

## Amos

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April 13, 2022



Amos 7:1-9

Vss. 1-3

- The final three chapters of Amos are mostly made up of a series of five visions given to Amos. Were these the visions that provided motivation **before** Amos preached his sermons? Did Amos have these visions at about the same time or were they spread out throughout his ministry?
- Here in the opening verses of Ch. 7, "The Lord God showed me..." We are to see that it is God who initiates the action. Amos is not asking for anything, but God pulls him aside and "caused me to see."
- Locusts were and still are a great cause of worry for people in that part of the world. So as in Egypt, God causes a plague, a locust swarm and it was coming after the king's mowing/picking/harvest. The king's harvest is the first harvest and it goes to feed the army. This second harvest of the Spring crops would carry the people through the Summer until the Fall harvest is ready.
- Amos watches in horror as the insects destroy everything, eating all the vegetation so there would be no food left for the people during the Summer heat and drought.
- In vs. 2 we see that the prophet is not simply a mouthpiece for God, but also an intercessor for the people, just as Moses prayed for the people at Sinai (Ex. 32:30-34) and Jeremiah when Jerusalem was under siege (Jeremiah 7, 11, 14). And notice also that Amos does not plead with God in respect to the covenant that Israel has so thoroughly broken, but in that the nation is small and he asks for pardon, forgiveness. The juxtaposition of this next to Israel's boasts of greatness in Ch. 6 is striking. Amos sees the nation for what it is: small, weak, prideful, and filled with sin, but still God's children nonetheless.

- In the vision God changes His mind. Some translations use the word “repented”. “Changed His mind” is better because it does not imply that God sinned in forming the locusts, only that there is a sense of sorrow in His judgement of Israel, that such a judgement would be too harsh. Judgement still was coming, but not something so severe as the suffering caused by starvation in the Summer heat.

#### Vss. 4-6

- The second vision is similar to the first. Here it is not all-consuming locusts, but an all-consuming fire that the people must endure. Fire may refer to war as we have seen in Amos’ sermons, or perhaps to drought, but likely an intense fire is exactly what we are meant to understand.
- This fire is so intense that it consumed “the great deep”. This was the primeval ocean the ancients believed flowed under the earth from which sprung rivers and lakes and wells (Gen. 7:11; Ps. 36:6; Is. 51:10). And having consumed the great deep the fire now moved to consume the farm land. If allowed to continue the fire would devour all the water and food available to the people.
- Again, as it is clear that Israel is doomed, the prophet intercedes to God for the people. He does not pray here that the people be forgiven, but that God extend grace. “This too shall not be” the Lord replies. Here again, the punishment is too severe for the offense.

#### Vss. 7-9

- Here again it is God who initiates the action but here it is God who speaks first. The Lord is standing by a **homah**, a city wall, holding a plumb line in His hand. The city wall is that which provides security to all who live inside.
- “What do you see, Amos?” The best response is always the simplest – “a plumb line.” The plumb line is used to test to make sure the wall was correctly perpendicular. If the wall is leaning it may well collapse over time, so the wall must be tested to see if it’s upright and straight or faulty and leaning. The idea here is that Israel is about to be tested. God has set a standard that is upright and straight, so the test is against God’s standard.

- So the test comes to “My people, Israel.” This is the language of the covenant. “I will be their God and they will be My people,” (Ex. 6:7; Lev. 26:12).
- “I will spare them no longer/ I will never again pass by them.” God had been “passing by” Israel for too long, like a permissive parent, but He would never do so again.
- The “high places”, the rural centers of worship on the hilltops, and “the sanctuaries”, the great temples at Bethel, will be laid waste and desolate. It was not that Israel was worshipping in the wrong place, that they should be worshipping only in Jerusalem as the people of Judah claimed, but that their worship had become corrupted. Pride had led the worshippers of Israel to believe that they could live as immorally as they wished. They were the people of God. They were sons of Abraham. They were secure in their salvation and sense of right. They could live however **they** saw fit.
- In the first two visions God had relented because the punishment did not fit the crime. Here is the perfect fit, because God begins at the temple, the house of worship and only then will extend out to the King Jeroboam. What we believe theologically determines everything. It's there in our Declaration of Independence for all to see. The king of England cannot treat his American subjects unjustly without answering to a higher power and has in fact forfeited his right to rule because he has violated the laws of Creation's God. So the people of Israel are as corrupt as they are because of what they believe about God, because of what they preach and teach in their houses of worship. King Jeroboam rules as corruptly as he does because he has been so instructed and given permission in the temple.
- Therefore, it shall not be locust or fire but the sword that will fall on Israel. There will be no intercession this time from Amos, no relenting by God. The crime is too great and great crime requires great judgement.