10-12), it is only reasonable to conclude that the term “see” is used in Matthew 5:8 in a special way.

“See” is the Greek *horao* (found 449 times in New Testament). The word may be used literally (Mark 12:15) or figuratively. When it is figuratively employed, it denotes “perceive, recognize, experience, etc.” What, then, is the significance in Matthew 5:8?

D.R. Dungan suggested that the term refers to recognizing God in all the wonders of his creation. The foolish see only matter (compare “senseless heart” Romans 1:21b), but the pure in heart see God in the things he has made.

On the other hand “see” can also mean to *experience* something. He who refuses to “obey” the Son will not “see life” (Jn. 3:36), i.e., receive, enjoy, experience it.

When one submits to the conditions of the “new birth” process, he “sees” or “enters” the kingdom of God, i.e., he *receives* the blessings of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.

“Jesus said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he can’t see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!” (Jn. 3:3-5).

The student should compare the “see” of verse 3, with the “enter” of verse 5. They explain one another. There is no way this verse should be interpreted so as to negate other clear passages which require obedience to specific commands in order to become a Christian and ultimately enter heaven (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38, etc.).

The Heart of the Matter

A consideration of the biblical data leads only to the conclusion that the heart is a vulnerable feature of the human makeup. One must guard it, and he must cultivate it, with the greatest of diligence.

By Wayne Jackson | [Christian Courier](#)

Buried securely within the cavity of the human chest is an amazing muscle about the small size of one's fist. Charged by a tiny electrical impulse, approximately every 8/10ths of a second it "beats" — about 100,000 times a day, pumping some 1,800 gallons of blood, rich with food and oxygen, to all parts of your body. Its name is "the heart." The heart with its precious cargo, is the life-center of the human body (cf. Leviticus 17:11).

It is not without significance, therefore, that the term "heart" becomes a linguistic device for the conveyance of numerous profound ideas in virtually every language employed by humans.

The English word "heart" is principally derived from original terms in the Hebrew Old Testament. The word *leb* is rendered "heart" 599 times, and the kindred form *lebab* is likewise found as "heart" 252 times. In the Greek New Testament, the original word is *kardia* (cf. English, cardiac), and it was employed by the inspired writers on 156 occasions.

Oddly, the terms for "heart" rarely are used of the **literal** organ. After Absalom had initiated a rebellion against his father, David, he fled to the rugged territory east of the Jordan. While riding a mule, his long hair became entangled in the low-growing boughs of an oak tree, and he was left suspended there. Joab, David's captain, came by and thrust three javelins into the "heart," killing the lad where he hung.

But in most cases, the word "heart" is employed **figuratively**. It represents a host of intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and moral qualities. Great lessons can be learned from student consideration of the various passages in which the term is symbolically used.

The “Honest” Heart

In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of the sowing of seed on the soil of Palestine. Four types of soil were surveyed. There was the hard, wayside soil into which no seed could penetrate. Then reference was made to the stony ground (veneer of soil underlain with bedrock), which was too shallow to accommodate growth. A soil crowded with thorn bushes was similarly unproductive. Finally, though, there was the “good” soil, identified by the Savior as an “honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15).

The “honest heart” describes the disposition of one characterized by an earnestness of soul, an attitude of sincerity bereft of stubbornness and hypocrisy. It reflects a mentality adorned with “integrity,” as possessed by Abimelech, Abram’s contemporary (Genesis 20:5), or Nathaniel, in whom was found no “guile” (John 1:47).

The honest heart is the one in which there is a sense of craving for the divine; it acknowledges the need for the Creator’s guidance. It is the mind-set in which the distinction between right and wrong has not been obliterated. It longs for instruction, acknowledging that “the way of man is not in himself ... to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

No better example of a glaring contrast, i.e., a **dishonest** heart, exists than that of Pharaoh, whose stubborn heart resisted every benevolent overture from the Lord. Three Hebrew words are each employed to describe the rebellious inclination of the Egyptian ruler. Qasha means to “make sharp, hard, obstinate” (Exodus 7:3). The term kated denotes “heavy, insensible,” (Exodus 7:14; 8:15,32; 9:7,34; 10:1), and hazaq signifies “headstrong, stiff, unyielding” (Exodus 4:21; 7:3,22; 8:19; 9:12).

The hardening is attributed both to Pharaoh and God. To the former because he closed his mind to any enlightening message of Jehovah, as buttressed by awesome power. The hardening is credited to God because the Lord made demands upon the ungodly autocrat he did not wish to obey. Also, Heaven respected the ruler’s free will choice. What God merely **permits**, he is often, in a figurative sense, said to actually do (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:11).

The “Seeking” Heart

In order for conversion to be achieved, an honest heart is **necessary**; however, it is not **sufficient**. More is required.

Saul of Tarsus had a most sincere disposition when he was persecuting Christians. He was doing what he thought he “ought” to do for the preservation of his cherished Hebrew religion. His conscience was clean (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:9). But he was wrong. **Had Saul remained in that state, honest as he was, he would have died lost.**

Solomon once wrote: “The heart of the prudent gets knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge” (Proverbs 18:15). There is that quality of heart that is not only honest, it is **inquiring** as well. It is not satisfied with the *status quo*; it is characterized by a “mental industry” that probes, questions, and analyzes. It seeks to know the whole truth, wherever that may lead and whatever the cost of obtaining it may be.

Paul captured the spirit of this quality when he wrote: “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (2nd Corinthians 13:5 NKJV). “Examine” (*periazō*) reflects an “endeavor to discover the nature or character of something, by testing” it (Danker, p. 792). “Test” is from *dozimazo*, “to make a critical examination of something to determine its genuineness” (Danker, p. 255) Both verbs are in the present tense, signifying these processes must be ongoing.

The honest heart that loves the truth (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:10), and seeks it, can know what is right, and he can know that he knows it.

On one occasion, when some Jews were stunned at the marvelous teaching of Christ the Lord said to them: “If any man wills to do his [the Father’s] will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God” (John 7:17). The verb “willeth” (here in the present tense, suggesting persistence) implies a strong desire, a firm resolve, to know the truth. Such resolution will lead to a serious study of the data, from which the careful student can draw rational conclusions, provided his study methods are sound.

This is why skeptics are so confused as to the meaning of the Bible; they approach the sacred documents as **critics**, not as honest, seeking investigators.

There may be no better example of the quality of which we speak than the case of the people of Berea. Concerning them, Luke wrote: “Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

The “Understanding” Heart

While the “honest” heart is premium, and the “seeking” heart is essential, still, these by themselves — even in concert — cannot satisfy the demands of God’s plan for human redemption.

During the course of his preaching ministry, Jesus began to use the **parabolic formal** in his teaching. When his more attentive disciples sought an explanation for this alteration in his method, the Lord explained that, in part at least, it was due to the fact that Israel’s “heart” had “waxed gross,” and they simply were not interested in seeing, hearing, or “understand[ing] with [their] hearts” (Matthew 13:10ff; especially v. 15). From this text we note the “heart” can be an instrument of intellectual comprehension. With many religions, it simply doesn’t matter what is believed. One is free to attach himself to the system and then pursue his own philosophical ideology. Such is not true with reference to the regime established by Jesus Christ.

Christianity is a religion grounded in history. Its validity depends upon whether or not certain events actually happened in “time.” Moreover, according to the teaching of Christ himself, together with that of his appointed spokesmen, the efficacy of Christian benefits may be assessed only by way of understanding certain propositions associated with historical data, and then, subsequent to that, a mental acceptance of the responsibilities that flow from promises of the system. Simply reduced: without an understanding of certain threshold elements, one cannot be a Christian.

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of the day when the new covenant of Christ would be introduced (31:31-34). In describing the nature of that administration, he noted that God would write his law in men's "hearts," which was equivalent of "knowing" the Lord. This implies that in entering the kingdom of Christ, understanding certain truths is imperative. **A relationship with God is not accessed as a result of a mere physical birth, as was the case with reference to Israel under the Mosaic system; rather, the acquisition of knowledge is inherent to the system. Salvation is dependent upon coming to a "knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).**

The "Broken" Heart

David once wrote: "Jehovah is near unto them that are of a broken heart" (Psalm 34:18a). A young man, following a "break-up" with his girlfriend, took great comfort from this passage — only to learn later that this was not the thrust of the text at all. The parallelism of the latter portion of the passage explains the matter more clear. Those of "broken heart" are those who entertain a "contrite spirit" relative to their sins. The best example is that of the shepherd king himself, who, following his terrible sin with Bathsheba, penned the 51st Psalm as an expression of his penitence. Therein he wrote: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (v. 17).

A double portion of this disposition is needed in today's world where sin has been trivialized to the point of embarrassment. Like those of Isaiah's day, we call evil good, and good evil, and light and darkness are confused equally (Isaiah 5:20).

In other words, the broken heart is absolutely requisite to any real reconciliation with the Holy God.

The “Obedient” Heart

In his letter to the Christians of Rome, Paul calls attention to the fact that in their heathen state these folks had been enslaved to sin (6:17a). One only need survey the first chapter of this epistle to realize how sordid that was. Happily, however, that was not the end of the story. The apostle further noted that “thanks be to [the wonderful grace of] God,” they “became obedient from the heart” to the divine “pattern” of teaching (17b).

What else could we call this but “the obedient heart.” There are two items worthy of notice here. First, there is the word “obeyed.” The Greek verb is compound, *hupakouo*, from *hupo*, “under,” and *akouo*, “to hear.” The word came to mean “to listen,” in the sense of “obey.” The verb is used, for example, of those stormy elements that were perfectly submissive to the “Master of ocean and earth and skies” (Matthew 8:27). None of us is ever totally submissive, of course, but if we are honest, we try hard to be.

Second, we should focus on the phrase “from [the] heart.” While the expression embodies obedience that issues from an understanding heart (see above), more specifically here it may carry the idea of genuine, sincere, without coercion or any base motive — a pure desire to obey (cf. 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 1:22).

There is that disposition that so loves God it longs to be obedient, in spite of personal weaknesses. Young Samuel had this spirit when he said to the Lord: “Speak, your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:9-10). David had the same general inclination, and so was characterized as “a man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22).

The biblical record is replete with examples of disobedience as well. A graphic passage which addresses the progressive temperament of the disobedient soul is in Paul’s first letter to Timothy. The apostle says that “law” does not exist for the righteous person; rather, it is necessary because of those who are “lawless and unruly,” and for the “ungodly and sinners,” and for “the unholy and profane” (1 Tim. 1:9). It has been noted there is a progression of rebellion here cataloged.

The first two terms denote general disdain of law, the second two reflect a disregard for God's law, and the final two suggest a more specific flaunting of the holy (cf. Lock, p. 12).

To have an obedient heart does not mean that one forfeits his critical abilities and yields mindlessly. The “seeking heart” (see earlier) will probe, and perhaps dispute. But honesty will overpower eventually, and the “obedient heart” will surrender. When the Apostle Peter was commanded to “kill and eat” those “unclean” creatures presented to him, he initially said, “Not so, Lord” — three times, no less! When he was confronted with the evidence, however, he went to the Gentiles “without gainsaying” (Acts 10:14ff; v. 29). For a while, Saul of Tarsus “kicked” against “the goad” (Acts 26:14), but his obedient heart finally melted before the Savior.

It cannot be stressed too much or too often. Every sincere soul, who desires with all his heart to serve the Maker, must strive to keep his heart “exercised” (cf. Hebrews 5:14) so as to be ever sensitive to doing God's will — whatever the cost may be.

The “Backsliding” Heart

Consider this interesting warning from the book of Proverbs. “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways” (14:14 ASV). The key expression is “his own ways.” These are the self-centered desires he longs to pursue. And ultimately, he will “be filled with,” i.e., reap the reward of (cf. 1:31), this God-dishonoring philosophy.

The theme of “backsliding” is a popular one with the Old Testament prophets. No less than thirteen times Jeremiah refers to Israel as a “backsliding” people (cf. 3:22; 31:22). Hosea called the haughty nation a “backsliding heifer” (4:16 KJV).

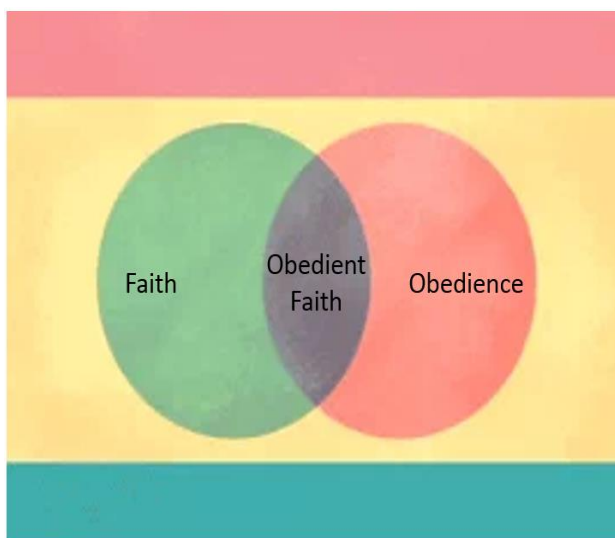
One of the mysteries of “theological” enterprise is how so many good and intelligent people can be duped by the Calvinistic notion that the “backslider” who remains in that position until death will not be held accountable for the defection.



AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

I an Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

When by His grace I shall look on His face, e

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

