

AMOS

The name Amos means literally, Burden, Bearer, or Heavy. Amos bore a heavy burden for the Lord.

Amos was a herdsman of an ugly, stunted, fine-wool, sheep called (*noked*) in Hebrew, but highly esteemed on account of their wool. He lived in or near Tekoa. Tekoa is in a desolate region, too dry in the summer for raising grain.

Amos, a simple country preacher, came from the Judean wilderness in a day when both society and religion were bankrupt. He came to burn the message of God upon the hearts and minds of the people of Israel.

Amos was well aware of the society about him. He knew what their sin was exactly. Israel's sins were:

1. Oppression of the poor,
2. Judges taking bribes,
3. Businessmen were dishonest,
4. Sold the righteous into slavery,
5. Sexual immorality,
6. Materialism, and
7. Religious corruption.

Amos was a preacher who was not afraid to tell it like it is. (Amos 7:10-11)

He did have a direct call from God, to go to the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and prophesy against Israel. In exactly what manner this call came we are not told. He went to Bethel, 12 miles north of Jerusalem, and there under the very shadow of the royal palace lifted up his voice in a vigorous and impassioned cry for justice. (Amos 7:14-15)

Gluttonous feasting took the place of religious service. Greed permeated the whole society. Corruption of justice was a commonly accepted rule of life.

Land-grabbing became an everyday crime. The rich owners had bribed the legal machinery until they controlled it. The rich became richer and the poor became destitute. Men lived in haughty indifference to God and were “at ease in Zion.”

Religion lost all its vitality and became ritualistic, syncretistic, paganistic and had no bearing on morals of life. Insecurity and dishonesty, corruption, and licentiousness, criminal extravagance and blind assurance took such a firm hold of the wealthy, arrogant upper-class that they became heathen in everything but name.

No wonder the shepherd farmer prophet was outraged and shocked at the immorality he saw—no wonder that the God of all holiness and righteousness spoke through him so bluntly and angrily!

We need more people like Amos, today, to speak the warnings and promises of God in the New Testament to an immoral society today which is world-wide!

We believe the best statement of the theme of Amos is, “The Sovereignty of God, Over All.” This universal sovereignty of God—the responsibility of all men everywhere and all nations to morality and justice—is Amos’ central doctrine.

Amos goes to the root of the matter and deals with the attitude of the people’s heart and will towards Jehovah. He wants them to know that their worship is vain—an abomination to the Lord—because their hands are stained by sin and their hearts are indifferent to the Law of God and the common dictates of social justice and morality.

The book of Amos is a practical work, for it points out sin clearly and exalts at the same time the purity of God. He shows that God is no respecter of persons. If the Israelites sin against Him, He will condemn them as readily as other nations. He shows that God hates hypocrisy.

**PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—
DAMASCUS**

Chapter 1

Verse 1

We do not know exactly why God chose a man of the southern kingdom, Judah, to send with his message to the northern kingdom, Israel. All we need to know is that God selected the right man at the right time to do the right job.

Amos and his message were extremely unpopular. Yet within a very few years four kings of Israel had been assassinated, then Hoshea was deposed and imprisoned and Israel ceased to be a nation in 722-721 B.C. at the Assyrian captivity.

Verse 2

Zion means the City of God, Jerusalem, where God's presence dwells. It would be a subtle reminder to the northern kingdom that God was to be worshiped only at Jerusalem!

Amos reveals that the Sovereign God will bring His judgment upon Israel first through a drought. God will wither the pasture land from the top of forest-crowned Mount Carmel, the mountain at the mouth of the Kishon river, to the verdant plains of the lowlands.

Carmel means "garden." Mount Carmel was an especially verdant place for grazing sheep.

Verse 3

The numbers three and four merely serve to denote the multiplicity of the sins, the exact number of which has no bearing upon the matter. It is a Hebrew idiom expressing fullness.

The Syrians have filled their cup of wickedness full to overflowing. God will not relent! He is going to punish them. Their one greatest sin has been to cruelly crush the Gileadites (a territory east of the Jordan allocated to Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh) with iron threshing carts.

The threshing cart was a sort of a cart with toothed iron wheels underneath, which was driven about to crush the straw in the threshing-floors after the grain had been beaten out.

They have despoiled God's possession—they have violated, in the most cruel fashion, the most basic law of God—the sanctity of human life. But even worse, they have done despite (injury) to the covenant people of God. To attack God's people is to attack God!

Verses 4-5

To break the bar of Damascus would mean to “break the bolt of the gate,” literally to destroy the city's defenses and overcome it.

To “cut off the inhabitant” is to slaughter him. Those who were not slaughtered, God would cause to be taken into captivity to Kir, the territory in ancient Elam east of the Persian Gulf, on the banks of the River Kur.

Jehovah God, all-sovereign Creator of the universe, has the right and the power to punish them for their sins. And what are the sins of which they are guilty? They are guilty of desecrating God's holy people. But in the main their sin is simply inhumanity.

They have broken those most basic laws of God written on the heart and conscience of all mankind by which the relationship of man to man and nation to nation ought to be governed.

Violating the natural laws of humanity written on their consciences, demands punishment.

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—

GAZA AND TYRE

Verse 6

Jehovah says: "For sin after sin of Gaza I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Philistines captured whole cities and areas of My Holy land and people and sold every last one of them into slavery to the Edomites, I will consume them in the fires of judgment."

Verse 7

It could be that Amos meant literal fire would destroy these heathen cities since the destructive forces of fire have always been a major result of warfare in every age. But most probably it is a figure of the judgment of God. (Matthew 3:12; John 15:6)

Verse 8

God means the Philistines as a nation or race shall perish.

And it is true today, Philistia is no longer a nation and the Philistines are no longer a people.

Verses 9-10

Tyre was the capital of Phoenicia. The people were seafaring people. Tyre was one of the principal seaports of that entire territory bounded by the Mediterranean coast. They imported and exported many different things among which were slaves—men, women and children often Hebrew captives of raids by the Philistines, and the Syrians.

Their indifference and cruelty to the covenant people of God through their slave-trading was wholly unjustifiable and God announces that He will visit them with His judgment.

Alexander the Great appeared before Tyre. The island stronghold (where the people of the old city of Tyre had fled at the siege of Nebuchadnezzar almost 300 years earlier) closed her gates.

Alexander was forced to build a causeway, and after long months of frustration and vast penetration, take the city by costly storming. Alexander built the causeway out of the timbers and stones of the old city of Tyre by scraping its site “flat like the top of a rock.” Tyre was broken, and the causeway still remains.

The ancient city of Tyre on the mainland has never been rebuilt!

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—

EDOM

Verses 11-12

The Edomites were descendants of Esau, brother of Jacob (Israel). Edom became the relentless enemy of Israel constantly cultivating an implacable, moral hatred towards the Israelites, which broke out in acts of cruelty at every possible opportunity.

The Edomites were always busy raiding the cities and villages of Palestine, taking captives and using or selling them for slaves.

Verses 13-15

The Ammonites (descendants of Ben-ammi) were related to the Moabites and Israelites through Lot. (Genesis 19:38) The Israelites were told by the Lord not to enter into battle with them as they journeyed toward the land of Promise. (Deuteronomy 2:19)

The Ammonites were continually trying to extend the borders of their land. They were a fierce people by nature, rebellious against Israel and idolatrous in their religious practices.

The chief god of the fierce Ammon was Milchom, the principle of destruction, who was appeased with sacrifices of living children, given to the fire to devour. (1 Kings 11:7) Because of their sins and especially because they constantly opposed Israel, Ezekiel predicted their complete destruction. (Ezekiel 25:1-7)

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—

MOAB

Chapter 2

Verses 1-3

Moses and the Israelites had a run-in with the Moabites in their journey to the land Of Promise. Balaam advised Balak to seduce the men of Israel by sending the Moabite girls into the camp of Israel. (Numbers 31:16; 25:1-9) The Moabites

oppressed Israel for 18 years. When Israel repented God sent Ehud to deliver them from Moabite oppression.

Along with Amos' death sentence upon Moab are those of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah. The death knell of Isaiah upon Moab is fulfilled by Shalmanezzer of Assyria or by his successor Sargon. From then on a succession of world conquerors subdued and in the process, annihilated Moab as a nation.

Some have thought that Moab had no king at this time since Amos mentions a "judge" as the potentate. But there is no notice in the history of that time of any other type of potentate than a monarch.

"Judge" in verse 3 is probably nothing more than a rhetorical expression applied to the king and used simply for the sake of poetic variety.

PUNISHMENT PROMISED THE COVENANT NATIONS—

JUDAH

Verses 4-5

Amos may have been a shepherd and a farmer but he was a student of human nature and a master psychologist. His homiletical approach to the central application he made was excellent. In a series of concentric circles Amos denounced the sins of men against Jehovah.

Beginning with a great encircling movement that included Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab; he identified the rebellion against God with those outside God's special covenant.

One can almost hear the people of the northern kingdom, Israel, giving ready "Amens" to Amos' preaching against their neighbors! Yes, there were many in Israel who probably still held grudges against Judah and so when Amos pointed out the sins of Judah they were in full agreement.

We find Judah, not being judged for the wild excesses of the heathen, but for rejection of the law of God. Judah stood in greater responsibility than the heathen for she had been blessed to know the law of God, had been blessed with a succession of teachers and religious leaders to instruct her in the law and so Judah's was an even more heinous sin against God! Greater privilege

brings greater responsibility. (Luke 12:48) Judah is not immune to judgment because they are God's elect.

Indeed, their judgment is greater because they are His; and being His they chose to rebel against His law.

“Walking after” is the standard expression for idolatry. Their fathers before them, “walked after” false gods. These false gods were impotent, dumb, vain and deceitful. So, their “lies” are their “idols.”

They followed falsehood, deception, immorality and rebellion—an inevitable consequence of idolatry. Society is little better today, even in so-called Christian cultures. Men have deified science, philosophy, flesh, government and self. To worship any of these is hardly more intelligent than the idolatry of 2700 years ago.

Rejection of divine revelation and substitution of any pantheon of gods—ancient or modern—brings the same inevitable consequences! Man without God becomes autonomous which leads inevitably to anarchy in society—both political and ethical.

PUNISHMENT PROMISED THE COVENANT NATIONS—

ISRAEL

Verses 6-8

Now Amos lets loose all the stormy fury of God's anger where it is needed most imperatively. Israel is on the brink of disaster.

God has called them time and time again. He has sent prophet after prophet; natural calamity after natural calamity, but unable to see through the veneer of a superficial prosperity (much like people today), Israel is “at ease in Bethel!”

“Selling the righteous for silver,” refers to the judges who were bribed to pronounce a man guilty of some crime of which he was accused while in reality he was innocent of the accusation.

“Selling the needy for a pair of shoes” does not mean that some slave was sold by someone else merely to obtain a pair of shoes. A rich creditor would

bribe a judge with a bribe trifling as the price of a pair of shoes and the judge would then sentence the poor man in debt to become a slave to his creditor.

The word translated “pant” means “to gasp, to long eagerly for.” The greedy rich desired eagerly to bring the poor into such a state of poverty and misery as to cause the poor to scatter dust (a symbol of sorrow and distress) upon their heads.

They long to trap the poor and cast them headlong into destruction by placing stumbling-blocks in their path. For themselves the rich seek gold and silver and luxury; for others dust and ashes, poverty and sorrow!

Father and son seek the same maiden for fornication. Actually the law calls it incest (Leviticus 18:7, 15, 20:11), a crime punishable by death. This was done not so much out of passion as it was in deliberate revolt against God’s law.

They literally defied God or man to punish them!

“Men satiated with ordinary sin seek incitement to sin, in its very horrors. Oppression of the poor, wronging the righteous, perverting the way of the meek, laid the soul open for any abomination.” The truth of this has been exemplified in every generation and is no less true in our own generation!

The rich men were taking the poor men’s cloaks as collateral on loans. The cloak as a pledge was to be returned to the pledger before nightfall (Exodus 22:25) and a garment so taken was not to be slept upon. (Deuteronomy 24:12-13)

But the godless rich money lenders kept the cloaks of the poor and used them as blankets upon which they lay to rest at the feasts; and this they did by every altar, at sacrificial meals, in contempt of God and His law!

Then in further contempt of God and their fellow man they debauched themselves in drunken revelry, drinking wine they purchased from the fines collected from the poor; and this in the place where they claimed to worship God. They did all these things but they went through certain religious rituals and so they eased their consciences.

Most of it done in the name of religion and in the very buildings hallowed for worshiping the Deity! Is it any wonder that Amos was so sharp and bitter in preaching the warnings of God to these lazy ones who cannot be changed.

There are centers of government and religion equally as corrupt today as in Amos' day. Let us know assuredly that God's wrath upon such rebellion has not changed.

Verse 9

God delivered, led, sustained and fought for Israel. When Israel came to the borders of the Promised Land and sent men in to spy out the land the report came back that the people were as giants and the Israelites like grasshoppers in comparison but God gave Israel victory and so completely overthrew the Amorites that they were eradicated. God removed them so thoroughly that they never were a nation again.

Verse 10

God nurtured Israel like a father and mother nurtures a child. When Israel was an pitiful, disorganized, unloved, nomadic tribe of slaves in Egypt, Jehovah God took them and pitied them, delivered them from their slavery, fed them, clothed them, protected them, gave them a land and blessed them. Still they held Him in contempt. They forgot what they were before He blessed them! They took Him for granted. Ingratitude is, like its sister pride, one of the worst of sins.

Verses 11-12

Nothing demonstrated the grace of God as well as the fact that God raised up some men from among the covenant people to be His prophets, to deliver to the people the Light of Life, the Bread of Life, the Word of God.

The patience and longsuffering of God waited upon the people through the prophets as He sent them to turn the prodigal nation from its rebellion, but the people would not! They commanded the prophets to cease their preaching.

The word *nazir*, translated Nazarite, is literally "one consecrated, devoted."

This was the primary mission of the Nazirite—consecration—and to that end he dedicated himself either for life or for a brief period of time.

Samson is an example of a man used by God in such a life. The primary concern of the Nazirite was to manifest his consecration to God by a particular manner of life. This life consisted of:

1. Totally abstaining from products of the vine and all intoxicants.
2. Refusing to cut their hair lest a man-made tool profane this God-given growth.
3. Avoiding contact with the dead.
4. Declining unclean food.

So, the Nazirite was given to the people to demonstrate by holy living what the prophet taught in precept.

Instead of listening to the prophets and living like the Nazirites and becoming holy people God desired them to be, they tempted the Nazirites to break their vows and drink wine and they forbade the prophets to preach!

Verse 13

From the context, it would seem as if Amos is using the figure of a cart “stopped in its tracks” by being too full to pictorialize how God is going to “stop Israel in its tracks.” Israel’s military machinery, running smoothly under Jeroboam II (permitted by God), rolling on to victory, would suddenly be stopped by the Lord. Her facade of prosperity would be ripped from her. Disorder, confusion, panic, defeat, ruin, disaster was coming ever closer! Now she is “flying high”—soon she will be plunged into destruction.

Verse 14-16

The swiftest, strongest, bravest, ablest warriors will not be able to stand against God’s judgment. The most courageous among the mighty will throw off his armor and his clothing and run for his life like a coward.

Israel, as a distinct nation ceased to be, just as Amos and his prophet-successors warned.

Any nation, no matter how blessed and privileged in the past, contemptuously defies the laws of God and shakes its fist at the throne of heaven must suffer the same annihilation! Let all the nations of the earth take heed!

**REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE—
THE LORD DOES NOT ROAR WITHOUT CAUSE**

Chapter 3

Verses 1-2

God's indictment is against the whole covenant people. Judah has already been warned that she will be judged. But for the moment this particular prophet is concerned with the northern kingdom, Israel.

No other people on earth were, at that time, privileged to be the recipients of the grace of God and the oracles of God in such a measure as Israel. She was a favored nation in this respect. Much was given her, much was expected.

Verses 3-6

These verses have a series of seven questions in which the Lord teaches a lesson in clear logical thinking in matters pertaining to sin-punishment relationships. Reason demands repentance.

Verse 3 has nothing to do with the subject of unity. It is simply an illustration to the universal law of cause and effect! Two people do not meet and walk together (effect) without previously making some appointment (cause) or arrangement to do so.

Just so, says Amos, since every effect has its cause, your sin will cause God's judgment to come upon you due to the special relationship between you and God and even as God promised in His word.

These people of Israel had rationalized their sins so long they had lost the ability to see the very basic principle of cause and effect and to apply this to their relationship to God.

But God is roaring like a lion—does a lion roar in the forest unless his victim is doomed? God does not roar without a cause any more than a lion does.

Birds caught in a snare logically demands someone previously had set the snare. And when one sees a snare sprung he must logically reason that something caused it to spring.

If a mighty blast of the warning trumpet is blown in the city do the people pay no attention to it? Do not all the disasters happening even now in cities and villages sound a warning trumpet to you that God is beginning His judgment? How senseless and indifferent can this reason be?

But, just like the unbelieving and scoffing today, Israel probably rationalized, “All these droughts, famines, disasters, wars are bound to happen in every country.’ But the prophet warns them, “Shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah has not done it?” Local and national calamities are not due to natural causes, are not only the consequence of human mistakes, or faulty legislation, or political folly or inadequate statesmanship. These and other matters may be secondary or contributory causes. But the Prime Mover of this universe is Jehovah God! He has done it! (Isaiah 45:1-7)

The cause is man’s sin, against which God has warned man time and again. The purpose is to warn man against rebelling against his Creator and to call the sinner to repentance, back to his God, the highest Good! Whatever the Lord does, whether tribulation or triumph, it is good. (Romans 8:28)

Verses 7-8

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He is not willing that any should perish; so, He revealed His secret plans for the judgment of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous to His prophets (watchmen and shepherds) and they revealed them to man as facts to be believed; commands to be obeyed; warnings to be heeded; and promises to be enjoyed.

In His word we have all things that pertain to life and godliness; in His word we have doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

So the Lord has roared; who is so insensible that he will not fear? God has spoken; how can God's messenger be silent? Even as Paul said, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." Knowing the fear of the Lord, we should persuade men! The Lord has spoken; who can but preach!

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE—

ISRAEL'S SINS ASTONISH EVEN THE HEATHEN

Verses 9-10

Ashdod and Egypt, two heathen nations were called to:

1. See the acts of violence and the abominations in the palaces of Samaria.
2. Bear witness against Israel. (Verse 13)

The sins of Israel are even worse than those of these heathen. Israel thought of the Philistines and the Egyptians as the worst of sinners.

If such heathen as these are called to look upon the ungodliness of Israel, how great must have been her ungodliness! Everything was upside down. They were calling evil good and good evil. They had perverted every good thing into something evil. Justice and order were overthrown by open violence.

When they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up and they became worse than the heathen—insensible to practically everything that was right. They not only did not know how to do right they did not know they should do right! This is what a lack of attention for the revelation of God leads to—idolatry, ignorance, and licentiousness!

Verses 11-12

Just who was this enemy (adversary), God does not choose to announce through Amos. From prophets very nearly contemporary with Amos (Hosea, Isaiah), we learn that this enemy shall be Assyria.

The enemy will surround their beautiful, luxurious country with all its ivory-inlaid palaces and mansions and tear it to pieces. Israel will be so completely

destroyed that about all that will be left is a few pieces, like what is left of a sheep when a lion gets through with it!

The rich luxuriant pleasurable things the rich have gotten themselves by oppressing the people will be taken away from them by the Assyrians. They will have nothing left!

Verses 13-15

Now the heathen are called to witness the punishment Jehovah is going to visit upon reprobate Israel. Jacob is a term used along with Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria, to signify the northern kingdom. "Jacob is the whole of Israel, of the twelve tribes; for Judah was also to learn a lesson from the destruction of Samaria."

The smiting off of the horns of the altar signifies the complete destruction of the altar. It may also have this special significance: the four horns on the four corners of the altar of burnt offering, to which the sacrificial blood was applied, were symbolic of sure, reliable forgiveness and salvation.

To these horns clung the guilty transgressors for safety. So, even the symbols of salvation were to be torn off the altars of Bethel, which had neither God's permission or promise, no right of existence, no authority to forgive sins, and no power to save.

Though nominally built in honor of Jehovah, they were tangible evidence of Israel's rebellion, an abomination in the eyes of the Lord.

The Lord will strike down Bethel, the very heart of Israel's religion. He will wipe out this vain, idolatrous religion from the land. Together with the altar at Bethel, He will tear down the luxurious homes of the rich and great built by the blood, sweat and tears of the oppressed poor.

They had built themselves winter-houses and summer-houses. These homes were expensive with walls and furniture inlaid with costly ivory.

These wicked and powerful rich (their power was dependent upon their riches), will be stripped of their riches in which they so vainly trusted. They would be powerless, destitute, prisoners!

How foolish men are to seek satisfaction, joy, power, in the fleeting, temporal, vain things of this temporal existence.

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE—

GOD'S HOLINESS DEMANDS PUNISHMENT FOR EVIL

Chapter 4

Verse 1

Most commentators feel that Amos is referring to the sensuous women of Israel when he calls them “cows of Bashan.” Bashan was noted for its fat, sleek, cattle well-fed on Bashan’s luxurious pasture lands.

These indulgent women were pampered by their husbands (lords) who in turn had to oppress the poor and crush the needy to supply their wives with the means of debauchery.

There are many “cows of Bashan” today in the world. Many sensuous women were tempting their husbands to evil scheming in order that they may have the means to continue in their libertine living.

Verses 2-3

These poor and needy have no recourse for justice. They are exploited even by the judges who should stand for justice. But the Lord, because He is holy, righteous, just, merciful, rises up as their Vindicator.

The Perfect Holiness of Jehovah cannot tolerate evil, especially in a people whose call and blessing was that they should be a holy people! The rich of Israel were making no attempt to be holy in their living.

Because of their lack of holiness, God would allow their enemy (the Assyrians) to come and violently “jerk” them out of their luxurious fish-bowl like a man who hooks a fish jerks it out of the water. They will be violently torn from their pleasant surroundings and caused to flounder and thresh in agony as a fish out of water.

The gates of their cities will be so utterly destroyed and piled high with debris from war’s destructive forces and their walls so completely torn down

that the people will be marched off to captivity through the great gaping holes in the walls instead of the gates.

These people of Israel, because of their sins, brought upon themselves this captivity. They are said to have cast themselves into this foreign land “Harmon” (which most translators believe is the territory beyond Mount Hermon, or Damascus and beyond.)

Verses 4-5

Amos uses the figure of speech called irony here to show Israel the folly of her sins. Irony is a “kind of ridicule which exposes the errors or faults of others by seeming to adopt, approve, or defend them.”

Amos was not approving or authorizing the people to sin! He as much as said, “Go ahead and do the sins you are doing, you are only multiplying God’s displeasure with you in so doing!” They were “presuming upon the forbearance and patience of God and by their hard and impenitent heart storing up wrath for themselves.” (Romans 2:4-5)

They had so perverted true religion of Jehovah they thought that by their superabundance of offerings they could fool God into thinking they were righteous. They did not stop with offering sacrifices of unleavened cakes upon the altar; to make sure they offered an abundance they even offered some of the leavened cakes (forbidden by the Mosaic Law) as well.

Not only this but the offerings which were supposed to be motivated out of a purely spontaneous impulse (freewill-offerings), were forced from people by making laws regarding “freewill offerings!” This was entirely the wrong attitude toward the Holy One of Israel, for He looks not on the outward man but upon the heart!

Israel did not know God! But this is not because God has not revealed Himself—not because they have no opportunity to know Him—not because He is unknowable!

No, they love to have it so! This type of religion pleases them. It soothes their consciences.

Men who do evil hate the light and love darkness, because their deeds are evil and if they should come to the light their deeds would be exposed—then they would see how utterly vain and foolish their deeds are. Any man who thinks God is pleased with a trust in forms and rituals is foolish.

Our faith is not in the act or rite itself but in the Person who commanded it. Again, if we refuse to do the thing which God has clearly commanded in the New Testament, it simply shows we do not trust the Person who commanded it—we trust our own wisdom more!

Sooner or later, just how much we trust Him, love Him and want to be like Him shows up in our daily living. This was true of Israel then, and it is true of all men now.

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE—

CHASTENING IN THE PAST SHOULD MAKE THEM THINK

Verse 6

God is going to remind them of the six chastisements He gave them. The phrase, “cleanness of teeth,” (1) means lack of food as is evident from the parallel “want of bread.”

This is what God told the people through Moses in Deuteronomy 28:47-57. A mother eating the flesh of her own child is recorded by Josephus in his account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Romans. God’s judgments are sure! Not one word of His will fall to the ground unfulfilled! Yet Israel did not repent!

Verse 7-8

At times God withheld rain (2) as a call for the people of Israel to repent. (Leviticus 26:19-20)

The rains which were withheld in this particular case were the so-called “latter rains” (three months before harvest). When the drought came, the crops failed.

But in order to show man even more clearly that He uses natural forces and that the sending and withholding belongs to Him, God caused it to rain on one

village (2) and another village, (3) while at the same time other villages received no rain at all.

Rivers and wells dried up in these latter areas and the people had to travel long distances for their water supply and even then could not get enough to satisfy their needs.

The word “wander” comes from an original word which means literally “to stagger, to totter, and pictures the people staggering, almost fainting with thirst, as they go from village to village in search of water! Yet Israel did not see the hand of God in these tribulations—they felt no chastening—they heard no call to repentance!

Verse 9

Their grain fields were either burned up by the “blasting” hot and dry winds (4) or they were rotted by mildew. Their gardens and orchards were gnawed and stripped bare by the locusts.

Verse 10

God sent among the people of Israel many diseases in epidemic form (5) “after the manner” that He had done in the days of Moses to Egypt. (Leviticus 26:25)

God sent wars upon Israel. Often times, in crowded, unsanitary military camps epidemics took their toll along with the slain of the battlefields so that sword and sickness decimated the ranks of Israel’s young, virile men who were the hope of the nation. The slain warriors and the slain battle-horses sometimes filled the air with that sickening stench of rotting flesh which is at times unbearable.

Verse 11

Amos’ list of six judgments of the Lord, are given in an emotional ascension whereby a climax is reached at the last. The Lord has also called Israel to repentance by sending destructions upon her cities similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (6).

Predicting the future was not, as many suppose it to have been, the primary function of the prophet.

The supreme task of the prophet was to interpret the events of history in the light of the will and purpose of God.

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD’S CHARACTER AND WILL REVEALED

Verse 12

“Prepare to meet your God O Israel.” This blunt, piercing statement is a last call of God to His “called out ones,” to perfect themselves in holiness. He does not say to them “prepare to meet your doom” as if their doom were irrevocably sealed, but “prepare (that is, get yourself ready by repenting) to avert your doom.”

We are also reminded of the perverted, ignorant bliss of these people of Israel who said they were actually looking forward to the Day of Jehovah. (Amos 5:18ff)

They were willfully ignorant of their sin and thus blissfully ignorant of what the Day of Jehovah would mean when it came. For them, if they did not repent, they would meet their God in darkness, not light.

Verse 13

Israel is reminded that they are not dealing with one of the impotent gods of the nations of whom they had grown so fond. Idolatry (ancient or modern) is convenient! When one creates his own gods he may manipulate his god to serve his own purposes; one may shelve it, gag it, blindfold it, and even destroy it at will. One need not fear it nor feel any responsibility to it.

But with Jehovah it is as different as light is from dark! He is the omnipotent Creator; He is the omniscient Revealer; He is the beneficent Sustainer. God is the searcher of the heart.

Israel is reminded that when they meet God, and meet Him they surely will for He is not a weak, man-made god, unable to bring His word to pass. He will judge their innermost secret thoughts and intentions.

He is Lord of the universe; He commands all the heavenly and earthly hosts and every creature and creation must reckon with Him! Let the nature of God call you to repentance, O Israel, both then and now!

**REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE—
GOD’S WORD AGAINST ISRAEL**

Chapter 5

Verses 1-2

Amos the prophet, on behalf of God, begins chanting Israel’s funeral dirge.

One can surely visualize with what unpopularity Amos’ preaching would be greeted in Israel. He is mocked, ridiculed and slandered as a preacher of “doom” and a pessimist.

The phrase “virgin of Israel,” is a “poetical personification of the population of a city or of a kingdom, as a daughter,” with a further idea of being unconquerable expressed by the term “virgin.”

God had intended Israel’s destiny to be one of separateness from the heathen world and as a result He would keep her inviolate from foreign invaders. Israel was to be pure, chaste, protected, untouched—but now she has played the harlot and she will be attacked, ravaged and brought to a violent end.

When God gives her up to be spoiled by foreign invaders there will be none to help her!

Verses 3-5

Only a very small remnant of the whole nation will be saved from utterly perishing. Such total ruin would, of course, be the most distant thing from the minds of most of the people of Israel in these days of peace, luxury, prosperity and influence.

We are fearful that there are many Americans who cannot see the danger signs in our generation—crime, government corruption, lewdness, selfishness, anarchy, and perversion of standards in almost every venue of life from sex to art and music to law and order!

Yet God pleads with Israel once more. Seek Me, and live! Jehovah is the Spring of Life. He is longsuffering and does not take pleasure in the death of any of His creatures.

But Jehovah can only be sought and found through His revelation! They will not find Him at Bethel or Gilgal or Beersheba.

These are centers of idolatry, false teaching, false worship; they will find there only ruin, destruction, and captivity for that is what God has planned for these places!

This is a moral law of the universe just as inevitable as any physical “law of nature!” If man will not hear the word of God warning of judgment in His revelation, it is only left for man to experience that judgment in history.

Amos proclaimed that Israel was dead! The people did not know it, nor did they want to know it! Although Israel continued to flourish for almost forty years after Amos’ prophecy before national extinction came, yet, for all practical purposes, she was dead when Amos was preaching; thus he speaks of her future as if it were already present.

Is it only extreme pessimism to say, “America is dead?” Could there be any parallel between Israel’s condition and America’s?

If so, there must be a parallel looked for in their destinies! Perhaps it is not too late for America, even as it was not too late for Israel. Perhaps if America will seek Jehovah in His revelation—His word—she will find Him and live. Only let her not seek life in the many idols her people have made for there she will find only false teaching, false worship and death!

**REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE—
GOD’S OMNIPOTENCE AND OMNISCIENCE**

Verse 6

To turn to Him is the only alternative to inevitable destruction. If they do not seek Him (where He is supposed to be sought) He will “break out” like a fire, He will become a roaring inferno which will consume the whole nation of Israel (house of Joseph) and none of the false gods and false religious practices

at Bethel will not be able to stop the judgment; they are powerless, they are dumb.

He is omnipotent; He has the authority and power to grant life or He has the authority and power to take it away. Israel must choose the alternative course from the one she is now following if she would have life.

Verses 7-9

Wormwood is a species of plant related to our western sagebrush. It was the oriental source of a much-used oil obtained from the dried leaves and tops of the plant.

The plant is a symbol of bitterness. The rich and powerful of Israel had perverted justice (that which is supposed to be sweet, pure, refreshing and vital) into bitterness and rottenness. They were wiping their feet on every semblance of right—they had trampled it down to the ground. It is difficult to imagine a society so corrupt.

The Lord appeals to the people on the basis of His omnipotence.

Contrasted with their present condition of being in the darkness of sin, He who made the starry heavens is able to turn their deepest misery into the glorious light of morning. He is also able to take what may appear to their sin-scared consciences as prosperity and turn it into a dark night of adversity. (Isaiah 45:5-7)

Blessing and curse both come from the Lord to serve His sovereign purposes—it is up to man to choose which he will have!

Yes, He even commands the seas and the rivers and brings about catastrophic floods with sudden destruction upon wickedness.

Man will never build a fortress, a bomb shelter, or an underground command complex strong enough to withstand the hand of the Omnipotent God!

Verses 10-12

Now the omniscience of the Lord is revealed. He is not blind and deaf! He knows both the multitude and the magnitude of their sins.

They despise anyone who takes a stand for righteousness and justice. The only persons they like are those who trample and oppress the poor and demand bribes for judgments. (John 15:19)

“Birds of a feather flock together!” From their “blood money” they have built magnificent plantations—great houses and rich vineyards. How many tears and moans of the starving went into the ill-gotten gains of the influential, one can only guess! They have built them, but they shall not dwell in them—they shall not enjoy the harvest of their vineyards.

There are two false concepts the people had of Jehovah God.

1. They believed He could be worshiped apart from His own revelation of Himself.
2. They believed that their conduct toward their fellow man had no bearing on their relationship to God.

We must seek God, that is, we must learn about Him, obey Him and worship Him, only as we are guided by His revelation of Himself in His delivered Word.

Verse 13

The social and political situation had so deteriorated in the day of Amos that the “smart” man would either join the “establishment” or keep quiet. The advice comes constantly, “Don’t get excited, don’t get carried away, don’t become a fanatic, or preacher of doom. Keep your nose out of it. Play it cool—be wise—keep your mouth shut. It’s just best not to get mixed up in any way with things going on in these evil times!”

But there is one who will not keep silent. God will not keep silent, for He has spoken once for all in the New Testament on such injustice and He has warned His people to speak out against it also. He will continue to speak if voices will rise up in this generation who are wise enough that they will not keep silent like Amos.

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— HATE EVIL, AND LOVE GOD

Verses 14-15

Social injustice and the abuse of human personality ultimately stems from the concept that religion and morality are separate. This is a Satanic dichotomy! God has never authorized such a division! But man has, ever since Eden, been deceived into thinking that religion and everyday living are two separate compartments of life.

True God-revealed and God-centered religion is Life.

In this realm man makes either one of two errors—he either substitutes religion for morals or he substitutes morals for religion. God teaches through the prophets that all morality finds its roots, its spiritual source and its compelling power over the consciences of men in the character of God Himself, and that is true religion. (James 1:27)

To seek God is to seek good; to love God is to love good; and, conversely to hate evil because God hates evil.

Social injustice cannot be corrected by simply renovation and reorganization of the social structure. Social injustice can only be overcome by upgrading the ethics of all men and this can be done only by regeneration, recreating men in the image of God. This is accomplished by true religion which in turn involves submission to the authority of God as revealed exclusively in the written word of God!

The people of Amos' day were claiming that Jehovah was with them and they were with Jehovah, but Amos knew that as long as they continued in their present evil deeds and thoughts their claims on God were vain and false.

Their only hope was to turn to God and righteousness. Many of the Israelites had already gone too far and had set their minds against God.

Amos was speaking to those few who would still listen. God's mercy was still available for the few who would "hate evil and love good."

The prophets did not preach reformation, but restoration and regeneration! They were preaching to change individuals, to call each man to repent and turn to God's revealed will for their lives.

Society will never be changed except as men are changed! And men will never be changed until they are united with God through His revelation which has now been made in His incarnate Son!

Verses 16-17

Unless the sin of Israel was corrected, and Amos seems to feel the situation is almost hopeless for the largest segment of the nation, national destruction would be inevitable. Amos portrays the coming time as one of nation-wide mourning.

There will be mourning in the squares and plaza's, in every street of every city, in the fields of the farmers and lamentations will be changed to those who are professional wailers themselves.

Alas! Israel is no longer God's special people—she has become as heathen and as rebellious as Egypt in the days of Moses. God will no longer “pass-over” Israel, but will “pass through her midst” as He did Egypt with the plagues!

Verses 18-20

The truth of the matter was, the Day of the Lord would be a day of deliverance—but only for the true Israel, those who were Jews inwardly and not Jews only outwardly—for the Day of the Lord of which Amos speaks is typical and prophetic of the climactic Day of the Lord, the coming of the Messiah.

When the Day of the Lord came of which Amos was speaking, God delivered the faithful remnant through which He could someday present the Messiah, while at the same time He judged those who were unfaithful and had therefore cut themselves off from the covenant relationship with Him.

For the most of the people of Israel, then, the Day of the Lord was “darkness and not light.” It was a time of inescapable crisis, a time of inevitable judgment, a time when man would be abandoned by every known source of

aid. Amos uses an almost humorous figure of speech in verse 19 to describe the inescapability of God's judgment!

The Righteous God does not change! He must judge every man who sins! He must execute every rebel! Has not every individual and generation been guilty of reliance upon national and religious heritages instead of personal relationship to God?

Should we not have some second thoughts about how ready we are for the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord to come? (Mark 13:31-37)

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— RID RELIGION OF HYPOCRISY

Verses 21-23

What Amos is denouncing, as is plain from the context, is the perverted, hypocritical, idolatrous forms of religious ceremony these Israelites were then practicing.

God is not only not pleased with its syncretistic (mixture of heathen and Jewish worship) religion, He hates it. It is an abomination to Him and vain and useless as far as the worshiper is concerned!

Every sacrifice or offering made aroused in the heart of the All-Righteous and Perfectly—Holy God a divine hatred. The chanting of their religious psalms and the playing upon the harps was a weariness to God which He commands to be stopped. It was not that God hated the feasts, offerings and songs. It was the perverse and rebellious nature of the people performing them that made them offensive to God.

They were worshiping Jehovah only in pretense while their real affections were centered on their idols and images.

This same principle is true of those who claim to be covenant people of God today! Religious ritual, no matter how scripturally accurate if may be, will not substitute our loving God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength, loving one's neighbor as one's self.

Verse 24

“Because the Lord has no pleasure in this hypocritical worship, the judgment shall pour like a flood over the land.”

“Such worship, instead of averting judgment, rather provokes its full execution. It should pour over the land, like a flowing stream. The image of a flood of waters, points rather to an act of God.”

Verses 25-27

Amos asks a rhetorical question for which he is going to supply the answer and which answer is already well known by his audience.

Did the nation bring God sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years? Indeed they did, and just like Amos’ day they were, for the most part, hypocritical sacrifices to heathen idols while they called it worship to Jehovah! The Northern Kingdom had from its very origin adopted the idolatrous worship of calves as its national religion, a device of Jeroboam’s own heart.

The history of the twelve tribes is a record of ever-repeated idolatry and rebellion against God.

This tendency dated back to the early days of Israel’s acceptance as God’s covenant nation. It was only forty days after the solemn declaration of this covenant when Israel asked Aaron to make gods for them to go before them, and worshiped the golden calf. She did not cease to worship idols even after God’s long suffering and the intercession of Moses kept them from being exterminated.

Forty years later Moses warns them against idolatry, and twice in particular against that special form of idolatry with which Amos charges them here: the worship of the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars.

Star worship was one of the earliest and most widespread forms of idolatry in Israel. The false gods worshiped by Abraham’s ancestors in Ur of the Chaldees were astral deities.

The “images” which Rachael had taken from her father and which were later buried by Jacob were the teraphim, household gods, small statuettes of Ishtar.

In Egypt, Israel was exposed to the danger of various forms of idolatry, among them the worship of the sun-god Ra (also called Amon).

In the wilderness Israel carried the tabernacle (tent) wherein they had Sakkuth, the Assyrian-Babylonian god identified with Saturn. Him they regarded as their “Moloch” (their “king or god”).

The names used by Amos in verse 26 (Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god) may be as ancient as the idols, or he may be calling these ancient idols by the names current at this time. The sin remains the same, star worship.

Stephen, in his famous defense (Acts 7:41ff) quotes from Amos and states that Israel refused to acknowledge and serve the true God as He had revealed Himself to them. So, God surrendered them in divine judgment to their self-chosen ways which could end only in ruin and damnation.

But the judgment of God shall overwhelm them like a flood and carry them off into slavery and bondage to a land far beyond Damascus.

The terrible consequences of rebellion against God grew steadily worse: injustice, crime, immorality of all degrees soon led to complete anarchy in the land.

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— LUXURY LEADS TO INDOLENCE

Chapter 6

Verse 1

Amos directs his warning from God to the whole nation especially to the “notable” men—the renowned leaders.

These public leaders had allowed themselves to be lulled by luxury into a false ease and security. They, in turn had counseled all the people who came to them that peace, prosperity and safety were the watchwords of the day. They were confident that God would not allow anything bad to happen to the chief of nations, after all had not God chosen this nation above all the others.

Prosperity is dangerous. It may be either a blessing or curse, according to the way it is received by those to whom it may come. If the one who prospers receives it with thankfulness to God, constantly aware of his dependence upon God, and uses it to the glory of God it can be a wonderful blessing and a great source of joy. But if the one who prospers is ungrateful and makes his riches his whole aim in life he falls into a snare, into many hurtful lusts, and drowns in perdition.

Verse 2

Calneh was a city in the land of Babylonia one of the four cities founded by Nimrod. Hamath is one of the most ancient surviving cities on this earth located in upper Syria on the Orontes River. Calneh and Hamath were two of the 19 city-states that rebelled against mighty King Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria.

Gath was one of the five royal cities of Philistia destroyed by Uzziah.

Amos has selected these three rich, powerful, influential cities to compare Israel in her greatness, to, and thus emphasize Israel's ingratitude.

Verse 3

These people were crying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. How could Amos preach to them "hard times" when all was well—politically and economically?

They refused even to think of hard times, judgment, and retribution of God for their sins. But by their excesses and injustices they were hastening the day of God's judgment upon them!

Verses 4-6

The greater crime was their gluttony and idolatry as Amos stated in verse 6, "They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." They were blind, deaf, and dumb to the spiritual rottenness then prevalent. They were not the least concerned that this nation whose destiny was holiness and truth was sick unto death with the leprosy of sin.

The injustice, cruelty, decadence did not bother them. They were perfectly satisfied as long as they had food and drink and were rich enough to satisfy their desires.

Verse 7-8

Jehovah makes a solemn, terrible vow. Those who spent their time luxuriating and satisfying every selfish whim—who had no time for God—will be the first taken captive. They will be the first to be made slaves of a foreign despot. They will have no time henceforward for revelry.

That will come to a sudden end. From that time onward they will be an enslaved people. God cannot make his vows any more emphatic than by swearing by His own name, for there is nothing greater in existence than God.

Since He has the authority and power to carry out His threats it is not at all evil for Him to swear by His own Holy Name.

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE—

FALSE PRIDE, TURNS RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BITTERNESS

Verses 9-11

Jehovah is going to bring such destruction and death to Israel that even in the palaces of the rich and houses of the largest families where some may escape siege, famine and disease, even those who remain will die.

Then when a near kinsman comes to inter the dead he will find so many corpses that he will be forced to burn them instead of bury them in order to quickly dispose of the possibility of contagion and stench. Only extreme emergencies made it necessary to burn a corpse, which in Israel was a penalty for extreme wickedness.

When this awful task is finished the kinsman calls, either to his helper or a survivor hiding in the farthest corner, is any one left alive. When the answer comes back, No! The kinsman hastens to warn the answerer not to mention the name of Jehovah. If the attention of Jehovah be drawn to this particular place then the one mentioning His name would also be slain.

Verses 12-14

That they will be able to avert the judgment of God was as incongruous as their actions which were, in turn, as inconsistent as a horse, running full speed upon rocks or as oxen plowing the sea. The fruit of their “righteousness” was wormwood, bitterness. Their “righteousness” was false righteousness which led to false pride. They perverted justice and proudly bragged of their military and economic power.

“Horns” symbolize military power. They forgot and denied that God had anything to do with their prosperity and boasted that they attained it by their own abilities. This God-denying pride is enmity against God. When man declares war on God there is nothing left for God to do but uphold His holiness and omnipotence.

Israel is warned that God is going to raise up against them “a nation.”

We know that nation to be Assyria. This nation crushed the Land of Promise (including both Israel and Judah) from north to south—from one end to the other which is where Hamath and the Arabah would be located—the extreme northern and southern boundaries of the whole land of promise.

While Israel had more common sense than to run horses over rocks and plow the seas with oxen—while they acted so responsibly in the common things of life, they exhibited such irresponsibility in the most significant areas of human conduct—righteousness and justice. So the Lord caused a nation to rise up against this ungrateful, irresponsible arrogant, sensual people.

Our society is almost a sister to that one in its ingratitude, irresponsibility, arrogance, sensuality. Amos was not able to call men back to God in his day, but he was willing to lay down his life if necessary, to give God’s call to repentance. Can we succeed today where Amos did not? Time alone will tell!

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— NOT ALIGNED WITH GOD’S STANDARD

Chapter 7

God will have patience for a time, and spare the land the plagues it deserves. But if there is no repentance by the people from this goodness of God, His forbearance will cease and the downfall will come.

Verse 1-3

Amos is given a vision of a future judgment God has planned for Israel. Amos sees it as if it had already happened.

God prepared a vast swarm of locusts, as He did in the days of Joel, and they devoured all the grain and grass of the land. The first mowing of the grain and grass crops was claimed by the king for feeding the army horses.

If the second growing was destroyed by locusts everyone else would soon perish. There would be no grain or grass for human or animal consumption. This and the succeeding vision of the “fire” should be interpreted symbolically.

What happens to man in his relationship to God depends upon man’s response to God’s immutable will. If man rebels against God’s righteous and wise government he will suffer the consequences already decreed and determined. If he repents, he may avert those consequences because that salvation is also a part of God’s unchanging government.

It is also a part of that sovereign purpose of God to lead men to repentance by showing them His forbearance and mercy and kindness for a period of time decreed and determined by Him. That is what Amos prayed for and what the Lord granted, having already purposed to do.

One of the functions of a prophet was to demonstrate his faith and dependence upon God by prayers of intercession, to lead the people to a penitent, dependent attitude toward God.

Verses 4-6

In a second vision of the future Amos is given to see a great “burning-up” where God is going to punish and try Israel by fire as it were. Most scholars agree that this is a drought. The intense drought will dry up all the stream beds, the lakes, the deep springs and the deepest wells. All life would soon cease to exist in the land.

The great judgment by God, after having consumed the nations, would also begin to consume Israel. So, Amos prays and God relents. He promises not to send this judgment. Now we know that the heathen nations were judged by God.

Verses 7-9

Plumb lines were used then just as they are now to build walls perpendicularly straight. Now Amos sees God standing upon a wall which had been, in the beginning, made according to this standard or divine plumb line.

God is also holding along-side this wall the divine plumb line again and, behold the wall is out of plumb. It veers away from the plumb line. It is crooked and in danger of falling. It is ready to be condemned.

God’s revealed Word is the standard by which it is judged and it shows that Israel is no longer true to their covenant promise of loyal obedience.

They make it their practice to be out of line with God’s rule, disregarding His Law which demands holiness, justice, and righteousness. No more leniency will be shown to Israel. God is a God of patience, and He does not come in judgment without a purpose.

To every man and to every nation there comes a time when the plumb line of God’s revealed Word has been set. Judgment moves on with its inevitable tread and nothing is left for man’s degenerate condition but judgment.

When justice is turned into poison and the fruit of righteousness becomes wormwood and light is turned into darkness it shows that which God has raised up is out of plumb and the time for tearing down has come!

Does America, raised up straight and true, dare now to see what God's plumb line indicates concerning her status? America with all her anarchy, licentiousness and materialism is leaning, nay, teetering dangerously out of plumb!

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— CORRUPT RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Verses 10-11

Evidently Amos' preaching had met with some response among some of the people of Israel. The people were responding or taking notice of the prophet's warnings enough to cause Amaziah, high priest of the golden calf worship at Bethel, to be concerned about rebellion.

Amaziah sends an urgent appeal to the king that Amos be dealt with for what Amaziah says is a plot of conspiracy against the king's life and the nation.

Amaziah very shrewdly does not even mention the main content of Amos' preaching; the apostasy of Israel; his pleas for repentance, etc. As a good politician he turns it into a threat against the king's life and unpatriotic sedition against the nation. This is the first show of the corruption in the heart of Israel's religious leader.

He is not concerned with worshiping Jehovah God nor with righteousness, his only concern is that the status quo not be disrupted.

Verses 12-13

Amaziah was determined to get rid of this "trouble of Israel"—king or no king! His command to Amos is to flee (get out of Israel, while the getting is good) to Judah, Amos' own country. Amaziah adds a very nasty insinuation that if Amos expects to make any money at this preaching business it won't be in Israel.

Amos' assault upon the very center of the calf worship of the northern kingdom jeopardized its independence. Amos's attempt to overthrow this apostate religion threatened the very existence of the nation of Israel. Now we see the next indication of the corruptness of Amaziah's religious leadership.

He was only a priest because of the livelihood—he was a hireling and insinuated that Amos was also.

Amaziah was not a priest in order to serve the people as a minister of the word of God—he was a priest to be sustained and served by the ignorant and sensual worshipers of the calf. The corruption of his heart led the people of Israel in a corrupted religion. This became a major cause of the judgment of God upon Israel.

Verses 14-17

Calmly Amos repudiates the insinuation that he was in the business of prophesying for the sake of money. He was not a prophet by profession neither had he ever been trained to preach the Law of God as others had.

Professionally or vocationally Amos was a herdsman in the hills of Tekoa. He also dressed Sycamore trees to provide for his living. The Sycamore tree of Palestine bore a kind of fruit that required piercing, nipping, or scratching in order to ripen.

God took this honest-hearted, willing, God-fearing man from the flocks and commissioned him to a divine command to Go! tell my people!

Whoever sought to oppose the message of Amos opposed the Most High God! Since Amaziah had rebelled against the word of God, God (through Amos) pronounces His judgment upon His enemy Amaziah. Amaziah's wife was to become a common prostitute, selling her body and soul to other men.

Amaziah's sons and daughters were to die violent deaths by the sword, either by murderers or soldiers in battle. His property, undoubtedly a large and rich estate, would become the booty of the invaders and be divided amongst heathen soldiers and conquerors. As for Amaziah himself, he would be taken captive with all the people of Israel and he would die in a heathen land, never again to see his beloved homeland.

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— GOD’S LONGSUFFERING HAS EXPIRED

Chapter 8

Verses 1-2

The prophet is given another vision. What he sees is symbolic of Israel’s future. He sees a basket filled with summer fruit. Just as a basket of summer fruit indicates the reaper has gone through the vineyard and that the time for growing and developing has ended so God the reaper has passed through Israel and her time has ended.

The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved, could be written over the palaces and homes of Israel! Their last opportunity has come according to the vision given to Amos.

Most certainly there comes a time (known only to God, of course) when God’s longsuffering runs out. His Spirit will not always strive with man. It was revealed to Amos that this terrible moment was about to come to Israel.

Verse 3

When that terrible day of the Lord shall come the songs of frivolous joy and merriment sung in their temples will be turned into howling shrieks of mourning; there will be weeping and wailing instead of laughter and singing.

There will be cries of terror, fear—tears of mourning for the multitudes of dead bodies cast out in many places. After the first expressions of severity of the judgment of God they experience, there will be the furtive whispers and glances as they literally feel the omnipotent wrath of God in their very presence.

Verses 4-6

Israel is a nation of greedy profiteers, “Swallowing up the poor.”

The greedy rich harassed the poor and literally “stalked” them. The merchants and officials could barely wait while they punctiliously performed religious holidays until they could get back to cheating the poor and powerless.

As far as the rich were concerned they only went through the motions of observing religious holidays for the sake of expediency.

It helped them maintain control in governmental affairs and gave them a show of being religious. That was as far as religion went in their lives. When they got to their houses of merchandise or judgment seats it was “do to the other man before he has a chance to do you.”

The *Chodesh* (the new moon) was a holiday on which all trade was suspended just as it was on the Sabbath.

The *ephah* (in dry measure) is about $\frac{3}{5}$ of a bushel.

The *shekel*, in Amos’ day, was probably a hunk of crude, shapeless precious metal, heavy enough so as to approximate the value of the item purchased in actual weight. The buyer usually weighed his “money” to the seller. The Jewish *shekel* was such a weight (shekel literally means weight). Among the Jews the *shekel* was used for the temple tax, poll tax, and for redemption from the priesthood.

In Jesus’ day the *shekel* was struck in coin form and the value of a shekel then was worth about a day’s wages. Now we begin to see that if the greedy merchants made the *ephah* basket smaller than usual and increased the weight of the *shekel* over what it usually was then they were robbing the poor unmercifully. Not only that but they were using scales upon which to weigh grain that were “rigged.”

They were selling the chaff for wheat. The poor were being robbed so thoroughly that they did not even have enough to pay the very smallest debt (a pair of shoes). The poor debtor would either have to sell himself to his creditor or wait for the courts (which were also unjust) to hand him over to his creditor for enslavement.

The end of the nation had been so firmly fixed that Amos viewed it as already achieved. The nature of her character and her reaction to God has been such that Amos could speak of the end of Israel as a present reality.

When current political and religious structures and behaviors are examined, one often has this same feeling concerning the present reality of the end. The

seeds of dissolution and destruction have been sown in both political and religious life and the end seems to be upon us now! It seems as though the end has already come!

In the case of Israel social justice as a principle of life and conduct was cited as characteristic of a nation of whom it could be said “the end has come.” We firmly believe that whether it is ancient Israel embroiled in the problems of the eighth century B.C. or contemporary America, the principle is the same. Social injustice as an accepted fact of life will bring about the destruction of any society, ancient or modern. The same is true of the manifestations of superficiality in religion.

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS PROPHESED— BITTER MOURNING

Verses 7-8

The scene changes! From a description of the sinful state of Israel, we are brought abruptly to a description of the Lord’s terrible judgment. Jehovah is the One in whom Israel glorified. And, as surely as Jehovah is the glory of Israel He is also her Judge.

He must judge her sins. Leaving Israel’s sins unpunished would be denying His glory. Amos paints with figurative language, a terrifying picture of God’s judgment.

The nation will tremble with fear as the judgment of the Lord floods over it. The nation shall be troubled and rage within like the torrents of the flooding Nile River swelling over her banks, inundating and destroying everything in its path. Then Israel, subdued, will sink down.

Verses 9-10

K & D said, “The sun to go down at noon,” is to be taken as figurative. “To any man the sun sets at noon, when he is suddenly snatched away by death, in the midst of his life. And this also applies to a nation when it is suddenly destroyed in the midst of its earthly prosperity.” (John 9:4)

Israel at ease in Samaria and Bethel, riding on a wave of materiel and political well-being, was at the midday of her existence.

But, when Israel thought it was noontime, God knew that her sun had set. God was about to turn this superficial brightness into what it really was darkness(judgment, bitterness. Indeed, instead of the air of festivity and gaiety) Jehovah was about to bring mourning, lamentation, and bitterness. Their religious and social festivals would cease and their gay, suggestive, idle songs would be turned into doleful, sorrowful wailing.

Grief and mourning was to be so widespread as to be almost total. It would be very deep grief, like the grief of mother and father mourning the death of an only son.

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS PROPHESED— SPIRITUAL FAMINE

Verse 11-12

They had forbidden God's true prophets to bring to them the Word of the Lord. They refused to know His Word. (Hosea 4:1, 6)

The famine of the word of Jehovah began when Israel rejected the law and grew worse until God took them into captivity where they had no prophets to declare to them His word. God turned away from Israel when He took them to the land of the Assyrians and caused the word of prophecy to cease.

In death, destruction and in exile from the land of their father, crushed by their oppressors, hearing only of gods more cruel than the heathen who make them, they will run to and fro." They will suffer a famine of truth, will hunger and thirst for the God of Israel and some word from Him of His care for them and His fulfillment of the covenant made by Him, but they shall not find it.

Hosea tells how the people of Israel, just before their downfall, sought revelation from idols. (Hosea 4:12)

To those of Amos' day and to those in every generation who reject the Word of God for some other philosophy, the message is the same. Inevitably, there will come the time when a word from God will be sought for like starving men

seek for food. One writer warns, “Try to imagine all the influence of religion taken out of your life. In trouble, sickness, loneliness, failure, try to imagine yourself cut off from God.

Verses 13-14

Even young women and young men, in the vigor of youth, the best equipped to withstand these adverse conditions, will grow weak and hunger and thirst for some voice of authority and the promise of help from Jehovah. It is true even today!

Thousands and thousands of young people across our land, disillusioned and starved to death on the garbage of the contemporary, intellectualism are “running to and fro” seeking a voice of authority, a sane standard of conduct, a life which consists of more than “things.” But, because the “intelligentsia” of the world, have for the most part, rejected the word of the Lord, our young people “faint for thirst.”

In Israel, in Amos’ day, the people were swearing by (putting their trust in) the golden calf which they worshiped at Dan and Bethel.

They believed that all their prosperity, like that of their heathen neighbors, was due to their worship of these idols and other idolatrous forms of worship made toward Jehovah at Beersheba.

In our day, we are no better! Israel worshiped the golden calf only because she was sure her prosperity came through this. We worship science because we are sure our prosperity comes through it.

Yes, we have rejected the Word of God which reveals to us the True Source of both material and spiritual well-being, for our own Sacred Cow—science! We have our own Bethels, Dans, and Beershebas—our own priests and our own oracles. And if we continue to worship there and seek guidance there, we shall fall, and never rise again!

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS PROPHESED— THOROUGH AND INESCAPABLE

Chapter 9

Verse 1

The “altar” here is the altar Jeroboam set up at Bethel. It would symbolize all the idolatry of which Israel was guilty and which God is about to judge and punish. God is giving Amos a vision of the thoroughness and inescapability of His judgment upon Israel and so it is pictured as being in progress. God commands, "Smash the pillars!"

Capitals are really the crowns or tops of the pillars in the idolatrous temple there at Bethel and other locations. These pillars were probably imitations of those in the true sanctuary at Jerusalem and so the Israelite temple was struck from above and made to collapse in total destruction upon the heads of those worshiping the golden calf.

Should any succeed in escaping the crash of the building, even these God would slay with the sword. The point is, none shall escape who justly deserve the Lord’s judgment.

The Lord’s word of judgment is so absolutely certain to come to pass that when it is spoken it is as much as accomplished then.

Verses 2-4

There is simply no escape for the impenitent, in this world or any other, when God’s judgment time has come. Sheol is the Old Testament name for the place of departed souls, corresponding to the New Testament word Hades.

The reference to Mount Carmel is made because it is a point on the extreme western boundary, immediately next to the Great Sea.

The “serpent” is the one named Leviathan. Amos describes the people in their misery and terror as going willingly, gladly, into captivity before their enemies like a flock of sheep to escape judgment. Captivity, at least seemed safe. Yet, here too, God would command the swords of their enemies to slay them.

It is the omnipotent God who brings judgment. Judgment is never simply the action of humanity or nature alone. It arises out of the character of the Holy God and finds expression through His control of time and history.

Verses 5-6

Now Amos substantiates all that he has promised before. The thoroughness and inescapability of the judgment, which Amos prophesies, is certain because of the nature and character of Jehovah. He speaks and it comes to pass. He commands and the earth stands forth.

The word “chambers” means literally, “places to which one has to ascend, upper chambers, stories.

“Vault” means literally, “arch.” It probably refers to the firmament, or the visible heavens, which seems to span the earth like an arch. We believe Amos is simply picturing God’s omnipresence. He dwells everywhere. He is high above everything that man can see or imagine.

Not only so, but He is in absolute control of the forces of nature. Even in our own sophisticated age of science and technology the sea, the rain, the weather all remain uncontrolled by man yet mysteriously under universal laws which defy human comprehension and analization.

What with all our advances we still are at the mercy of the sea and floods. Jehovah commands the entire universe and uses it to bring judgment upon His enemies and blessing to His friends.

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS PROPHESED—

DISRUPTION AND DISPERSION

Verses 7-8

“Children of the Ethiopians” is also translated “sons of the Cushites,” Ham’s posterity. This should pierce the pride of the Israelite as nothing else would do—to liken them to the heathen.

It certainly was intended to destroy the veneer of complacency with which they had deluded themselves. The bringing of Israel out of Egypt in a special way avails no more than the bringing of the Syrians and Philistines out of their

former dwelling places. God did it all. With God it is not where you came from and what you were that counts! The sinful of Israel were depending upon their past heritage and special treatment by God.

Jesus had to deal with the same complacency and pride with the Pharisees. (Acts 10:34-35)

Special treatment is no license to sin! God is offended by sin in any people, and especially so in a person whom He has chosen and blessed above others! His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom!

Caphtor is probably Crete or perhaps refers to all the islands of the Aegean Sea. Kir is in the general direction of Elam (today it is Iran).

The word of Jehovah is that the kingdom of Israel, as a kingdom, will be totally obliterated from the face of the earth. The fulfillment of this is found in 2 Kings 17.

That does not mean, of course, that God has violated His covenant with Jacob (named Israel). God has kept His covenant, even in judgment and destruction of the sinner. Man, the sinner, has not kept his covenant. Those few righteous of the northern kingdom who did keep God's covenant terms were to become (with the righteous of Judah's dispersed) the seed of the Messianic nation through which God was going to ultimately fulfill His covenant.

Amos is gradually leading into the glorious climax of his prophecy in which he paints word pictures with figurative language of the future blessings of the Messianic age when God shall have fulfilled His promises in Christ and the Church.

Verses 9-10

The heritage of Israel did not grant immunity from judgment, and physical descent from Jacob did not guarantee exemption from accountability.

Love is neither blind, nor is it weak. The wrath of God's love and the love in God's wrath should be equally recognized. Remember that one of the backgrounds upon which the prophets are to be read and interpreted is

“Judgment-Redemption.” Judgment is never the last word in God’s scheme. There is a redemptive emphasis which is a result of judgment in history.

Verse 9 refers to the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes of Israel which occurred about 722-721 B.C. The Assyrian emperor transported the Jews and scattered them from one city to another in the vast Assyrian empire. He also imported foreigners into the former territory of Israel. These married the few poor and insignificant Jews left behind in Israel and became Samaritans.

The kingdom of Israel was never to be established again. But there is that righteous remnant still within this rotten nation. This will be the holy seed-grain out of which the Lord will form a new and holy people (Christians—the Church) and kingdom of God over which the “son-king” will reign. (Isaiah 9 and 11)

Sargon II (722-705) has left records of the fall of the northern kingdom. Many of the Israelites were deported to Upper Mesopotamian and Media and lost their identity there. Many of the people of Israel lost their national identity through assimilation during the centuries following their deportations. Others made their way southward to Judah, and remnants of them appear among the later Jews. Those who lost their identity are often referred to as “the ten lost tribes of Israel.”

This is not altogether accurate. From the establishment of the Church until time shall cease, however, all Jews, as well as Gentiles, must appropriate the promises of God through Jesus Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek.

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED—

DAVID’S THRONE AND DOMINION RESTORED

Verses 11-12

This verse has its fulfillment in the establishment and ongoing of the Church. (Acts 15:12-21)

In this verse, we see the fulfillment in the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles and their reception into the Church which is the restored kingdom of David, Christ, the son of David, reigning upon that throne.

The consummation of all that God promised in His covenant with Abraham is fulfilled in Christ. It proves that the Old Testament prophets were speaking of the Messianic kingdom—the church of Christ—not some dispensation or millennium which is to follow the age in which we are now living.

The consummation of all that God promised in His covenant with Abraham, and that which has been potentially accomplished in Christ, will be realized when Christ comes the second time, “not to deal with sin,” (not to give another opportunity for the salvation of the Jews or anyone else), then all the ages will be over and time shall become eternity and He shall make a new heaven and a new earth.

Verse 12

Connected as it is to what has gone before, this phrase is, of course, fulfilled in the establishment of the church and the evangelization of the Gentiles just as the preceding prophecy is so fulfilled.

The Old Testament prophecies most certainly did not have their ultimate future fulfillment in the mere literal restoration of the Jews to a portion of land.

What Amos says in chapter 9:11-12, James in Acts 15:15-18 puts it, the difference is significant. The prophet uses what to him must have been a perfectly natural picture of covenant fulfillment in the form of a national conquest of an ancient enemy.

It is as if he visualized the incorporation of Edom in Israel as a result of conquest; in this way the blessing of God’s covenant would be shared by them also.

The New Testament uses the picture of the Gentiles seeking the God of Israel and a share in the blessings of His people.

What is the nature of these blessings? A careful study of the covenant will make it clear that even in the case of Israel they were essentially spiritual.

Should it then be too difficult to see that when Amos speaks of the mountains dripping sweet wine he may be concerned with more than material prosperity; and that its ultimate reference is to every spiritual blessing in the

heavenly places of Christ? It belongs to the progressiveness of revelation to bring out the meaning latent in the original promise in and through the fulfillment.

‘The “times-coloring” disappears and the spiritual reality remains, only more clearly discerned as befits the fulfillment. Which is more important to stress, the promise of the land or of the blessing? Which is the “central idea” in the covenant promise?

The next section of our study will describe in highly figurative and “times-coloring” language the future glory and prosperity (spiritual) of the Messianic kingdom (tabernacle of David).

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— FRUITFULNESS AND PROSPERITY RESTORED

Verse 13

Note: The next three verses are speaking of the Spiritual, Messianic period of time. The prophet takes a phrase from the Law (Leviticus 26:5) to describe a super-abundant harvest which is so wholly beyond the natural as to be supernatural. He is, therefore, speaking of the consequences of the restoration of the throne of David, that is, the reigning of Jesus Christ upon that throne and the establishment of the church.

This restored dynasty of David has a glorious future filled with fruitfulness and prosperity! Just as the “raising up of the tabernacle of David” refers to the Gospel age, so this, in the same context, is explained by Paul in Ephesians 1:3.

It should be very evident that the prophet is not speaking literally when we are told that “the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.” Pusey said, “Such shall be the abundance and super-abundance of blessing. It shall be as though the hills dissolved themselves in the rich streams which they poured down. Everything, heretofore barren and unfruitful, should overflow with spiritual blessing. The mountains and hills of Judea, with their terraced sides clad with the vine were a natural symbol of fruitfulness, was meant under this imagery. It would have been a hyperbole as to things of nature; but what,

in natural things, is hyperbole, it is but a faint shadow of the joys and rich delights and glad fruitfulness of grace.”

Verse 14

“This phrase is not used here to denote the return of the people from captivity, but the turning of misfortune and misery into prosperity and salvation, is evident from the context; for Israel cannot be brought back out of captivity after it has already taken possession of the Gentiles.” (K & D)

It may be that Amos is speaking of what God is going to do historically in restoring the Jews to Palestine in the time of Cyrus (536 B.C.) but out of that would come the future blessings in the Son of David, the Messiah.

It could be that Amos’ perspective is so shortened that the beginning of God’s work in the restoration from the captivity is blended right into the eschatological fulfillment of it in the “last days” (the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the Christian age).

God promises here to restore, bless and sustain where He had formerly disrupted, dispersed and judged.

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED-- SECURITY-PEACE-PROTECTION RESTORED

Verse 15

In this verse the emphasis is on the victory, peace, and security that will come when David’s throne is raised up.

Kiel says: “The raising up of David’s fallen commenced with the coming of Christ and the founding of the Lord’s church by the Apostles. (Luke 1:32-33)

Notice, that Jesus is represented here as the restorer of David’s throne, and one whose kingdom shall have no end.

The land which flows with streams of divine blessing is not Palestine, but the domain of the Lord’s church.

The people who cultivate this land is the Lord’s church, so far as it stands in living faith and produces the fruits of the Holy Spirit. So far as the Jews are

converted to Christ and incorporated into the Christian community, there is “a bringing back of the captives.” Still this “bringing back” is not limited to Israel after the flesh. Its fulfillment is to be sought more generally in the freedom which Christ has brought, in consequence of which believers in Him are no longer prisoners under the control of an alien power.

They “possess the glorious liberty of the children of God,” through their enjoyment of communion with God. This promise for the people of God first began to be fulfilled at the appearing of the Messiah and in the coming of the Lord’s church.

Its complete fulfillment is to be expected at the *parousia* of Christ; and then the spiritual blessing, the spiritual power and greatness, the spiritual freedom which the people of God now enjoy, will obtain a corresponding outward sensible manifestation.”

God promised that in the Messianic days, He would establish a kingdom so securely, that it would never be conquered or “plucked up.” (Jeremiah 24:6; 31:28)

Pre-millennial literalism in seeking physical fulfillment in a physical Jewish nation misses the whole point of the prophetic message and, in my opinion is completely out of harmony with plain, unequivocal New Testament teaching as to its fulfillment.

Lange says, “It is remarkable that James, who was so pronounced a representative of the Judaistic tendency, should regard such a promise as we have in Amos, as fulfilled, so far as regards its meaning, in the appearance of Christ and the spiritual blessings thence resulting, without even once referring it to the second coming of the Savior.”

The last verse of Amos reminds us of Jesus who said, in John 10:27-29.

The peace, security, fruitfulness, and blessing which we find in Christ, God planned ages and ages ago and revealed it to the minds and hearts of stalwart men of God like Amos to deliver to those who would take comfort in it.

We would like to know more about this great spokesman of God.

Amos, man of holy conscience, unselfish motives, unshakeable courage and uncompromising conviction was not a prophet by profession or training. He was a simple rustic, a shepherd, whom God charges with the delivering to his countrymen the Lord's message of judgment, repentance and redemption.