

## Amos

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Amos 9:1-10

Vss. 1-4

- Typically when God reveals Himself in such a way, the Lord's purpose was to bring a blessing, as in the case of Jacob in Genesis 28 and with Isaiah in his Ch. 6. Here, God comes not with a blessing but with judgement.
- ..."the altar" was almost certainly the altar at Bethel, the center of the Northern Kingdom's faith and the center of its corruption.
- CS Lewis once said that it is not true that God sends people to Hell, but it is true that many millions of people have chosen Hell for themselves. Earlier Amos has implored the people of Bethel and Samaria to repent before it was too late (5:4, 6, 14-15). Here is the narrow path that leads to life and here is the broad way that leads to destruction. Choose! And Israel did choose and now they are receiving what they have chosen.
- It is God who is doing the smiting. And "the capitals" are not cities but the columns of the temple. The image here is not unlike Sampson in Judges 16 where he was tied to the pillars of the Temple of Dagon and brought down the whole temple killing some 3000 of his Philistine captors. Here in Bethel, God will come like an earthquake and bring down the whole Temple, destroying all who are in it.
- And none will escape. Those not killed in the earthquake will be killed by the sword of the advancing Assyrians. They may try to hide by climbing to the top of the earth and ascend in to heaven or dig down into the deepest depths of Sheol. They may climb the highest mountain or dive to the deepest part of the sea, like Jonah they will find there no place where God is not and He will find you. Even if they are taken as captives, hauled off in to exile, God's authority is not limited to the border. He is Lord over all the earth, even where pagans rule.

Vss. 5-6

- Amos diverts here from all that God is about to do and returns to again present a picture of who God is, in order to show that God is justified to pronounce judgement. Classical theology would call these verses a doxology as they would for 4:13 and 5:8.
- God touches the earth. The earth melts. The earth rises and falls like the Nile or like an earthquake. Though God resides in Heaven, when He reaches to touch the earth in judgement, the effect is devastating.

- As the ancients saw the sky, they saw it as a vaulted ceiling, with its high point in the middle and anchored at four corners. God sits above this vault and yet is intimately involved in His creation. It is God who cases the waters of the sea to rise and fill the clouds that then pour out water on the earth, and in the desert this water is literally life itself. The earth IS the Lord's and all it contains! (Psalm 24:1)

Vss. 7-10

- This would be hard for Israel to hear, but very important for Amos to declare. One of the main problems Amos and God find in Israel is that they see people who recognize the privilege of being God's chosen, but yet people who do not see the responsibility. Nor do they understand that God chose them explicitly because they were *NOT* special in and of themselves, which Israel believed themselves to be.
- God points out that the Israelites are no different than the Ethiopians (or Cushites). Yes, God brought Israel up out of Egypt, but did He not also bring the Philistines from Caphtor, (which may refer to Crete or Cappadocia on the Turkish coast or the whole area of the Aegean Sea)? And did God not also bring the Arameans from Kir, (located in Mesopotamia in the region of Elam)? In other words, God loves all these peoples, indeed all the peoples of the world, and has a plan and purpose for them just as He has a plan and purpose for Israel. It is not that Israel was special and so God chose them. They became special *BECAUSE* God chose them. And when God chose them, He gave them a purpose and at the heart of the matter, Israel has not fulfilled its purpose and frankly were very intentional about it all.
- Vs. 8 picks up where vs. 4 left off: the eyes of God are on you. And when God sees a sinful kingdom, He has but one policy: destroy it. This is what all the prophecies concerning Israel's neighbors were about in the opening chapters. Theft, murder, slavery and more were the charges against these kingdoms and these are the same charges against Israel, and is Israel different from the Philistines or the Arameans? No. By the way, how are things in Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union working out?
- But God does have a covenant with Israel. In all of Israel's sufferings for its sins, God has always left a remnant. The sinful kingdom and its temple will be destroyed, but the survivors will be sifted like grain from stone. The proud, sinners, who say that the evil will not overtake them, they will be destroyed, those who wrongly believed they were so righteous as to be above and exempt from God's judgement. Such people either have an exalted view of themselves or an inadequate view of God...or both. No, it is those who have been enduring suffering at the hands of the powerful and yet have not forsaken God, these will be spared, they will be the remnant who remain.