

Dickson Old Testament Commentary

AMOS

WRITER

Nothing is known of Amos except what is revealed in this book. He was from Tekoa, a small mountain village about fifteen kilometers south of Jerusalem (2 Ch 11:6; 20:20). He was a shepherd and a farmer of sycamore fig trees. His name means “burden bearer.” It has been suggested that he was a prophet who was called from the poorer people of Judah in order to preach to the rich urban dwellers. He too possibly suffered from the exploitation of the poor by the rich urbanites.

His humble nature was brought out in his statement that he was not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet (7:14). He was thus not a professional prophet, but supported himself as a shepherd and farmer. Neither did he claim to be from a school for the prophets (See 2 Kg 2:3). Because of the message that he had to deliver to Judah and Israel, God called him because he was a straightforward person. He was stern and fearless in the face of any adversary. Because he was deeply devoted to the law of God, he was courageous in delivering a message of judgment to those who were living contrary to the principles of God’s will. He was a fearless preacher of righteousness to a nation that had strayed from the will of God.

DATE

It is believed that this was one of the earliest books of the prophets to be written. Amos identified the time of his ministry to be two years “before the earthquake” (1:1). His ministry took place during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel, the northern kingdom. The date of the beginning of his ministry could have been somewhere around 760 B.C., and two years before the earthquake. In 8:9 he suggests that an eclipse occurred during his ministry. Archaeological evidence of the city of Hazor reveals that a severe earthquake took place in the middle of the 8th century B.C. An eclipse took place in 763 B.C., as well as an earlier eclipse in 784 B.C. The writing of the book could have taken place somewhere during the end of the 8th century. Amos thus prophesied in the twilight years of the northern kingdom.

BOOK

The book is written in poetic form, reflecting the literary skill of Amos. He used metaphors throughout the book to reveal the intensity of his message. In pure classical Hebrew he revealed a stern message of rebuke that was concluded with hope for the people of God. The book is both direct, but concluded with a message of hope.

In the New Testament, Amos was quoted by both Stephen (5:25-27; At 7:42,43) and James (Am 9:11,12; At 15:16,17). Amos also referred many times to the law of Moses, specifically to the book of Deuteronomy – Am 2:10 (Dt 29:5), Am 4:10 (Dt 4:30; 30:2), Am 4:11 (Dt 29:23), Am 5:11 (Dt 28:30-39).

At the time of writing, Hosea prophesied strongly against the Baal gods. Amos, however, focused little on false worship to pagan idols, but concentrated on the materialism of the people that led to the rich oppressing the poor. Israel had become very prosperous during the reign of Jeroboam II. As a result, their self-sufficiency in their wealth moved them away from trusting in God. There was great corruption in government and injustice in society in reference to the poor. The greed of the wealthy moved them to deal unjustly with the poor. Their religiosity, therefore, had digressed to the point that they had little concern for depending on God. Amos thus came with a message that the northern kingdom would come to an end, which prophecy came to pass within thirty years after the message of Amos. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom in 722/21 B.C.

Judgment Against the Nations

(1:1 – 2:16)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1,2), (2) Judgment against the nations (1:3 – 2:3), (3) Judgment against Judah (2:4,5), (4) Judgment against Israel (2:6-16)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1:1,2 Amos was a simple farmer who was called to deliver a straightforward message to a wealthy urban generation that trusted in great material wealth. It was a God-ordained mission for one who was a humble farmer. *The Lord will roar:* When God speaks judgment to the nations, destinies are set. Nations will mourn as God works among the nations in order to bring about His mission through the nation of Israel. Israel would mourn over the calamity that God would bring upon them in order to salvage a repentant remnant through which to bring the Messiah into the world.

JUDGMENT

AGAINST THE NATIONS

The irony of the judgments against the neighboring nations of Israel was that they were all descendants of Abraham through his various wives and handmaids. They were to be the buffer nations for Israel from the major kingdoms of the ancient world. However, in their envy, they became enemies of Israel, and thus reaped the judgment of God. The judgment was that they would all cease as nations, while Israel would continue until the coming of the Messiah.

1:3-5 Damascus: Syria would not escape the judgment of God. *Three ... four:* Three was the number of full sinfulness, plus four would mean that her sins were beyond full, and thus deserving of judgment. Gilead was often invaded by the Syrians and subjected to being plundered (See 2 Kg 8 – 13). *Ben-hadad:* See Is 17:1-3; Jr 49:23-27; Zc 9:1-4. *Bar:* This was representative of

the fortifications of the city. Reference was to the bar that locked the main gate to the city. ***I will ... cut off:*** Syria was conquered by Tiglath-pileser of Assyria during the reign of Judah (2 Kg 16:9).

1:6-8 *Gaza:* The Philistines had been the continual enemy of the Israelites from the time they were established in the land of promise. In this judgment, Philistia, the principal city of the Philistines, was used to represent the entire nation. ***Carried away captive:*** The Philistines had carried away an entire people (See 2 Ch 21:16; Jl 3:4). They had delivered the captives to the Edomites who were the perpetual enemies of Israel. All of the principal cities of the Philistines would be destroyed. The judgment against the Philistines would be harsh. They would perish as a civilization of people.

1:9,10 *Tyre:* Those of Tyre failed to remember the covenant that existed between Solomon and Hiram (1 Kg 5:1,12). Because of her sin, she too would be destroyed. Tyre was first conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, and then by Alexander the Great of Greece. Alexander threw the rubble of the city into the sea in order to complete his conquest of the people who had fortified themselves on a small island off the coast. Tyre was a major port city with significant trade between the eastern countries and the coastal cities of the Mediterranean Sea. She lived in luxury and trusted in her trade. For this reason, God would bring destruction upon her strategic trading position among the nations.

1:11,12 *Edom:* The descendants of Esau, the Edomites, were a continual enemy against their brother, Jacob. The resentment of Edom against the descendants of Jacob began when the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity. Because the Edomites were the perpetual enemies of their brethren, the Israelites, they would suffer the judgment of God. God's judgment against them was the termination of the Edomites as a nation of people.

1:13-15 *Ammon:* The Ammonites lived east of the Jordan River and east of Gilead. They were a cruel enemy against the Israelites who dwelt in the land of Gilead. Because they set themselves against the anointed nation of God, God would bring them down in captivity. They too would cease to exist as a nation.

Chapter 2

2:1-3 *Moab:* Neighboring Israel to the southeast, and situated between Edom and Ammon, Moab also was an antagonist against Israel. The Moab nation would die (See Ez 25). Though not recorded in history, on some occasion the Moabites evidently dug up the bones of the king of Edom and burned them as a show of contempt for the Edomites (Compare 2 Kg 3). At the time of Amos' prophecy, the Assyrian kingdom was threatening from the north. However, the judgment of these nations would not take place until the final conquest of the northern kingdom in 722/21 B.C., and finally by the conquest of the entire area by the Babylonian Empire in 6th century.

JUDGMENT AGAINST JUDAH

2:4,5 Judah: Amos turned from judgments against the surrounding nations, to Judah, the southern kingdom. **Despised the law of the Lord:** See comments Mk 7:1-9 (See Is 5:24; 6:9,10; 29:13; Jr 5:18-21,23,31; 23:25-28,32; 29:8,9,22-32; Hs 4:6). One despises the law of God by ignoring its principles as a way of life. Those who fall to study the word of God show disrespect for it because they do not honor it as God's inspired word for their learning and living (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11; 2 Tm 2:15).

JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL

2:6-8 Israel: When the Israelites were established as a nation in the promised land after coming from their wilderness wanderings, there were no poor in the land. God established the people as an agricultural community within the land, and everyone was given land to farm. However, when they started to ignore the law of God concerning the land rights, the greed of many individuals led them to buy out the land of others, and thus a poor class was developed. Through lies and fraud people were subjected to the greed of the rich. The digression of the northern kingdom into social and economic oppression was manifested in their subjection of their fellow Israelites to slavery. **Man and his father:** The moral state of the people had digressed to the point that a son and father would have intercourse with the same young woman. **Clothes taken as pledges:** Any clothing that was taken as

a pledge for a loan was to be returned before the night came (Ex 22:26). In this case they sinned by profaning the name of God by keeping and sleeping with the clothing, thus showing little concern for their fellow man. They purchased wine with the fines that they had taken from the condemned. There was no justice because judgments were made for gain.

2:9-12 God had taken Israel out of Egyptian captivity. He had made it possible for them to conquer the Amorites who were a strong people. When Israel entered the land, the Israelites were protected by God through the ministry of the prophets and Nazarites. All these privileges required them to be responsible to God. But they tempted the Nazarites to forsake their vows and commanded the prophets not to speak the judgments from God. They rejected the word of God, and thus condemned themselves to the judgment of God.

2:13-16 I will crush you: God's patience had run out. It was now time to bring judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel because of their rejection of the commandments of their Creator. As a cart totters by the weight put upon it, so Israel would be burdened with the calamities that God would allow to come upon her. They could not run from the calamity to come, or stand against it. They would not be strong enough as a nation to overcome the force of the Assyrians who would come against them. In the face of the enemy, they would be defenseless as a naked man. They would fall beneath the judgments of God.

Proclamations Of Israel's Judgment (3:1 – 6:14)

Outline: (1) Necessity of judgment (3:1-15), (2) Prepare for destruction (4:1-13), (3) Funeral dirge for a dead nation (5:1 – 6:14)

Chapter 3

NECESSITY OF JUDGMENT

3:1-8 *You only I have known:* God selected Israel as His bride, and thus committed Himself to her as a young man would commit himself to only one woman. Since Israel alone was chosen from the nations of the world, then she bore greater responsibility to be faithful to God (See 2 Ch 36:16; Is 1:2-4). Regardless of Israel's special attention and calling, she rejected the pleas of God through the prophets to follow after His commandments (2:4; 7:10-13). **Two walk together:** They had rejected the message of the prophets. But Amos reminded them that since God and the prophets walked together, the prophets were speaking the message of God. Both God and the prophets agreed on the message that was delivered to the people. **Lion:** God was the lion who roared through the prophets that turn Israel from her sin (1:1; Jl 3:16). **Fall in a snare:** The bird would fall to the ground only if caught in a trap. Israel's fall to the ground meant that she was caught in her own trap of sin. **He reveals His secret to His ... prophets:** God would bring no judgment on His people unless He first warned them. Thus the prophets went forth to warn Israel of impending calamity. However, they rejected the prophets (2:12).

Since God, the lion, had roared and spoken His message of judgment, Amos stated that he had to preach the message of God (Compare comments At 4:17-20).

3,9,10 Ashdod ... Egypt: Ashdod is mentioned for Assyria. Assyria and Egypt were called upon to witness against the people of God. The irony of the scene that is presented here is that the idolatrous nations are called on to be a witness against those who were to be the righteous people of God. **Do not know how to do right:** This would be a statement against a culture of sin. In their ignorance of the word of God, they had created values and behavior after their own desires. The people had digressed to the point that they did not know what was right according to the commandments of God, for they had forgotten the law of God (Hs 4:6).

3:11-15 Amos reveals the fall of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. The city will be surrounded. When it falls, the royal palaces will be plundered. The city will be completely destroyed. **Two legs ... ear:** Some will be saved as two legs or an ear are saved from the mouth of a lion. Samaria is to be utterly destroyed, except for "a corner of a bed" or "the cover of a couch." **The house of Jacob:** Amos extended His proclamation of judgment to all Israel, both the northern and southern kingdoms. Since Judah would eventually follow in the steps of her sister to the north, she too would succumb to the judgment of God. **Altars of Bethel:** God's judgment on Israel would cleanse the land of all idolatrous altars to the Baal gods. **Horns**

of the altar: There would be no place of refuge from the destruction. No one could go to the horns of the altar for protection (See 1 Kg 2:28). The judgment about which Amos spoke eventually came to pass a few years later when Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, brought down Samaria, and thus also brought an end to the northern kingdom (2 Kg 17:5,6).

Chapter 4

PREPARE FOR DESTRUCTION

4:1-3 *Cows of Bashan:* In the words of a farmer, Amos focused on the rich women socialites of urban Samaria. Bashan was a productive land that was known for fine-looking cows (See Nm 32). These rich women socialites pressured their husbands into providing for them a luxurious life-style. They oppressed their husbands to exploit the poor in order that they be able to enjoy great wealth in luxuriant living. However, the calamity that would come through the destruction of Samaria, and the captivity of the people, would be laid on the shoulders of the women who lived in luxury. God cannot tolerate the oppression of the poor that is caused by those who seek to live a luxurious life. He considers it a tyranny in society when the rich maintain their life-style through their oppression of the poor. If one is poor because he does not want to work, then he has made a choice of poverty. However, if one is poor because he is exploited by the rich, then the poor live in an unjust society. *Take you away with hooks:* This was not a pretty picture. During the de-

struction of Samaria, the dead bodies of the rich and famous would be dragged away to a refuse pile of corpses for burning. God's punishment on them would be the loss of all their wealth and their lives.

4:4,5 These words spur the idolatrous people on to intensify their sin for which they would be judged. Bethel and Gilgal were places of idolatrous worship, and thus places to which the people would go in order to increase the separation between themselves and God. In their zealous religiosity, they were actually intensifying the call for judgment to come upon them. *Thanksgiving with leaven:* Reference was to the leavened loaves offered in the praise offering. Instead of the required unleavened bread, they were bringing the leavened bread to the offering. *You love to do:* Their worship had turned from offerings to God to occasions to gorge themselves on the food they had brought for the offering. Their worship was no longer worship to God, but an opportunity to satisfy their own lust of the flesh.

4:6-11 God had worked consistently throughout Israel's history in order to turn the people back to His commandments. But they did not respond to the chastisement He brought on them in order to encourage repentance. They did not respond favorably because they had long forgotten their origins and the law by which God sought to direct their paths. Nevertheless, though they were indifferent to God's chastisement, He continued to plead with them through the prophets and calamity in order to encourage their

return to Him. **Cleanness of teeth:** They suffered through drought where they had nothing to eat. Through blight and droughts they could not understand that the environmental calamities were the judgments of God on their wayward behavior. **Destroyed some of your cities:** In the end, God went to final and desperate measures in order to turn Israel from her sin. He allowed invaders to destroy some of the cities of Palestine as He had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 19).

4:12,13 Because they did not respond with repentance to the chastisement of the Lord, they should prepare to meet the God who would bring an end to Israel. **He who:** This doxology is to the glory of the creator of all things. Since He is the creator of all things, then He is sovereign over all that is created, even Israel. And since God was the creator of Israel, He would be just to take Israel out of existence as a nation. He would be just in His actions because Israel violated the conditions of the covenant that He had established with them at Mount Sinai.

Chapter 5

FUNERAL DIRGE FOR A DEAD NATION

5:1-3 **She will no longer rise:** At a climax of Israel's prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam II, Amos came forth with this prophecy of death. The people were secure in their own wealth, and thus did not think of falling as a nation. Therefore, they paid little attention to the words of Amos. However, the manner by which the rich were maintaining their wealth,

was the cause for the fall of the nation. The wealthy were exploiting the poor, and the nation had turned to idolatry. Both their economic behavior and religious beliefs contradicted the commandments of God. The nation against which Amos prophesied, therefore, would come to an end because she had given up her identity as the people of God. In order for the repentant remnant to come forth out of apostate Israel, the people had to go into captivity. They had to be stripped of their material self-sufficiency and the idol gods in which they believed. Not only would the society of Israel that existed during Amos' ministry cease to exist, in her captivity Israel would lose her status as an independent nation. When the captivity ended in 536 B.C., a remnant returned to the land. However, the Jews returned to a land that was under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire. After the Medo-Persians came the Greek Empire, and then the Romans. In her sin, Israel gave up her right to be an independent nation within the land of Palestine.

5:4-8 **Seek Me:** Contrary to seeking religiosity that is created after the desires of men, the Lord here pleads that the people seek Him and His commandments. When men create moral standards after their own desires they digress into the moral chaos that was prevalent with the nation of Israel at this time in their history. Only the consistent moral standards of God build societies. The moral standards that men establish for themselves constantly change throughout history. **Bethel ... Gilgal ... Beersheba:** These were places of idol worship within

the boundaries of Israel. Idolatry was the creation of an idea of a god after one's own imagination and desires. Therefore, when God called on the people to seek Him, He was calling them away from themselves, and thus away from establishing their own moral codes of behavior. As long as they determined their own values and directed their own behavior, they would continue to digress into moral degradation. And in a state of moral degradation, they were no longer representatives of God's people on earth. In order to bring the Messiah into the world, God could not work through a morally apostate people who had no knowledge of Him. **You will live:** They would escape the calamity that was soon to come upon them. **Wormwood:** This was a bitter plant that was symbolic of the injustice that was in the society. **Cast down righteousness:** In order to maintain the injustices of their society, they had to reject the will of God. When men love darkness more than light, they have taken society into moral degradation and away from God. **Him who makes the Pleiades:** Instead of creating a god after their own image, they should worship the God who created all things and man after His image (Gn 1:26,77). God is the creator of all things, and thus higher than all He created. There is thus no possible means by which man can imagine the fullness of God outside revelation from God. Since men cannot think beyond that which they experience in this physical world, then they cannot imagine or fully comprehend the God who is above this world. Only through God's revelation to

man is man able to come to a knowledge of the one true and living God. Every imagination of God that ignores the revelation of the Bible, therefore, is a distorted understanding of God. **Calls for the waters:** This is possibly a reference to the flood of Noah's day when God brought forty days of rain upon the earth.

5:9-13 It is God who brings forth destruction on those who are socially wicked. In verses 10-13 Amos defined in detail those who were socially wicked. Decisions of judgment were made at the gate of the city. The socially unjust would protest against those who would give judgments against them. They maintained their luxurious life-style by exploiting the poor. The rich would be punished by the loss of that which they prized so much in life, their wealth and possessions. **They take a bribe:** When those who are in authority take bribes, there is no justice. The poor who can pay no bribes are marginalized and exploited for the sake of the rich. Since they could not pay a bribe, then they received no justice. **Keep silence:** In this context, the one who would patiently keep silent would be the one who waited on the vengeance of God. The faithful righteous, therefore, believed the prophets concerning the coming judgment of God on those who had oppressed them. The destruction of their oppressors was their liberation. When the northern kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians, the rich and their possessions were taken and the poor were left in the land to care for the land.

5:14,15 **The remnant of Joseph:** Amos turned to the righteous with this

note of encouragement. They must continue to seek and love good. After Tiglath-pileser swept through the northern kingdom in 732-31 B.C., he left only a remnant of Ephraim in the land. The remnant were the poor who were to farm the land for the Assyrians.

5:16,17 *Pass through you:* When the Lord passed through the land, there was destruction (See Ex 12:12). In this case, He passed through the land with the Assyrian army. The dead would be so prevalent that the farmers would be called to mourn over their dead relatives in the cities. The professional mourners would be hired to lament both death and destruction (See Jr 9:17,18; Mt 9:23).

5:18-20 *Day of the Lord:* There were those who thought that they could escape the judgment of God because they were the chosen of God. The day of the Lord would be destruction of the enemies of Israel, but salvation for Israel. In this case, the opposite would be true. Israel would be destroyed and the enemies of God's people spared as the conquerors. The wicked of Israel were caught in a trap. In fleeing from the lion, they were caught by the bear. For those who are disobedient to the Lord, the day of the Lord was a day of doom.

5:21-27 The assemblies and offerings of the people had become heartless ceremonial performances. They were a socially unjust society carrying on with the rituals of religiosity that meant nothing to God. Obedience to ceremonies could not make them righteous before God. God asked them to take from His presence those ritualistic ceremonies they

presumed would justify their unjust ways. If they would be righteous before God, they must repent of their oppression of those they exploited for their own gain. Ceremonial acts of worship do not make one righteous before God. Acceptable worship comes from the heart of the sincerely devoted, not from the performance of acts of religiosity. ***Wilderness forty years:*** The answer to the question was that they did not faithfully offer themselves to the Lord throughout the forty years of wilderness wanderings. ***But you have borne the shrine:*** While they were unfaithful in offering their sacrifices to the Lord, they were carrying the shrine of their king and the pedestal of their idols. They honored the gods that they had created after their own imagination, but failed to honor God in their hearts. The consequence of their disloyalty to God would be their captivity beyond Damascus. They would go into captivity in the land of Assyria.

Chapter 6

6:1-7 *At ease in Zion:* The rich were oblivious to the impending calamity that was approaching. Not only did they place their trust in the false security of ceremonial religious practices, but also in their wealth. They flaunted their wealth, thinking that it would deliver them from their enemies. They did not realize that it was their wealth that their enemies sought. Amos reminded them that they were no more important than Calneh and Hamath of Syria and Gath of Philistia, which cities had already fallen to the Assyrians. The self-indulgent leadership of Israel

manifested little wisdom. As they indulged in the luxuries of consuming their wealth upon themselves, the Assyrians were building an army that would within forty years bring to an end the northern kingdom of Israel. This prophecy was made during the reign of Jeroboam II, a time of great prosperity in the northern kingdom. It was during this time of great prosperity that the prophecy of their doom was made. Thus the people never believed that such a wealthy kingdom as Israel could fall. The problem with the sense of security that comes through wealth is that wealth is never secure. Wealth always lessens the importance of God in one's life. The greater the wealth, the less one depends on God. The poor are thus blessed because their true sense of security can be found only in God.

6:8-14 *Pride of Jacob:* Israel found their security in their riches. But God had set Himself against their riches, and thus would take them down when they were materially strong. Israel's pride was in her self-sufficiency, not God. As in the days of Solomon, Israel began flashing her wealth before the nations. Within five years after the death of Solomon, however, Egypt invaded Judah and took all the treasures of the royal palace and temple. The same was about to happen in Israel. Because she took pride in her wealth, God was about to take her wealth away. ***Burns the bodies:*** It was the custom of the Israelites to bury their dead. But during the invasion that would come, the number of dead would be so great that they would have to burn the bodies. ***Keep silent:*** After removing the bodies

from houses, they would not dare mention the name of the Lord, lest He hear and bring on more calamity. ***Gall ... wormwood:*** The social order of Israel was in moral chaos before God brought on them the calamity of the Assyrian invasion. That which they thought was justice was actually the bitterness of gall. And that which they believed was right was actually poison to society. ***Lo Debar ... Karnaim:*** The Hebrew word for Lo Debar means "nothing." Karnaim means "horn." These were towns east of the Jordan that were taken by Jeroboam II. They were insignificant towns, and thus easily taken. Amos uses the names of the towns to signify their overconfidence in their military strength. Though they had confidence in taking two insignificant cities, they would stand no chance against the mighty Assyrian army. The Assyrians would overwhelm them from the northern borders of Israel (Hamath) to the southern borders near the Dead Sea.

Visions Of Judgment

(7:1 – 9:10)

Outline: (1) Visions of judgment (7:1 – 8:3), (2) Sin and judgment (8:4-14), (3) Prophecy of restoration (9:1-15)

Chapter 7

VISIONS OF JUDGMENT

7:1-9 *Locust swarms:* This first vision of Amos pictures the locusts coming at the time when the rains came on the crops in their final stage of growth. There was great hope for a good crop, and then the locusts would devour it. The

state possibly took in taxes their portion of the crops from the first cuttings, while the people were left with the remainder. The coming of the locusts stripped the crops bare, and thus the prophecy was a judgment of God against the sustenance of the nation. The self-sufficiency of the nation was attacked through blight before the arrival of the Assyrians. **Fire:** The second vision was of drought. Drought had set in and thus fire raged across the land to devour what was left from the locust devastation. **Plumb line:** This third vision was in reference to the moral character of the people. Locust plagues and drought were natural phenomenon that occurred in the natural environment in which the people dwelt. The plumb line was used to measure how straight a wall was to be built. In this vision the plumb line was used to measure the moral integrity of the people. They were measured and found wanting. The final judgment, therefore, came upon the people because of their moral degradation and apostasy from God. **High places:** The people had built for themselves locations that manifested their apostasy from God. These symbols of religious apostasy indicated that they had turned away from God, and thus could not stand when measured by the law of God. Regardless of their religiosity, they had fallen from the word of God.

7:10-13 Not able to bear all his words: The conspiracy was not a military uprising, but a pronouncement of the judgments of God. Amaziah was a religious leader who was on the payroll of the state, and thus brought charges

against Amos before the state. He not only saw his payroll in jeopardy, but also the continuation of his position with the people, for Amos was bringing words of condemnation upon Jeroboam and the state. Amaziah thus considered Amos' words against the government to be treason. **Flee:** No true prophet of God would flee in the face of danger. If Amos was a coward in character, then certainly God would never have chosen him to bring harsh and direct judgments on the house of Israel. In times of apostasy, God must have strong men who stand up and teach the word of God to those who have turned their backs on the truth.

7:14-17 I was no prophet: Amos was not a prophet who represented the institution of professional prophets. He was a simple farmer whom God had chosen from outside the prophetic professionals. Thus Amos was saying to Amaziah that his financial well-being did not depend on the contributions of the people. He was not called to be a prophet because he sought the salary of a prophet. Amaziah, therefore, could not question his motives. And in fact, in the context, Amaziah never condemned Amos for speaking lies, neither did he speak against what Amos was saying. He simply threatened him that he should flee, for he knew that if what Amos was saying came true, then he was out of a job. **Your wife ... your sons and your daughters:** This tragedy that would come in Amaziah's family was a prophecy from God. Amaziah would die when Israel was invaded. His children would die, thus terminating his posterity, for none of his de-

scendants would return from captivity. His land would be divided and given to others. The calamity that was coming would be the end of the house of Amaziah.

Chapter 8

8:1-3 *Basket of summer fruit:* This fourth vision depicts the summer fruit that had been picked. The picked fruit would eventually become rotten, and thus be discarded. Israel was ripe and ready to be discarded. ***I will not again pass:*** Though He had passed over them in the past and not brought judgment and destruction, the time of passing over without judgment had come to an end. It was a time for judgment and destruction. The destruction would be so great that the land would be defiled because of so many dead bodies. ***With silence:*** During the time of devastation, there would be no hope of deliverance. It would be useless for them to cry out to the Lord for deliverance (Zp 1:7; compare Hk 2:20; Zc 2:13).

8:4-6 *Sabbaths:* The Sabbath was given as a sign of the covenant between God and Israel. When they rested from their work on the Sabbath, they ceased from honoring the conditions of the covenant. In their greed, they exploited the poor. They saw the Sabbath rest as a day wherein they could receive no profit from trading. The greedy merchants did not want to give their poor laborers a day off. ***Dishonest scales:*** Cheating merchants were a sign of a morally degraded society. They overcharged the buyers in order to oppress the poor. The poor farm-

ers received little for the goods that they sold to the rich who dwelt in the cities. The rich thus increased the poverty of the poor. ***Buy the poor:*** By increasing the poverty of the poor, they forced the poor to sell themselves into slavery in order to pay back that which they needed for daily sustenance.

8:7-10 *I will never forget:* When God refuses to forget, He will bring to judgment those who commit crimes against their fellow man. In this context, He would not forget the exploitation of the poor that the urban rich had committed against the rural poor. ***Land tremble:*** God brought judgment through earthquakes. ***Rise up like the Nile:*** As the Nile yearly rose up to flood the land, so God's judgment would rise up against the wicked. ***Cause the sun to go down:*** As an eclipse would bring darkness over the land, God would bring down the rulers of the land who allowed social evil to prevail among the people over whom they had responsibility. The purpose of government is to protect and work for the people (See comments Rm 13:1-7). But when government exists for its own benefit, then it has lost sight of its purpose. ***Sackcloth ... baldness:*** These signs of mourning and lamentation would be over the death of the nation. Israel, the northern kingdom, would die as an independent nation in the land of Palestine. The Assyrian destruction of Israel would bring to an end the independence of the ten northern tribes, as the southern kingdom would be brought to an end in 586 B.C. when they were taken into captivity.

8:11-14 *Famine ... of hearing the words of the Lord:* No greater loss of opportunity could be experienced by man. They had already forgotten the law of God (Hs 4:6). They had rejected the law, and God took away the prophets. In the time of their destruction when they would seek God for deliverance, there would be no answer from God. They would thus faint because of their lack of spiritual nourishment from the word of God (Compare comments At 20:32; 1 Tm 4:6). ***Sin of Samaria:*** They had given themselves over to idolatrous religiosity. ***Dan ... Beersheba:*** These were generally posted as border cities of the northern and southern extremities of the land of the twelve tribes. In this statement Amos goes beyond the judgment of the northern kingdom alone. Judah was brought into the prophecy of condemnation because she too was guilty of the idol worship that had infested all Israel. Therefore, she too would suffer the destruction of her independence as a nation within Palestine. With the final captivity of the remnant of Israel in Palestine through the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the independent national Israel came to a historical close. Israel would never again be restored as a God-recognized independent nation in the promised land. A repentant remnant would be restored to the land after the fall of the Babylonian Empire, but only the Israelites as a race of people would be restored to land that was occupied by the Medo-Persians. After the Medo-Persian control of the land, the land would be occupied by the Greeks, and finally by the Ro-

mans. During the time of the Roman control of the land, the consummation of Israel in the church through Jesus would come to pass (See comments Gl 3:7,23-26; 6:16). There is a modern-day independent Israel in the land of Palestine. However, this nation was not established by God in order to bring the Messiah into the world. The Messiah has already arrived.

Chapter 9

PROPHECY OF RESTORATION

9:1-4 This fifth vision of Amos was one of final judgment on the nation. The nation could not escape the calamity that was to come. Though they would seek to escape by fleeing, God would find them in order to bring judgment upon them. Since God is omniscient and omnipotent, no one can hide from His presence. God's judgment would start at the altar and spread to all the nations.

9:5,6 In this doxology, Amos magnified the transcendent God who prevails over His creation (See 4:13; 5:8; 8:8). ***Rise up ... drown:*** When God rises up, He brings judgment that will overwhelm those of His creation as a flood of waters. No one will escape (Compare 2 Co 5:10). ***Waters of the sea:*** God calls on the nations to flood over His people. Through the proxy of the nations, God brought judgment on both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel.

9:7-10 The Lord was the God of all nations, for all nations find their birth in Him. He brought Israel out of Egyptian captivity. As He worked among the nations, He brought nations as the Ethiopi-

ans, Egyptians, Philistines and Syrians into existence. **The house of Jacob:** Amos' prophecy goes beyond the termination of the northern kingdom. Judah, the southern kingdom, is also in the prophecy of judgment. She too would be brought to an end. **Sift ... among all nations:** Through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, God would send His people as captives into many nations. When the Medo-Persian Empire would eventually conquer all the nations to which the Jews were sent, God would relocate them to the land of Palestine. However, only a faithful remnant would be restored to the land in order to establish the racial identity of Israel for the fulfillment of the prophecies to the fathers (See comments Et & Ne).

9:11,12 Within the prophecy of calamity, there was a prophecy of restoration. Because of James' quotation of this prophecy, its final fulfillment was in the establishment of the church (See comments At 15:16-18). **Tabernacle of David:** This is a metaphorical statement that refers to the church of the living God, the manifestation of the spiritual Israel on earth. This prophecy has been fulfilled according to the quotation of the prophecy by James in Acts 15. **All the nations:** See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16. The building of the tabernacle would be through the preaching of the gospel to the nations. As all those of all the nations throughout the world were obedient to the gospel, the tabernacle (the church) would be built throughout the world.

9:13-15 God would return the cap-

tives of His people and restore their fortune in their land. There was a literal fulfillment of this prophecy after the conquest of the Babylonian Empire. The repentant remnant was restored to the land and the Israelites once again lived off the bounty of the land. **Never again be pulled up:** In view of the Messianic prophecy of verses 11 & 12, we could conclude that the Messianic prophecy continues into these final verses. Since God terminated independent national Israel with the captivity, the permanent restoration here to the land was not in reference to national Israel, but to the spiritual Israel of God, the church. The church would never be taken from their spiritual foundation in Christ (Compare comments Jn 10). Biblical interpreters must keep in mind that the land promise to Abraham was valid only until God accomplished His eternal plan through Abraham (See comments Gn 12:1-3). God promised that the Blessing that would bless all nations would come through the seedline of Abraham. Genesis 3:15 was in the background to this promise. In order to bring into the world the Blessing that would crush the head of Satan, God worked through the seed of Abraham in order to build the nation of Israel. In order for the nation of Israel to exist, they needed a land. God blessed the nation with the land of Palestine until the fulfillment of all promises and prophecies that were made in reference to the coming of the Seed of woman who would bless all mankind. When Jesus came, therefore, national Israel was dissolved in Christ (See comments Gl 3:23-26). Since

God does not now recognize a national Israel with whom He has a special covenant relationship, then there was no need for a land possession for Israel after the coming of Christ and the establishment of the spiritual Israel in Christ.