

THE PROPHET AMOS

BY

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Introduction

A few years before the prophet Hosea began to witness against the apostasy of the house of Israel, the ten tribes, and announced the coming judgment, there appeared in Bethel, the seat of idolatry a peasant by the name of Amos. He was not a citizen of the ten-tribe kingdom, but belonged to Tekoa, a small town in the south country of Judah. We learn from the book that he was a herdman and a gatherer of the fruit of the sycamore trees. Some have thought he was a man of wealth, in possession of large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, but this cannot be confirmed. He was just an humble peasant and while engaged in his calling, not being a prophet or the son of a prophet, the Lord suddenly called him to leave his work and said unto him "Go, prophesy unto My people Israel" (chapter 7:14-15). Amos means "bearer" or "burden." In obedience to this command he appeared in Bethel to discharge his prophetic duty and deliver the messages of Jehovah to the people. It was a strange occurrence that a prophet should come out of Judah to prophesy to Israel, it probably attracted wide attention, for such a thing had never happened before nor after. It greatly aroused Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, who reported the case to Jeroboam, the king of Israel. The message the priest sent to the king was the following: "Amos has conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel, the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus saith Amos, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their land" (7:10). Evidently the priest did not await the king's answer for he tried to intimidate the prophet and drive him away, but Amos was a man of courage, he boldly resisted the priest and announced the fate of the priest and his family.

The Time of His Prophecy

There is no difficulty with the age in which he prophesied. This is stated in the opening verse of the book. "In the days of Uzziah, King

of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, King of Israel, two years before the earthquake." Jeroboam II became king in the fifteenth year of the reign of Amaziah, King of Judah. Jeroboam reigned forty-one years. As Amaziah reigned over Judah twenty-nine years and was followed by Uzziah, Jeroboam's reign was during fourteen years of Amaziah's reign and covered twenty-seven years of Uzziah's reign. Amos' activity was during the period when Uzziah was king in Judah, in the second half of Jeroboam's reign. The earthquake which is mentioned, two years before which Amos began his work, cannot be placed chronologically. It is also mentioned by Zechariah (14:5). The time then is around 810-782 B.C. As we have shown in the introduction to Joel, Amos knew Joel's prophecy, because Joel preceded him by at least a half a century. Amos was therefore somewhat earlier than Hosea and part of his ministry was contemporary with Hosea.

The Characteristics of His Times

Under the reign of Jeroboam II the northern kingdom of Israel flourished as never before nor after. There was a great external prosperity. Therefore, we find that the prophet mentions the rich, their great wealth and luxury, their arrogant pride and self-security and the oppression of the poor. Underneath it all was an awful moral corruption, the fruit of the false worship. In this state of prosperity, immorality and false worship they did not dream of any coming calamity whatever. Such were the days in which the herdman of Tekoa appeared upon the scene to give an inspired testimony against the nation.

The Style of Amos

Attention has been called to the fact that the prophet's style and composition show the former herdman in the use of certain words and in many figures and similes drawn from nature and rural life. But he also shows a very close acquaintance with the Mosaic law and the history of the people to whom he belonged. The style also shows great rhetorical power, great depths of thought, and truly poetic expressions.

"Amos expressed his thoughts in words taken from the great picture book of nature, which, being also written by the hand of God, so wonderfully expresses the things of God. Scarcely any prophet is more glowing in style, or combines more wonderfully the natural and the moral world, the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God" (Dr. Pusey). Augustinus selected Amos as an illustration of unadorned eloquence. And another learned scholar speaks of him thus, "Let any fair judge read his writings, thinking not who wrote them, but what he wrote, and he will come to the conclusion that this herdman is in no wise behind the very chiefest prophets; in the loftiness of his thoughts and the magnificence of his spirit, nearly equal to the highest; and in the splendor of his diction and the elegance of the composition scarcely inferior to any" (Bishop Lowth, De Poesi Sacra).

He gives us a splendid example of inspiration. The Lord called him, gave him the message, filled the simple herdman with the wisdom from above so that he burst out in these eloquent utterances. At the same time the Lord in using him as His mouthpiece did not set aside his personality, he uses his shepherd idiom, and the truth of God is expressed through him in the terms of nature, with which he, as a child

of nature, was so familiar.

The Message of Amos

The message concerns chiefly Israel, the ten-tribe kingdom, their spiritual and moral condition, yet Judah is also noticed by him, as well as the different nations, surrounding Israel, their Gentile enemies. The book consists of the prophecies he uttered in Bethel, which follow the two introductory chapters. The people are reprov'd and their sins uncovered; judgment for them and for the nation is announced. The end of the book brings in the promise of deliverance and restoration. The great prophecy in the ninth chapter (9:11-12) was quoted by James in the first great church-council in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

The Division of the Book of Amos

The book of Amos consists of three parts. The first part comprises the two opening chapters which form the introduction to the book. In them we find the judgments announced in store for the nations surrounding Israel, but Judah and Israel are also included.

From the third chapter to the end of the sixth is the second part. Here are recorded four prophecies given by the Lord through Amos. Three of them begin with "Hear this Word" and the last in chapter six begins with "Woe." The third part, chapters seven to nine, give the five visions which Amos had. The first two judgment visions were not carried out on account of the intercession of the prophet. The third vision is that of the plumb-line; the fourth, the vision of the basket with ripe fruit. In the last vision he beheld the Lord standing alongside of the altar, ready to smite. The conclusion of the ninth chapter is a prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel, the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David and the blessings of the kingdom. We follow this division.

- I. JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS, JUDAH, AND ISRAEL (1-2)
- II. THE PROPHETIC MESSAGES UNCOVERING THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE (3-6)
- III. THE FIVE VISIONS OF THE PROPHET (7-9)

Analysis and Annotations

I. JUDGMENT ANNOUNCED AGAINST THE NATIONS, JUDAH, AND ISRAEL

CHAPTER 1

1. The introduction (1:1-2)
2. Damascus (1:3-5)
3. Philistia (1:6-8)
4. Tyre (1:9-10)
5. Edom (1:11-12)
6. Ammon (1:13-15)

Verses 1-2. It has been pointed out that Amos does not say like so many of the other prophets, "the Word of the Lord which came unto me," but he begins his prophecy with the statement "the words of Amos." The fact of divine inspiration, however, is expressed in the next words "which he saw." His messages, like the messages of all the prophets, were given to him in vision. As stated in the general introduction to this book, this first verse determines the exact time when the herdman of Tekoa appeared with his message. The earthquake mentioned must have been a disastrous one, for there was a great flight of people (Zech. 14:5).

Then follows his first utterance which Joel recorded in his prophecy, "the LORD roars out of Zion." Inasmuch as Joel prophesied in Judah and Amos appeared from Judah in Bethel of the ten-tribe kingdom, this sentence of coming judgment was probably unknown to his hearers. He sounded the alarm at once as to the coming judgment on account of which the shepherds would mourn and the beautiful, luxurious Carmel would wither, it would bring disaster upon all.

Verses 3-5. Six nations are mentioned against which judgment is announced, five in this chapter and Moab in the beginning of the second. Eight times we read "saith the LORD." Then in each judgment prediction we find the phrase, "for three transgressions or four ... I will not reverse it." The meaning of it is that the measure is full and that the judgment cannot be averted. Fire is prominently mentioned as the mode of judgment. These nations were the enemies of Israel. The Syrians were the great enemies of Israel and treated them with awful cruelties. The threshing of Gilead with iron instruments took place when Hazael of Damascus conquered the land east of Jordan (2 Kings 10:32-33; 13:7). Hazael murdered Ben-hadad and Elisha predicted all the horrible things he would do to Israel. When the man of God wept and Hazael asked him the reason, Elisha answered, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child" (2 Kings 8:12). Damascus was broken and the predicted judgment came. It was executed through the King of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser, who drove the

Syrians back to Kir, from which they had come (2 Kings 16:9).

Verses 6-8. Philistia is represented by Gaza. They also mistreated Israel and sold them into the hands of Edom. (2 Chron. 21:16). The cities of Philistia; Gaza and its palaces would be consumed by fire. There would be an end to the Philistines, "the remnant of the Philistines shall perish saith the LORD."

Verses 9-10. Tyrus, the capital of Phoenicia, had also sinned against Israel by delivering them into the hands of their great enemy Edom. Their sin was especially heinous because David and Solomon had made a covenant with the King of Tyre, hence no King of Judah or Israel had ever warred against Tyre (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:1-5).

Verses 11-12. Edom was closely related to Israel, yet they hated more than the heathen nations hated Israel. At every opportunity Edom expressed this hatred by deeds of cruelty. What an awful record! "He did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever." In Obadiah we find more concerning Edom.

Verses 13-15. Wicked Ammon had tried to exterminate the people for selfish reasons "to enlarge their border." What horrible deeds to rip open women with child! Nor is this confined to the barbarous warfare of 3,000 years ago; the same was done in other wars down to our own days. Judgment would overtake them also.

In meditating on these terse judgment messages we must remember while these nations of the past have ceased existing as nations, and the predicted judgment came long ago, that these nations are typical of the other nations, who also sin against Israel and whose judgment will come "in that day."

CHAPTER 2

1. Moab (2:1-3)
2. Judah (2:4-5)
3. Israel (2:6-16)

Verses 1-3. So fierce was the hatred of Moab that they dishonored the bones of the king of Edom. "Moab burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime" (see 2 Kings 3:26-27). The fire or judgment came upon Moab and her glory, too, departed like the glory of the other nations.

Verses 4-5. While the measure was full of these nations, who had heaped transgressions upon transgressions, Judah and Israel were as guilty, yea, even more guilty, than these nations. The same significant phrase "for three transgressions and four" is used in connection with both. If the punishment of the nations could not be held back, but had to come, so Judah and Israel could not escape. Judah's sin was the rejection of the law of the Lord; instead of listening to the voice of the Lord and to His prophets, they harkened to the false prophets, who, with their lies, caused them to err, and the children walked in the evil footsteps of their fathers. The sin of Judah was apostasy. That is the

great sin today among the professing people of God, Christendom. Fire was to devour the cities and palaces of the nations and fire was to come upon Judah and the palaces of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled this prophecy.

Verses 6-16. Inasmuch as Amos was sent to Israel the indictment and judgment of them occupies more space than the rest. Verses 6-8 give a description of their sins. The poor suffered through their covetousness, they lived in unspeakable vileness, they were idolatrous. Those who were condemned by judges and paid their fines furnished the money to the judges to buy wine for their heathenish orgies.

Then the Lord reminds them of all His mercies and loving kindness in the past. He destroyed the Amorite; He led them through the wilderness to possess the land. He instituted the Nazarite. In spite of all these manifold mercies they continued in their evil ways, grinding the poor, defying God and His law and in their moral depravity.

Behold, I will press you down
As the full cart presses the sheaves.
Then shall flight be lost to the swift,
And the strong shall not confirm his strength,
And the hero shall not save his life.
He that beareth the bow shall not stand,
And the swift-footed shall not save,
And the rider of the horse shall not save his life.

II. THE PROPHETIC MESSAGES UNCOVERING THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE

CHAPTER 3: The First Discourse

1. There is cause for judgment (3:1-8)
2. The coming judgment visitation (3:9-15)

Verses 1-8. "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You have I only known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities." This is the solemn beginning of the special messages addressed to the nation by the humble herdsman of Tekoa. The Lord had singled them out from the other nations. He had separated them unto Himself. With His mighty power and outstretched arm He had delivered them from the house of bondage and brought them to the land promised unto their fathers. He had revealed Himself and made known His will to them exclusively. He had entered with them into covenant and called them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy

nation (Exodus 19:6). Hence their responsibility was very great, for the degree of relationship is always the degree of responsibility. The divine election of the twelve tribes does not insure against punishment, but that intimate relationship into which the Lord had entered with Israel broken and violated by sin, demanded a correspondingly great punishment. To whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required. Our Lord expressed the same truth in Matthew 11 when he denounced the cities in which great miracles had been done and they believed not and declared that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for them.

To demonstrate the rightful cause of judgment Amos speaks now in a number of brief similes. There are six of them in the form of questions. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Fellowship is only possible on the ground of separation; a holy God demands a holy people. In their state of licentious idolatry and gross injustice the Lord could not own them. Then follow brief questions indicating that which would happen to them. Like a roaring lion, or a young lion, the Lord would come upon them. They will be caught in a snare and a trap. The blowing of the trumpet denotes that evil was to come upon them. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD has not done it?" It is hard to believe that certain men have taken this statement and teach on account of it that God is the author of moral evil--of sin. The context shows that this is not in view here at all. A holy God who cannot be tempted with evil, who is light and in whom there is no darkness at all, does not put moral evil in the world. The evil is of a punitive character such as invasion by hostile forces, the sword, the famine and the pestilence.

And the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets unto His servants, the prophets. These secrets are made known to us in the prophetic Word and not, as some claim, in special visions. The Spirit of God, the author of the Word, shows to God's people in His Word things to come (John 15:15; 1 Cor. 2:10-16). The result of such knowledge of the secrets of the Lord concerning the future is stated in 2 Peter 3:17, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." (See also 2 Peter 3:14).

Verses 9-15. This paragraph begins with a striking call. The speaker is the Lord and He addresses the prophets and commands them to cry in the palaces of Ashdod (Philistia) and in Egypt so that they may see and know the wicked acts of Samaria, and thus bear witness against Israel. Thus the Lord exposed them to their enemies. Then the coming adversary is announced who would encircle the land and humiliate the proud nation, so that her palaces would be spoiled. Then the herdman speaks in a parable familiar to him from his life as a shepherd. When the beast of prey devours a sheep the shepherd must bring proof of it, so he is anxious to recover a part of the slain animal and tries to snatch away from the devouring lion either the legs of the sheep, or even a small piece of the ear, so as to show the rest was eaten by the lion. Such would be the case with the people in their luxurious living, and only a small remnant is to escape the coming slaughter by the lion, the Gentile world power. The transgressions of Israel will be visited; the idol altars of Bethel will be overthrown in that visitation and all their prosperity and luxury would then end and instead of living in winter and summer houses, they would become homeless.

CHAPTER 4: The Second Discourse

1. Divine threatening and irony (4:1-5)
2. Yet have ye not returned unto Me (4:6-11)
3. Prepare to meet thy God (4:12-13)

Verses 1-5. The prophet addresses them as "kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria." The cows of Bashan were noted for their sleek and well-fed condition, feeding on the choicest of pasture. The term is descriptive of Israel's prosperous condition as well as their beastly character. They were selfish and cruel, for they oppressed the poor and crushed the needy. It seems that women are mostly here in view, which explains the fact that the comparison is with kine and not with bulls. They asked their masters to supply them means for debauchery. But what happens to dumb cattle would happen to them in their luxurious and selfish life. They would be taken with hooks and their posterity with fishhooks, and they would be taken away. The last sentence of verse 3 is correctly translated "Ye shall be cast away to Har (mountain) Monah." It has been surmised that this means Armenia.

Then follows a statement of bitter irony. "Go to Bethel and sin; at Gilgal multiply transgression." Go on in your idolatry in these sacred places of your past history! In Bethel the Lord had revealed Himself to the progenitor Jacob; in Gilgal on the banks of the Jordan, the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away (Joshua 5), and these favored places were now the scenes of their wicked idolatries. It is also mockery when the prophet says, "Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven," for leaven always typifies sin.

Verses 6-11. The Lord had sent different chastisements upon them at different times. There had been famines, drought; yea, it had rained here and there, while lots of ground received rain others remained parched, so that they might recognize in it the hand of God. He smote them with mildew and blasting; the locusts came and devoured vegetation; there were frightful pestilences and other judgments, but they did not return unto Him. Five times in this paragraph we find the same statement, "Yet have ye not returned unto Me." They were an impenitent nation and hardened their hearts as Pharaoh did. They were incorrigible, though they knew that through His mercy they were "as a firebrand plucked out of the burning."

In the book of Revelation we read of a similar condition in the coming days when the Lord deals with the earth in the decreed and revealed judgments. It is written that the inhabitants of the earth, in spite of these judgments falling upon the earth, do not repent of their sins.

Verses 12-13. And now they were to come face to face with Himself as the judge.

CHAPTER 5: The Third Discourse

1. The lamentation (5:1-3)
2. Seek the Lord and ye shall live (5:4-15)
3. The wailing (5:16-20)
4. The captivity announced (5:21-27)

Verses 1-3. This chapter begins with a lamentation over the fallen daughter of Israel. "She shall no more rise" has been used as an argument against the future and literal restoration of Israel. The prophet has only the present government of God over that generation in view and does not deny at all a future rising as so abundantly predicted in the prophetic Word. "There is none to raise her up, " nor could she raise herself up. But the day will come when the Lord in grace will raise her.

Verses 4-15. Here the Lord entreats Israel once more to desist from her idolatrous way and to seek Him instead of the worship at Bethel and Gilgal, for judgment would surely be executed there. "Seek ye Me and ye shall live." Then again, "Seek the LORD and ye shall live," and in case of disobedience, He, whom they refused, would fall like fire upon the house of Joseph. The house of Joseph is mentioned because the tribe of Ephraim was the most powerful tribe in the kingdom of Israel, and Joseph was the father of Ephraim. Again they are told to seek Him "Who maketh the seven stars (the Pleiades) and Orion." These two great constellations were well known to the ancients (Job 9:9; and 38:31). And He also turneth the shadow of death into morning and darkeneth day to night. This is an illustration of the judicial actions of the Lord. As in nature He turns night into day, and the day into dark night, so He turns the deepest misery and sorrow into joy and happiness, and changes the bright day of prosperity into the night of woe and disaster. He is the Lord of judgment, who controls the waters of tribulation and wrath, the floods of judgment, and makes them pass over the earth.

Verses 10-13 give a description of the moral condition of Israel. They were unrighteous and loved the ways of unrighteousness; if the judge in the gate judged righteously they hated him for it, those who spoke uprightly they abhorred. The poor they trampled into the dust and extorted the distribution of corn from them. They had built fine houses of hewn stone, but they were not to enjoy them nor the wine from their pleasant vineyards (Deut. 28:30, 39). The Lord knew their transgressions and the greatness of their sins.

Still there was hope, for the Lord is merciful and slow to anger. Judgment is His strange work. Therefore once more we hear His pleadings, "Seek good and not evil that ye may live, and so the LORD God of hosts shall be with you, as ye have spoken." "Hate evil and love good!"

Verses 16-20. As judgment comes there shall be wailing in the streets, wailing with the husbandman, and there will be wailing in all

vineyards as the Lord passes through in His judgment. "For I will pass through thee" reminds us of Egypt in the passover night when the Lord passed through Egypt to smite. And now the death wail was soon to be heard in the midst of His people.

And still another evil was in their midst. Some of them brazenly desired the announced "day of the Lord," the day of His manifestation to come. It originated in their false boast that they are the covenant people. They knew from the former prophets that the day of the Lord would rid them of their enemies, then Israel would be fully redeemed and blest and the Lord's glory would be manifested in the sight of the nations. Such was Joel's vision concerning "that day." Such was their false hope while they lived on in sin. But the herdman, Amos, pronounced a woe upon them for desiring that day. What good will that day be to the impenitent nation? It is a day of darkness and not light. Then follows a parable such as a child of nature, as Amos was, would make. He describes a man who flees from a lion and fortunately escapes; but then he meets a bear, him he escapes likewise. Exhausted he reaches his house, and like one about to faint, he leans his hand on the wall; a small serpent out of the crevice bites him and he perishes miserably. So would the day of the Lord overtake them. How different it is with the true believer. He desires, not the Day of the Lord, but the coming of Him, who has promised His own, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also."

Verses 21-27. The Lord despised their outward worship; their feast days and different offerings were not well pleasing in His sight. It was all a hollow pretense of honoring Him, and all their songs were hateful to Him.

But this departure from Him was not a new thing in their history. They were always a stiffnecked people. Even in the wilderness did they not bring Him sacrifices and offerings, but instead they bore the tabernacle of Moloch and Chiun (or the booth of your king and the pedestal of your images, the star of your gods). Then follows the verdict, "Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is the God of Hosts."

CHAPTER 6: The Fourth Discourse

1. Woe to them that are at ease in Zion (6:1-6)
2. The punishment announced (6:7-14)

Verses 1-6. This woe concerns the great men, the chiefs of the nation, who were sunk into a godless self-security, and dreamt on in their darkness, while the clouds of judgment were gathering above them. They were to go from Calneh to Hamath and then down to Gath of the Philistines. Calneh was built by Nimrod in the land of Shinar (Genesis 10:10); Hamath was the capital of a Syrian kingdom, and Gath the center of Philistia. These places were the places of vileness and corruption. But were the kingdoms of both Judah and Israel any better than these?

While some desired the day of the Lord others put it far off, they refused to believe that judgment was impending. It was so in Ezekiel's time when the people said "The days are prolonged and every vision faileth" (Ezekiel 12:22). So it is in Christendom. The evil servant (Matthew 24) says "My Lord delayeth His coming, and as a result he acts outrageously. What were the results in Israel when the evil day was put far off? They committed violence; violence increased in the land. They lived luxuriously on beds of ivory and ate the best of the flock. They danced and made merry; they drank wine but none was exercised over the hurt of Joseph, the spiritual condition of the people.

Verses 7-14. They were now to go away as captives. There should be utter desolation. There would be a multitude of dead, so that they could not follow their ancient custom in burying them; they would have to burn them. Then the one who burns the corpses asks the last person in the house whether there is any one still with him, and the answer is No, but keep silence! For the name of the Lord is not to be invoked. It means that the speaker fears that the other one might mention the name of the Lord and in doing so bring down upon himself an additional judgment. Everything is to be smitten. What they had done could no more secure blessing and salvation than horses could run upon a rock and one plowing upon a rock with oxen. The nation which is announced in the last verse is the Assyrian.

III. THE FIVE VISIONS OF THE PROPHET

CHAPTER 7: Three Visions and the Opposition Against Amos

1. The vision of locusts (7:1-3)
2. The vision concerning the fire (7:4-6)
3. The vision of the plumbline (7:7-9)
4. Opposition against Amos (7:10-17)

Verses 1-3. In the first vision Amos saw how the Lord prepared locusts (not grasshoppers as in the A.V. They started in with their destructive work, just as they did in the day of Joel. Then Amos interceded in behalf of the sinful nation, "O Lord, GOD, forgive, I beseech Thee, by whom shall Jacob rise for he is small?" He confessed and pleaded forgiveness, acknowledging their helplessness. With such a spirit the Lord is well pleased and the praying prophet received the answer from the Lord, "It shall not be, saith the LORD."

Verses 4-6. He beheld a furious fire sweeping everything before itself so that it even devoured the great deep, the floods of water. This represents a more severe judgment than the previous one. This judgment also was kept back by the intercession of the prophet. But when

the time came for judgment by the Assyrian, symbolized by the locusts and the fire, no intercession could change it. Tiglath-Pileser and Shalmaneser finally made an end of the sinful ten tribe kingdom.

Verses 7-9. He saw the Lord standing upon a wall with the plumbline to see if the wall was straight. The test by God's Word and God's holy law shows that all is crooked and must be condemned. Therefore, the announcement, "I shall pass by it no more. And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." The false worship and the monarchy in Israel will be completely swept away by the judgment.

Verses 10-17. This is an interesting and instructive occurrence. Amaziah, the apostate priest at Bethel, who had charge of the idol worship, accused the prophet falsely before King Jeroboam. It was a religious political accusation. Thus the enemy accused Jeremiah also (Jeremiah 37:14-15); he did the same with our Lord and His apostles. At the same time Amaziah, the priest, sent an insulting message to Amos, saying, "Seer, go and flee into the land of Judah, and eat there thy bread; there thou mayest prophesy." He tried to intimidate him, urging him to return to Tekoa in Judah where he came from. He received a courageous answer from the herdman-prophet. "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. The LORD took me from following the flock, He said unto me, Go and prophecy to My people Israel."

The insinuation was that Amos prophesied for the sake of a living. Amos refutes the false charge and then announced the doom of the false priest and the doom of his family.

CHAPTER 8: The Fourth Vision: The Basket With Summer Fruit

1. The vision (8:1-3)
2. Israel ripe for judgment (8:4-10)
3. The coming days of famine (8:11-14)

Verses 1-3. In his fourth vision the prophet beholds a basket of summer fruit. The Hebrew shows that it was a basket filled with ripe fruit. The ripe fruit is a symbol that Israel was ripe for the harvest of judgment. The message of the Lord to the prophet is, "The end is come upon My people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more." The songs would be changed into howling lamentations and many should be slain.

Verses 4-10. Once more the wealthy and prosperous portion of the nation is addressed, their sinful practices are exposed and it is shown that they were ripe for judgment. The rich oppressed the poor; they took away from the poor what belonged rightfully to them. They cheated by making the measure small and increased the price. They were the profiteers of that time. They also used false balances. Then they sold the refuse of the wheat. All may be compared with James 5:1-6 where the

same conditions are pictured, prevailing in Christendom, before the Lord comes. For all this they did the land would have to tremble and every one mourn.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." Much nonsense has been written on this verse especially from the side of the Adventists, as if there has been a certain time "a dark day" in fulfillment of this prophecy. Some expositors have made of it a mere eclipse of the sun. The verse, while it has a certain application to that generation, whose glory should end like the sun going down at noon, has its final meaning in the coming day of the Lord, which all the prophets announced. It is the same our Lord predicts in Matthew 24:29-30. For Israel the bitter day of mourning, lamentation and woe would come.

Verses 11-14. A great famine is announced. It is not to be a famine for bread, or thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. His Word and the light of His revelation is to be completely withdrawn from them. The Word of the Lord which they despised they would then desire to seek in vain. They will wander hither and thither from sea to sea, from the north to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord and shall not find it. Such was the case with them when the cruel Assyrian power took hold on them and carried them away. Such a judgment too is fast approaching for Christendom which in its apostasy rejects the Word of the Lord, turns to fables, till the day comes when the Spirit will leave and as a result there will be a famine of the Word, no comfort and no help for those who are ripe for judgment.

CHAPTER 9: The Passing of a Kingdom and the Coming of the Kingdom

1. The fifth vision: The passing of a kingdom (9:1-10)
2. The coming of the kingdom (9:11-15)

Verses 1-10. In his fifth vision the prophet saw the Lord standing by the altar. He utters His word. The description of what is to take place is very vivid. He stands by the altar and the people are assembled before Him. He smites the lintel of the door, so that everything trembles and the building falls upon them, cutting all of them in the head and none can escape. Even if they break into sheol (not hell, but the world of spirits in the unknown regions), from thence His hand will take them; if they climb into heaven, He would bring them down. If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel He would search for them and take them out. If they conceal themselves from His sight in the bottom of the sea, He would command the serpent to bite them. It is to be an all consuming judgment with no possibility of escape.

Even as they went into captivity the sword of judgment would follow them. "Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them; and I will set Mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good." He is the Lord

who has all power to do this (verses 5-6). They had degraded themselves down to the level of the heathen nations, hence they were unto Him like the Ethiopians. Then He calls them "the sinful kingdom." This kingdom is to pass away from the face of the earth, there is no hope for its restoration. But the Lord in mercy promises that the house of Jacob is not utterly to be destroyed. In His own time He will assemble the outcasts of Israel with dispersed Judah and lead them back to their land. In the meantime they will be sifted among all nations, as wheat is sifted in a sieve, but not the least grain shall fall on the ground. The sinners of His people will die by the sword.

Verses 11-15. While the sinful kingdom, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, is passed away and will never come into existence again, there is another kingdom which will come, into which Judah and Israel will be gathered with the nations of the earth. This kingdom of heaven, promised to David, is now announced by the prophet. "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." This prophecy is quoted by James in Acts 15:15-16 at the first great church council held in Jerusalem. On that occasion the Holy Spirit used the prophecy of Amos to unfold the program of God concerning the future. Yet there is no church council, no general conference, general assembly or general association which reckons in any way with that which the Spirit of God has laid down as the program of the future. We learn from the passage in Acts that during this age the Gentiles are visited to gather out from among them a people for His Name (the Church). When this is accomplished the Lord returns, and, as a result of His return, the restoration of the tabernacle of David takes place: that is, the kingdom will be restored to His people, the kingdom of heaven comes and the Lord Jesus Christ will be enthroned as its king upon the throne of David. Then the conversion of the world will take place.

This is seen here in the passage before us. Verse 12 tells us that when the tabernacle of David is raised up, when "that day" has come, His people restored and saved will possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations. The last three verses of the prophecy of Amos describe the millennium in its earthly blessings. It also shows the permanent blessing and glory into which redeemed and restored Israel has entered, "They shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God."