

Amos Chapters 7-9 – John Karmelich

1. I was debating whether to call this lesson, "How we should respond to disaster" or should I call it "The bad news, the really bad news and the good news". In this lesson we finish the nine-chapter book of Amos. I wanted to combine the last three chapters as one lesson as these three make up a series of visions God gave Amos. In between describing the visions Amos gives his responses as well as describing an interruption of ministry. After that interruption, God effectively says, Amos be quiet, I'm on a roll and I can't finish what I have to say with the interruptions. What fascinates me about these chapters isn't just these visions God gave Amos, but why they became part of this book. It'd be best at this point to summarize the three chapters and then I'll let you decide which title works the best. Here goes:
 - a) These three chapters consist of seven visions that Amos had. The short version is together they tell of some really bad times for those Israelites, more bad news, and then some good news, which is why I like the second title.
 - b) One of the fascinating things about the first two visions is Amos effectively "haggles" with God by saying that's too harsh, Israel wouldn't survive that. If God isn't going to do those first two, why are they listed in the first place? If Amos prays for God not to carry out the scenes of that vision, why mention them? If the prayer Amos states is the reason that God "relented", why didn't Amos keep on saying "Please God, don't do that" through the other horrid visions things that were being planned? Why did Amos stop praying after #2!
 - c) If those questions aren't hard enough, realize we're just getting warmed up. What the text implies is right after God gave him "#3", Amos gets interrupted by some top-priest type of person in the Northern Kingdom effectively saying, "Hey Amos shut up. Stop predicting all of these bad things and go back home to the Southern Kingdom."
 - i) Amos' response is one of my favorite parts of the book. He essentially says, "I did not sign up for this gig! I'm not being paid for this gig. I was content with my old farming job when God said I have to go this! So here I am, deal with it!"
 - ii) Then Amos essentially curses out this "fake high-priest" and tells him some horrid things about his fate for being a high priest for a false deity within Israel.
 - d) After all that God in effect, gets tired of everyone else talking, and returns to giving Amos the remainder of the visions. After a few more, "Here is what will happen to the Israelites since they've ignored Me for so long!" The final few verses are in effect "The Good News". It is Amos essentially saying despite all the damage God's going to do around here, it will not be the final end of the Israelites. I've got glorious plans with a remnant of them a long time from now in the distant future. One of the final positive visions is quoted in the New Testament book of Acts. If nothing else, it shows that the New Testament writers believed Amos was a prophet of God and the final set of visions will still happen in the future.
2. There, that's there chapters in a little over a half page. With that said, let me return my suggestion for the first lesson title. How should we respond to disasters?" Whether we like it or not most of us have to face disasters at some points in our lives. I've known people who've had to live with a horrid disease all of their lives. I've met people who've lost their eyesight or have to live out their lives in a wheelchair. God never says, "Follow Me and you're life will be pain free!" I remember a quote on this I really liked, "God's not there to improve our golf score!" I've never believed the lie that if we believe in God, He'll make us prosperous based on that trust! What God does promise is to guide us through life and be there for us as we deal with whatever we're facing.
 - a) I've always thought of the bible as our "life survival manual". God desires we think about the stories and how they apply to our lives. That's what I try to stimulate when I do write these lessons. I don't think of all disasters as God ordained, but I do consider disasters as God allowed, as in He allows them to occur. Stop and think of the worse tragedy that we can imagine. I'm convinced if one is a believer, God allowed ultimately it for His glory.

- b) For example, I've seen many a story of Christians who've died tragically and their stories have inspired others to give their lives to Jesus. I've seen too many stories of people who have had to suffer horribly leading up to death and their positive attitude through all of it of God helping them has inspired others to press on. All I'm saying is for the believer, I'd argue that hard times are God ordained not to make us suffer or because He enjoys to see us suffer, but ultimately He allows it for some greater purpose then we can comprehend.
 - c) That little speech leads me back to Amos. He receives a bunch of visions about what will happen to the nation of Israel in the near future as well as the distant future. We shouldn't think, "Well too bad for them, they blew it and that's what they deserve!" What God does want is for us to learn even from His disaster predictions that 1) He's in charge and we've got to accept His will and 2) He still has a plan for our lives even when such disasters will strike.
 - d) The shorter version is that's why I was torn between the "life's disaster" title and the other one about the "bad news, really bad news and the good news".
 - e) Enough of that. We've got three chapters to get through, so let's get rolling.
3. Amos Chapter 7: This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: He was preparing swarms of locusts after the king's share had been harvested and just as the second crop was coming up.² When they had stripped the land clean, I cried out, "Sovereign LORD, forgive! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!"³ So the LORD relented. "This will not happen," the LORD said.
- a) Well, I said there were a series of visions; the first one is 1.5 verses. Even before I discuss what is the vision itself, I can't stop thinking about why is it here in the first place? If God won't execute Judgment #1, why mention it in the first place? It reminds me of Revelation 10, in which John saw a vision of "Seven Thunders". God then told John not to write down what the seven thunders did, which leads us to the logical question, why mention it at all? Don't know. I suspect God wanted to show us (about Amos vision, not Johns' Revelation vision) that He does respond to prayer. It's kind of like saying, "God was considering this action, but if His people prayed otherwise, He decided not to." Since we as humans can't understand how God's sovereignty mixes in with our prayers, we simply accept both are a part of life and we pray for His will to be done, even if it means we're asking God to stop what He was planning on doing!
 - b) OK, enough background, onto the vision itself. The short version is a bunch of locusts are to come and Amos even gives a specific "time of the year stamp". The "second crop" refers to barley, which is harvested later in the year than wheat. The "time stamp" states the fact that the Israelites had to first give part of their crop away for taxes. (Obviously, nothing's changed.) It had to be paid before anyone else gets their cut. I'm reminded of an old joke that goes, "paying taxes is like having a bad partner. That partner takes a cut, but doesn't contribute anything". Anyway the "time stamp" here is very specific as if to say, right after the taxes are paid, then a bunch of locusts came and ate up what was left.
 - c) To state the obvious, this is bad news. It's like saying we just paid our taxes and now we'll starve as we have nothing else to live on. That's when Amos interrupted the vision to say, "Hey God don't do that, we Israelites can't survive something like that!" The big question is why did Amos write down this very specific vision, if God didn't do it?
 - i) The time of the year stamp is specific enough that if it did happen, it would verify that Amos is a prophet of God if locusts struck at that time. If you were with me in the Joel study, he described some specific locust plagues. I'm convinced they're not the same story simply because in Joel's story the locusts did strike and here in Amos' story, the locusts didn't strike!
 - d) Before I move on, let me ask another logical question: How do we know Amos didn't just eat some late night pizza and then had some bad dreams? After all, this first (and second) vision didn't happen, so how do we know it just wasn't a bad dream he had? What we do know is the visions after these two pretty much happened as Amos predicted.

- i) All I'm saying is the proof of what Amos didn't ask God to relent upon, happened pretty much as Amos said. I'm convinced the first two "This didn't happen but it's what God was thinking of doing" visions are here to show us that God does listen to our prayers and is willing to relent if God fearing people pray for His will to be done and use our lives for His glory.
 - ii) OK enough of that, time for "Vision #2" which God also relents from doing:
- 4. Verse 4: This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: The Sovereign LORD was calling for judgment by fire; it dried up the great deep and devoured the land. ⁵ Then I cried out, "Sovereign LORD, I beg you, stop! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!" ⁶ So the LORD relented. "This will not happen either," the Sovereign LORD said.
 - a) In a sense, "Vision #2" is a repeat of "Vision #1". It's a repeat in that God says He's going to do this, but Amos says, "that's too tough, God, please back off" and God does.
 - i) Before I get into specifics let me talk about prayer and believers. Other than what I call "ritual" prayer (pray because someone tells a group to pray with him or maybe when we get up first thing in the morning), often our prayers occur when we have an urge to pray about something. My point is spontaneous prayer to God is short and to the point. That's the type of prayers Amos gives in the first two visions.
 - ii) What I'm getting it is that prayers don't have to be "grandiose and long" in order to have God respond to it. He responds to Amos' prayers here, which get right to the point. Am I saying group prayer or first thing in the morning prayer is wrong? Of course not. I'm just saying that a lot of times, prayer came come by the Holy Spirit urging us to pray and God responds to that prayer. Does that mean all prayer like that gets answered right away the way we like? Of course not. Prayer is all about us trying to line up our will with His will. In this case, I suspect God's will was for Amos to pray for God not to allow a specific disaster to occur, so we read of Amos praying and God responding to that prayer by "letting up".
 - b) Since we know "Vision #2" didn't happen, let me quickly explain what it is, if for no other reason than to show the thoroughness of this judgment. What's implied in this text is that a fire was to come that's so bad, it not only consumes all that in its path but it also dries up the water supply buried beneath the ground. Then Amos effectively responds with, don't do that God, that's too harsh, and for the second time, God relents.
 - c) The part that really fascinates me is why did Amos intercede on the first two visions and not intercede on the rest of them! We'll get to that as I discuss Vision #3 next.
- 5. Verse 7: This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸ And the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" "A plumb line," I replied. Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. ⁹ "The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam."
 - a) To explain these verses, I have to start by explaining what is a plumb line: It's a tool made with string and a weight on the end that's used to see if a wall was built straight from the top to the bottom. It is sort of an ancient yardstick, long enough to put up against a wall.
 - b) The idea is just as a straight high wall is a form of protection against an enemy attacking, so God has been a "wall" to protect the nation of Israel from their enemies attacking them. The point is God's announcing in Vision #3 that He will no longer protect Israel and He'll let the Northern Israel Kingdom be destroyed by enemies. Amos uses a number of ways to describe that kingdom: First referring to Israel as "the high places of Isaac". That term is used as Isaac was the long promised son to Abraham. It's like saying, just as I made the promise to Abraham to give him a son, so I will do what I promise to the North Kingdom as they failed to live as I desire.
 - c) Then to get more specific, Amos refers to them as "Israel" which in this case is the name of the Northern Kingdom and then Jeroboam, who was the king there at that time!

- d) In case you care, technically this king was known as "Jeroboam II", as the first king of the Northern Kingdom had the same name. What's historically accurate is that within a few decades of this prediction, that's when that kingdom was literally destroyed and all those who lived there were relocated elsewhere in the Assyrian Empire.
 - e) What's about to occur next is Amos is going to be interrupted by a "top priest" there in the Northern Kingdom as if he's saying, "Cut it out Amos, stop preaching that way! Go home and leave us alone!"
 - i) Before we get to all that, why didn't Amos pray for God to relent on this vision? I don't know. All I know is what's written. It's practically impossible to understand what he didn't do. Maybe Amos thought, "I'm pushing my luck telling God what to do and I'll stop here." Whatever the reason, Amos got the idea that God's pretty ticked off at the Northern Kingdom and by asking God over and over again to not go forward with doing something dramatic was a waste of his time as whatever it was God was planning, He's going to do something.
 - ii) All we do know is that Amos got interrupted right here after Vision #3, which did get carried out by God as we know from history that the Northern Kingdom died with a few decades of this vision.
 - iii) Enough of that, time for Amos to get interrupted by a non-believing top official.
6. Verse 10: Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. ¹¹ For this is what Amos is saying: " `Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.' "
- a) Before we get into the why did Amos include this speech in his book, let me talk a little of the background about religion in the Northern Kingdom. It can best be described as a mix of honoring God and honoring false gods. In the Gospel stories there are a lot of mentions of the Samaritans. These were the people who settled in the Northern Kingdom after God allowed the Israelites to return to that land over a century later. Those who settled there believed in a mixture of worshipping God and worshipping other things. That's why they had a bad reputation among the religious Jews of Jerusalem even many centuries later!
 - i) I bring that up here as the "high priest" of the Northern Kingdom wasn't someone we'd associate with the official "high priest" of Jerusalem, but a false priest here in the Northern Kingdom. This high false-priest is named Amaziah.
 - b) One thing we don't know is how Amos preached. Did he just stand on a busy corner with a sandwich board saying, "Doom is coming!" Did he walk around the area where the rich and famous lived and said, "God says you're in big trouble, deal with it." We don't know. We just know that however he preached, he now has the attention of whoever was the big guns were at that time. Those in charge of the Northern Kingdom knew this "Amos guy" is preaching destruction of Israel and death of their king.
 - i) Therefore, Amos I believe gets the "final warning" probably before he'll be arrested for preaching of treason. This isn't just a random person saying, "Cut it out, you'll end up in jail if you keep it up." It's a top official saying in effect, "We the big shots know what you're doing and we're telling you now to cut it out, go home and stop it, or else you'll end up in jail or something worse!"
 - c) If there is one thing I've learned from studying the prophets, it was no easy life. Based on what I've read in the bible as well as archeological and historical evidence, to be a prophet was a tough gig and often deadly as people don't want to hear repentance messages! All I am saying is Amos had it as tough as any Old Testament prophet and was experiencing a threat on his own life here at this moment.
 - d) The big question of course, is why tell us all of this? I suspect part of the reason is so we'll know that Amos was human and had to overcome serious threats on his life for him to do what God called him to do.

- i) It's a reminder to us Christians that being a living witness for God does not mean life will be a bed of roses for now on! It means rejection and threats. However it's still worth the trouble as some do get it! Plus, whatever suffering we'll have to go through in this lifetime is nothing compared to the eternal rewards of doing what it is God wants us to do, be a witness for Him. I don't know of any experience life has to offer greater than being used by the God of the universe despite whatever it is it cost us in this lifetime! As a friend of mine said, "Being a profit doesn't profit" and that's the case here for Amos as well!
 - e) Meanwhile, the religious leader of the Northern Kingdom isn't done yet! Verse 12: Verse 12: Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. ¹³ Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom."
- 7. Verse 12: Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. ¹³ Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom."
 - a) First, let me explain the word "seer". Before the term "prophet" was used, "seer" was used to describe someone who went around describing visions that they claim were from God. To state the obvious, the way we know if a "seer" was really a prophet was whether or not the vision actually came to pass. Anyway, that's the ancient title for that role.
 - b) The top official in the Northern Kingdom effectively said to Amos, "Go back to your home land, do your predicting there and go back to how you were earning a living. Stop giving us predictions of what'll happen to our future. If you keep this up, we'll have you arrested and let's just say it'll go downhill from there!
 - c) In case you haven't read the previous lessons on Amos, "Bethel" was the "religious capital" of the Northern Kingdom. If you know your bible, when the first Jeroboam was the king, he set up two golden calves in that land as if to say to his people, "You don't have to waste your time traveling to Jerusalem for those annual feasts any more, we'll have our festivals here in the Northern Kingdom specifically here in "Bethel". (See 1st Kings 12:28.)
 - i) Anyway it's now about 150 years later (more or less) and now another king named Jeroboam was on the throne and the top religious official of the calf-gods came out to Amos and threatened him to go home and cut off his ministry!
 - ii) By the way, if you want proof if you're making a difference for Jesus, just see who is trying to prevent you from carrying out that mission! One thing one learns is if we are making a difference "resistance comes". That's why I constantly seek many to pray for this ministry as I want to be effective and I know that resistance comes! I don't ask for long prayers, just simple one's like Amos performed when the Spirit leads you to such prayers. OK, enough about me, back to Amos!
 - d) All of this leads to his response in Verses 14-16. As I said in the introduction, these verses are among my favorites in the bible. Let's begin:
- 8. Verse 14: Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. ¹⁵ But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' ¹⁶ Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say, " `Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the house of Isaac.'
 - a) Let me paraphrase Amos in my own words:
 - i) Hey your highness, I didn't ask for this gig!"
 - ii) Hey your highness, I'm not being paid for this gig!
 - iii) Hey your highness, I was content with my old life in the Southern Kingdom when God called me to perform this gig! Therefore, do you think I should be listening to what you tell me to do or should I be listening to what God tells me do!
 - b) The more literal translation conveys the idea that Amos wasn't trained to be a prophet. He is not a priest in the Southern Kingdom. He took care of sheep and fig trees. But God did take him from that job and said, "Congratulations I've just picked you to be a prophet. So go up north and preach exactly what I tell you say." I picture Amos thinking, "I'm not too crazy about this, but if God tells me I've got to go, what choice do I have?"

- c) The reason I love these verses so much is I can relate to them. I too, fell like I didn't ask to be a bible teacher on the internet. I too am not being paid for this! I do it because I too am convinced God called me to this ministry, so here I am pounding away at the keyboard as I try to lead others closer to Jesus. Do I get resistance to this ministry? All the time. Do I covet prayer? As much as I can. Am I making a difference? Let's just say there are people around the world reading this and I'm grateful to all who do.
- i) That leads to each of you reading this. The issue isn't me it's each of you. God can use anybody to do His will. All it takes is a willingness to be used by God and He can and does use anyone and not just the "paid professional" to make a difference for Him the world around us. It doesn't have to be something grandiose, (there is that word again), but just a willingness on our part to be used by Him. That's the greatest purpose one can have for living. That's also why I relate so much to these verses. OK, enough of Amos' purpose, let's see what he has to say to the top priest of a false religion:
9. Verse 17: "Therefore this is what the LORD says: " `Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will certainly go into exile, away from their native land.' "
- a) Well, Amos takes time out from telling us what is God's plans for the Northern Kingdom so he can spend a few verses cursing out this Amaziah fellow. It sort of makes me suspect that Amos isn't going to barter with God anymore about punishment, as Amos appears to be accepting God's punishment for North Israel. Amos sort of "joins in on God's plans as to tell us what'll happen to the false priest and his family since he's in the middle of telling everyone how God's about to go destroy this place.
- b) My question of the moment, is why single out this guy? I've always held the view that in hell, some people will be punished more than others. Even Jesus Himself told Pilate that the person who brought Jesus to Pilate is guilty of the greater sin! (John 19:11). I'd think that on a list of sins, leading God's chosen people away from Him has to rank pretty high on the naughty list! That's why I suspect God through Amos is making an example out of this guy to describe his punishment.
- c) The short version is Amos said his children would be killed by the sword. His wife will be a prostitute, his land will be divided up and he himself will die in another country. If I'm guessing correctly, that prediction didn't go over very well, and I wonder if Amos had to suffer for saying what God told him to say about this man and his family. Of course there is no record of this individual. If I'm correct, I'm sure this guy suffered far more than any punishment he threatened Amos with for saying what he did to Amos!
- d) Finally, notice the punishment isn't just for him. It says Israel (as in "North") will be going into exile. That part is a big aspect of the "how" Israel will be punished.
- e) Before I move on to Chapter 8, realize this is not just a message for ancient Israel. Among the things God wants us to gather is He's not to be messed with as a witness for Him. We have to realize if God's willing to do "that" to His chosen people, that should scare us into using our lives as a witness for Him as well! Ok then, onto Chapter 8.
10. Chapter 8, Verse 1: This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. ² "What do you see, Amos?" he asked. "A basket of ripe fruit," I answered. Then the LORD said to me, "The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.
- a) I have to admit, I picture God saying here, "Hey Amos, if you're all done dealing with the "fake-high-priest", you probably forgot, but I was in the middle of giving you a bunch of visions about the future of Israel." Since Amos didn't pray to "stop vision #3", God moved on to "Vision #4", which is the first few verses of Chapter 8.
- b) The other thing to catch is God likes to communicate on our level. Remember that besides being a sheepherder, Amos ran an orchard. All I'm saying is "Amos understands fruit".

- c) If you've ever had the privilege of harvesting fruit, there is usually a "peak time" when it's most ripe. That's how I picture God communicating to Amos here. It's the idea of, "Now or never". I've always held the view that when God goes to this extreme of a judgment, it is because there is nothing else He can do to get people to change. To use an illustration I use on occasion, "it's like shooting a dead horse as it's the most merciful thing to do".
 - i) I've also mentioned a few times that when archeological digs are done before and after the captivity, one of the biggest differences is the amount of household idols before and how few after. My point is this "extreme" measure did the trick!
 - d) Anyway, the key point is the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom have reached that point of no return, and now comes judgment. The big question for any of us, is when have we reached a point of no return? First, for those of us who believe Jesus is God, He did die for our sins and He's in charge of our lives, salvation is secure and we can't lose that. We can fail to be a witness for Him Jesus that can harm us like the Israelites. For nonbelievers, we can only tell a point of no return literally by when they die. There is no mark on the body of a saved person so we can't tell when it's ever too late!
 - e) Short version, don't mess with God and do our best to live as He desires or that could be "us" suffering as this nation suffered at that time. OK, enough scare for that verse!
11. Verse 3: "In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies--flung everywhere! Silence!"
- a) I don't know if this is part of the vision, or just Amos making a statement of how bad this suffering is going to be. Either way, it's bad news.
 - b) One thing to grasp is just because "The" Temple is located in the "South", doesn't mean the Northern Kingdom didn't have their own "false" temple. That's the place where singing is going to change into wailing. The point is the Northern Israelites will run to a place they associate with their god and they're about to suffer horribly for that decision.
 - c) One thing to catch is how God holds us accountable for what we know or what we should know about Him. God held the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom accountable for their history. Amos is effectively saying, "All of you know you're Jewish, but you've turned to other gods, and now it's time to "pay the fiddler"".
 - d) So why is the word "silence" at the end of this verse? I suspect it's the realization of what they are doing and of their guilt. They can't say we didn't get warning as both Hosea and Amos preached of this fall right before it happened. Other prophets in the North's history also did great works here and God's saying in effect, "Look, there's nothing you can say in your defense, so you might as well be silent as the punishment goes on.
 - e) I have to admit, I keep thinking of the old expression about Christian pastors: They're job is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. The latter thing is pretty much what Amos has been saying in this lesson. The warning of course is for us as well, and if I have learned one thing it is that God isn't to be messed with, period.
 - f) OK, let's move on to the next verse and see what affliction lies next!
12. Verse 4: Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, ⁵ saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?"-- skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, ⁶ buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the crops that were bad in order to make few extra dollars.
- a) I don't think this is another vision. It's just Amos describing life in the North Kingdom at that time. To paraphrase, "Can't we hurry up and get done with all this religious stuff so we can go back to working for a living and make some more money? Why do we need to stop working one day a week anyway or one day a month which is what the Israelites did on the night of a new moon. If that wasn't enough, they'd be cheat people in dealing with others. The rich Israelites would even sell the poor Israelites to others just to buy a pair of sandals! The final crime was selling products that they knew were bad.

- i) The key point here is God called the Israelites to live a certain way as a witness for God so that other nations would know they are different. That includes observing certain holidays such as the weekly Sabbath and other holidays as well as the once a month ritual. The general idea is that if the Israelites kept their focus upon Him, He would provide so they won't have to work "24/7" to worry about having food to eat. By wanting to avoid those rituals, the Israelites were essentially saying we are not satisfied with the wealth we have and we need to work harder in order to have even more!
 - ii) The fact they'd violate their own laws in order to "have more stuff" is a big sign of one approaching a "point of no return!" As I've preached in the past, the sin is not to have money, it's one's attitude of what they do with it!
 - b) OK, now that Amos got a few "why Israel is being punished" out of his system, let's return to the main focus of these chapters, which is "how" the Israelites will be punished.
13. Verse 7: The LORD has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done. ⁸ "Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt.
- a) One of the trivia things I'm fascinated by in the bible, is the names "Jacob and Israel". All I am saying is it appears that whenever the nation of Israel is in trouble, God uses "Jacob" to describe the nation of Israel. When God wants to compliment them, He uses the name He gave to Jacob, which is Israel.
 - b) Let me explain that idea a little better. In Genesis, there are a lot of people that God gives a new name. For example, Abram becomes Abraham. In the New Testament Saul's name gets changed to Paul, and it sticks. My point is once a new name is given, that's that. The one exception is the common ancestor of the 12 tribes of Israel was named Jacob. His new name was Israel. Without explaining what both names mean, notice that it appears when God's "ticked off" at that nation, He'll use the name "Jacob" as if to say, "You're all living as you were before I called you to be My people!"
 - c) That little lecture surprisingly leads me back to these verses. In the bible, the word "pride" is never a good thing. It's like saying, "Everyone is doing whatever they want to do, and no one is using their lives to make a difference for God, which is why you were separated as a people in the first place." Anyway, God's "ticked off" at the Northern Kingdom as to say, "I'm done waiting for all of you to change. It's now too late, punishment is coming!"
 - d) Amos then uses a "Middle East" analogy that most of the adults understand. Even if they have never seen Egypt, most of them were aware that the Egyptian economy is dependant upon the Nile River overflowing in peak season as most rivers do in the spring. Anyway I think the "Nile" is the biggest river that the Israelites could relate to, so God uses it as an illustration of how the Northern Kingdom will be stirred up (attacked) and sink, as in not being a kingdom any longer. Anyway, it's an illustration they could relate to!
 - e) What we may not see, is this is another vision by Amos here. It's number 5 if my count is correct here. Maybe Amos has seen the rise of the Nile and that's why it's used here. The point for us is just as the world God created causes the Nile to rise and fall, so He can and did cause the fall of this kingdom and yes, He can cause a fall of your or my life if we fail to be a witness for Him as He desires.
 - f) OK, enough about "Vision #5, time for #6.
14. Verse 9: "In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. ¹⁰ I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.
- a) Before I get into the specific's here, it's important to remember that prophecy is "patterns". All I'm saying is these predictions are not just one time occurrences in Israel's history, but patterns to be studied as God can and does "repeat history" to perform them again!

- b) All I'm saying is "Well, too bad for them, they ignored God and are now suffering for it." Just as God worked that way in the past, doesn't mean "He's all done with that prediction so let's get on with our lives!" God wants us to study these predictions so we don't repeat the same mistakes! With that said, onto the specific's:
 - c) The text starts with "In that day": Is Amos talking about the destruction of that kingdom, or is this another "end time" thing? Because God works in patterns, I suspect it's both! To state the obvious, it's all "past tense" in that the Northern Kingdom was destroyed around the year 700BC. It was the literal end of that specific kingdom. I'm equally convinced it is also all "future tense" from Amos' standpoint. When Jesus was on the cross, we read in the Gospels how it was dark for hours in the middle of the daytime! I'm convinced that "dark" was God showing us how He judged sin. I also suspect it's "end time stuff" as that's when God is going to judge the entire world once and for all, for the sin factor that exists here!
 - d) To finish the specific's Amos is saying in effect, "Instead of going about life as you would normally go, all of you will be mourning as if your child was just killed". Amos is trying to use the most painful thing one can imagine as an image of how bad it will be!
 - e) That's why I'm convinced it's past tense and future tense, in that this literally happened as Amos described it and it's a warning to us not to mess with God, period.
 - f) Well, if the book of Amos hasn't been strange enough yet, it's about to get worse:
15. Verse 11: "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land-- not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. ¹² Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.
- a) The next prediction is strange. Amos is saying there will be a famine of the hearing of the word of God (i.e. the bible). It's strange to us in the era of the internet to think that people can't get whatever information they want whenever they want it! What I suspect Amos is predicting is when the Israelites are scattered after that war, they won't be able for awhile to gather together as Jewish people to hear God's word. I think that's part of it.
 - b) It makes we wonder if there will be world one day where the bible is banned during some time period. I know it was illegal in Communist countries for a long time for bible studies to occur! In our modern era of political correctness, it might become illegal to teach God's word. In short, I don't know how these verses will play out in the future, but the fact that Amos predicts a future day where bible study is illegal, just makes me all the more to get His word out to as many people as are willing to hear it as God wants me to preach! Bottom line, verses like these inspire me to keep going!
16. Verse 13: "In that day "the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst. ¹⁴ They who swear by the shame of Samaria, or say, `As surely as your god lives, O Dan,' or, `As surely as the god of Beersheba lives'-- they will fall, never to rise again."
- a) We have to admit, this is all bad news for those who are supposed to be trusting in God! I'm sure Amos is predicting the people being marched out of the land and many will die in the process. In some of the great wars of the 20th Century, there were "death marches" as captured soldiers had to walk long distances, where many of them died on the way!
 - b) If you care about ancient specific's "Dan and Beersheba" is like American's saying, "From Maine to California". It's a way of describing the entire land area by naming the place in the most northern and most southern part of that territory. Anyway, Amos is delivering really bad news here of the death of the Northern Kingdom and how terrible those will be suffering due to that great defeat.
 - c) I can tell, you're expecting one of my why should I care speeches, so let me not disappoint you. The issue isn't to read about ancient suffering. It's to realize that you reading history occur before it happened and God knows all things in advance. More importantly we are reading a warning to us who believe in Jesus, that we too are separated for a purpose and if we "blow that purpose" we can suffer just as they did so long ago!

- i) If you have doubts that is true, think of the empires that have risen and fallen over the millenniums while the Israelites still exist as a people! If that's too grand a scale to consider, stop and think of all the Christian ministries that have risen and fallen because the people running those ministries turned from what He wanted them to do those ministries.
 - ii) Anyway, we're almost done with this tough book. One more short-chapter to go!
17. Chapter 9, Verse 1: I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said: "Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on the heads of all the people; those who are left I will kill with the sword. Not one will get away, none will escape.
- a) Apparently God's not done giving Amos visions. This is #6 is my count is correct. Keep in mind that this is a vision. Does God literally live in an altar room? I have a tough time picturing the God who created everything being "stuck" in a room somewhere! What I do realize is that since Jesus is fully God and fully man now, there has to be a literal place we will see one day where God Himself lives. Put it this way: If we're going to live forever it has to be a physical and literal place for us to exist for all of eternity!
 - b) Anyway, Amos is having another of what I call a "bad pizza dream" moment as He sees a literal vision of God Himself standing in "THE" temple as He orders damage to be done to the Northern Kingdom to a point where the land of that kingdom will be empty of Jewish people! By the way, that's literally what happened to Israel, as the entire population was either killed or taken into captivity and separated from each other. The Assyrians did that to prevent uprising by not allowing captives to "gather together" in any one place! Realize that empire lasted for 700 years for a reason, and that policy was a key reason!
 - c) Realize that the desire to end the existence of the nation of Israel is nothing new. Just as it happened way back then, there are "dark forces" that work to want to destroy it today!
 - d) Anyway, Amos is saying, no one will escape this judgment. Which leads us to details:
18. Verse 2: Though they dig down to the depths of the grave, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens, from there I will bring them down. ³ Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from me at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them. ⁴ Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good."
- a) Short version: No matter where they hide, there is no escape from this judgment!
 - b) As we get close to wrapping up Amos, that's the message for us too, there is no escaping the fact that God's going to judge how we lived and how we've used the time He's given us. Carmel is a high hill or small mountain in Israel. Obviously people can't live in at the bottom of the sea. Again it's Amos' colorful way of saying there is no escape from the fact that we're all going to be judged by God for how we live, so we might as well accept it!
 - c) In the midst of all this bad news, let me give a little good news. If we're trusting in Jesus as God, and in charge of our lives, then we can't lose our salvation. If we are using some of the valuable time He's given us as a living witness for Him, we don't have to fear when we face Him in judgment. The issue is always are we doing what He desires we be doing at any given moment. The great news is He guides us. If we pray, God my life is in Your hands, make it obvious what it is You want me to do next, do so." Then go do whatever is logical to do next as if God has answered that prayer. Looking back over time we can see how He has worked in our lives if we let Him. That's how this relationship works! That's not an indication that life will always be "rosy". It means He promises to guide us so we can make a difference for Him.
 - d) I know I'm preaching to the choir again, but even "us in the choir" need the reminder that He is there, He wants to guide our lives and He wants us to use our lives for His glory. If you get that, you actually get the purpose for Christian living. With that said, it's time to get back to Amos as we've got a few verses left to cover.

19. Verse 5: The Lord, the LORD Almighty, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn-- the whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt-- ⁶ he who builds his lofty palace in the heavens and sets its foundation on the earth, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land-- the LORD is his name.
- OK we get a second reference in two chapters to the rise and fall of the Nile River. Amos is saying is effectively, God's in charge, deal with it! This is sort of a lofty reminder of the God the Israelites are supposed to be worshipping made all things, so why are so many of the people God's called to live as He desired, ignoring that fact? That's what I see Amos almost "screaming out" as he finishes his book.
 - So why state the "God's in charge lecture" here near the end of the book? Because despite all of God's warnings of the horrid things to come, nobody is paying attention to Amos or turning to God. Why do you think the false-priest religious official told him to stop? It is as if Amos is saying, "I'm not saying all of this just to get it off my chest! God commanded me to say all of this so that people here actually turned from how they were living so they could use their lives for His glory." That's the point here. Amos continues:
20. Verse 7: "Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?
- This is God saying, you Israelites are not like your neighbors. Since I am God I know the history of all the people groups around here. However, you Israelites were not called to live like others around you. You were supposed to be My witnesses to the world around you. You can just sense the frustration of Amos as he's preaching what should be obvious to the Israelites around him.
21. Verse 8: "Surely the eyes of the Sovereign LORD are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth-- yet I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD.
- Remember I said one of the two titles of my lesson was the bad news, the really bad news and the good news? Well congratulations, after ten and one half pages, we've reached the good news portion of the lesson. It's as if Amos wanted to say, "Despite the fact you have messed up life around here beyond hope, God still has the dilemma of His unconditional promise to give this land to your descendants mixed in with the fact that all of you failed to live as God desires as a witness for Him."
 - Amos' key point is that despite all the horrid things that are about to occur here in "North" Israel, it's not "the end" of Israel's existence. One reason I'm convinced that despite all the attempts to wipe out Israel as a nation, I'm convinced it will stand whenever Jesus comes back to begin His millennial reign from there. In the meantime, Verse 9:
22. Verse 9: "For I will give the command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground. ¹⁰ All the sinners among my people will die by the sword, all those who say, 'Disaster will not overtake or meet us.'
- Apparently Amos is so used to preaching bad news, he wanted to give two more verses of the bad news before he wraps up with some good long-term news. It's as if Amos wanted to make the point clear that way before any of the positive things occur about God saving the nation of Israel won't occur until all the "sifting" of sinful people happen first.
 - One advantage you and I have is hindsight. It was around 700 years later before the time of Jesus' ministry. Yes Israel existed at the time of Jesus, but they were part of the Roman Empire. They were back in the land, but as part of other nations. They weren't their own nation until 1948! My point is God kept His promise to restore Israel as a nation although the time frame was a lot longer than I suspect Amos could ever imagine!
 - Meanwhile, back to these verses. Most of us have "sifted" in some capacity in our lives. In these verses Amos is trying to get the idea across that few will survive as if they will all be sifted like one does in many cooking products. I don't think it was like eternal judgment on an individual basis, but more of a group judgment for the majority of them as they are ignoring Amos' pleas and they'll be stuck there when the invading army comes.

23. Verse 11: "In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be,¹² so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the LORD, who will do these things.
- a) What fascinates me here is the term "David's fallen tent". David was the 2nd King of the "united" nation of Israel before the split occurred. David's descendants were the kings of the Southern Kingdom all the way until it was destroyed about 100 years after the North was destroyed. The point here is that God is not only promising Israel will exist one day as a nation again, but it will also be rebuilt and a descendant of David will rule there!
 - b) If you know your history, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD, they burned the temple which held all the family records. My point is no one today knows who is and who isn't a direct descendant of King David. I believe one reason God allowed the temple to be destroyed is so people couldn't claim they were David's descendants. My point is it is just another way we can prove that when Jesus returns as a direct descendant of David from both Mary and Joseph, He will be king based on His "family lineage."
 - c) Occasionally I will get asked from my religious Jewish friends of "How can Jesus be from the line of Joseph?" The short answer is legal adoption. In both Jewish and Roman law, if a man marries a wife, all she owns belongs to him, and that includes her children." There is a longer answer that includes quoting the book of Numbers, but that's enough for now.
 - d) Verse 12 says that the Israelites will possess the "remnant of Edom" and other nations that bear God's name. Short version is that when Jesus returns to rule over the world from the nation of Israel, it will be bigger in size and include parts of what is Jordan today as well as parts of Syrian and Iraq. Ezekiel Chapter 48 describe the boundaries of Israel after the time when the Messiah returns (that is, Jesus Second Coming). Anyway, Verse 12 states a short version of what Ezekiel tells us in more detail.
24. Verse 13: "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.
- a) Again, realize Amos was a farmer, so God uses analogies Amos relates to. What I believe Amos is saying is in effect, "Times will be so good, the land will produce more fruit than a harvester can collect." Remember that Amos spent most of the book telling us in detail of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. Here Amos is saying a day will come when life will be so good here, the land of Israel will be inhabited by Israelites and it will have more fruit than we need! Israel today is one of the largest fruit exporters to Europe. Here is the relatively tiny country of Israel, roughly the size of New Jersey, is now a major exporter of fruit. All I'm saying is this is another proof verse of God's word coming true.
 - b) Let's recall one last time why Amos is saying all of this. It's to answer the "God dilemma" issue of keeping His promises to the descendants of Abraham getting that land combined with the fact that God requires us to be a witness for Him or else we suffer badly.
25. Verse 14: I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit.¹⁵ I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.
- a) Again, we have the advantage of hindsight to see that this prediction by Amos literally is fulfilled today. Yes they came back after the Persians conquered the Babylonians who did conquer the Assyrians, but the Israelites returned to the land as part of the Persian Empire roughly around 500 BC. Other than a brief revolt period from the Greeks, Israel wasn't an independent nation until 1948. My simple point is that God keeps His promises despite a lot of "horrid stuff" until that occurred!
 - b) Finally, let me talk about "never again be uprooted from the land". That means that when Jesus comes to rule the world from Israel, "that's a wrap" and Israel will never be removed from that land again. Does that mean Israel today won't be destroyed? We'll wait and see!

- c) Obviously I can go on for another page or so discussing the present state of Israel as it can relate to this passage. However, I'm now running long. All I know for sure is God's word is true and all the predictions have and will come true exactly as it is written. However we have now finished the bad news, the really bad news and the good news for one lesson so it is time to wrap this up in prayer.
- 26. Let's pray: Father, first, help us to be eternally grateful for our salvation. May we be grateful that we can't lose our salvation. However, we can blow our witness for You as the Israelites did back in those days. Help us to apply the lessons You want us to learn from Amos. Help us to realize we've been separated for You for the purpose of making a difference for You. Help us so we don't waste the most valuable thing you've given us, our time, so we can use it to make a difference for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.
- 27. My commentary on Amos is part of series I'm doing on all the Minor Prophets. I'm going to list my sources for all these books when I get to the end of that series. Thanks for reading, John