

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF AMOS

PART ONE: Judgments on the Gentile Nations (Amos 1:1-2:3)

A. Introduction (1:1-2)

1:1-2 - Amos was a shepherd by profession whom God called to be a prophet. He came from the village of Tekoa 10 miles south of Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah. The emphasis of this book will be the prophecies or visions concerning the northern kingdom of Israel. This is like taking the word of God from your native country (e.g. United States) to a foreign country which has much in common with your country (e.g. Canada). At this time Uzziah was king over the southern kingdom of Judah, and Jeroboam II was king over the northern kingdom of Israel. The time was two years prior to the earthquake that occurred during the time that Uzziah was king (cp. Zech. 14:5). Like the roar of an attacking lion, God's voice, i.e. His word) came from Jerusalem on Mt. Zion. The imagery of an attack was the word of God in judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel especially in the area of the sheep pasturing grounds in the fruitful region of Carmel.

Note: The expression in the NASB (1:3a, 6a, 9a, 11a, 13a, 2:1a, 4a, 6a), "For three transgressions and for four" is best translated, "The people ... have sinned again and again" by the TEV. The idea is repeated sins and disobedience to the terms of a covenant. For the Gentiles this would be the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:5-6 and for the Jews of Israel and Judah the covenant with Moses in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy with all its commands.

B. Judgment on Damascus (1:3-5)

Their sin was extreme cruelty, specifically using threshing sledges to mangle the bodies of the men of Israel who lived east of the Jordan River in Gilead. 2 Tim. 3:3 lists the sin of being brutal as being a sin we as believers are to avoid. Notice that God's judgment would fall on king Hazael's palace which was the center of government showing that it would involve the loss of control. The judgment of Benhadad's citadels, i.e. fortifications would mean the loss of security and defense while the judgment on the gate bars would mean the loss of protection. The cutting off of the inhabitant of the Valley of Aven would mean the loss of a center of worship of false gods and the loss of people. The judgment on him who holds the scepter would mean that these people would be without a leader. The judgment of the people going into exile would help us to see how God's judgment falls on peoples' homes and their identity.

C. Judgment on Philistia (1:6-8)

The sin involved the deportation of God's people to Edom by the Philistines. This is a violation of the sin of kidnapping mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:10 (NASB). Again we see how God's judgment falls on people: The judgment on the wall means loss of protection while the judgment on the citadels means judgment on their defenses. God's unleashing of His power reminds us that God's judgment is with power. The judgment of cutting off inhabitants would involve the loss of people or numbers while the perishing of the remnant would involve the loss of continuity. There were five cities in the Philistine pentapolis. Only 4 are mentioned here: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron. The fifth city Gath is not mentioned as 2 Chr. 26:6 states that it had been

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF AMOS

overrun by Judah. It did not make a comeback like the other cities based on Zeph. 2:4-5 and Zech. 9:5-6.

D. Judgment on Tyre (1:9-10)

They were also involved in the sin of kidnapping God's people and delivering them to Edom (cp. 1 Tim. 1:10 - NASB). The failure to remember the covenant of brotherhood was a sin of failing to keep their commitments. As believers, we are to keep our commitments whether they be an oath or a non-oath (Ps. 15:4; James 5:12). Their judgments fell on their walls (protection) and citadels (defenses). As believers, God can remove our defenses and protection.

E. Judgment on Edom (1:11-12)

Notice the sins that Edom committed against God's people. By pursuing them with the sword, they were committing the sin of murder, a sin that we as believers are to avoid (1 Pet. 4:15). Their stifling of compassion speaks of the sin of hate which is equivalent to murder (1 John 3:14-15). They possessed harbored anger which Jesus equated with murder (Mt. 5:21-22). Finally, they were unforgiving which we are warned against (Mt. 6:14-15; Eph. 4:32). God's judgment fell on their center of wisdom at Teman (Jer. 49:7) showing how temporary the wisdom of this world is (1 Cor. 2:6). His judgment would fall on Bozrah, the supreme center of defense showing that there is no defense against God's judgment.

F. Judgment on Ammon (1:13-15)

The 2 sins of Ammon against God's people are sins that we are to avoid: brutality (2 Tim. 3:3) and greed (Eph. 5:3). The brutality was ripping open the pregnant women of Gilead with the motive of enlarging their borders. God's judgment came in several forms. It fell on the walls (picturing the loss of protection), the citadels (picturing the loss of defense), opposing war cries and battle (picturing the loss of peace), and the loss of leaders (meaning the loss of direction). The overwhelming storm or tempest could refer to an actual storm sent by God, or it could refer to a large defeat by an invading army. In any case, sin has negative consequences for any nation.

G. Judgment on Moab (2:1-3)

The sin of Moab was showing dishonor by burning the bones of the king of Edom to lime. Dishonor or disrespect by New Testament believers toward anyone is a violation of 1 Pet. 2:17. This sin would invite the judgment of God on Moab. Their citadels or defenses would be destroyed. Another result of God's judgment would be death and disorder. The sounds of war (as God's judgment) show that their peace would be destroyed. The loss of judges and princes would mean that God would judge them by destroying their leadership so that they would lack guidance and direction.

PART TWO: Judgments on God's People – Israel and Judah (2:4-16)

A. Judgment on Judah (2:4-5)

2:4a, 6a – For three transgressions ...and for four, I will not revoke its punishment = For repeated sins, God's judgment will be irrevocable.

2:4b – The sins were rejecting authority of God's word and disobeying it (John 17:17; James 1:22), lying to themselves (Ps. 51:5; Eph. 4:15, 25); imitating ungodly believers (3 Jn. 1:11) instead of godly believers (1 Cor. 11:1).

2:5 – Result would be God's judgment on their citadels (=security), not trusting God's power (Isa. 41:10).

B. Identifying and avoiding the sins of Israel (2:6-8, 12)

<i>Sins of Israel</i>	<i>Sins of N.T. Believers</i>	<i>Correction for these sins</i>
Root sin was greed (Ex. 20:17) in selling the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals and wanting the very dust the helpless threw on their heads to mourn their poverty (Prov. 17:15, 26, 18:5; Deut. 15:12-15; Lev. 25:39-40) taking and keeping garments taken as pledges (Ex. 22:25-26)	Eph. 5:3	Acts 20:34-35; Jas. 1:27; 2:15-16; 1 Jn 3:17-18
Sexual immorality – Father and son consorting with same girl and so dishonoring God.	Hebrews 13:4	1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thes. 4:3; Eph. 5:3 (NIV)
Using gain from the poor for idolatry at every altar of idols	Gal. 5:19-20	1 Cor. 10:14; 1 Jn. 5:21
Drinking wine in connection with idolatry	Gal. 5:19-21	Eph. 5:18
Making the Nazirites* drink wine	Rom. 14:21	1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Tim. 4:12
Telling the prophets not to prophesy (2 Kings 17:13-23; 2 Chr. 36:15-16)	2 Timothy 4:1-4	2 Tim. 3:13-17

* The Nazirite vow or commitment is clearly outlined in Num. 6:1-18

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF AMOS

C. Israel's advantages cp. Church's advantage (2:9-11)

Advantages of Israel	Advantages of the Church
Amorites defeated despite size and strength	Satan and his angels defeated despite size of his forces and their power – Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 2:15
Amorites past advantages were gone and their future was ruined	Satan's past advantages were gone and his future was ruined at the cross (John 12:31)
Delivered from Egypt	Delivered from old life (Romans 6:2-6)
Led in the wilderness for 40 years	Led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14)
Entered land	As we walk in the Spirit we experience the abundant life (John 10:10; Galatians 5:22-23)
Raised up prophets	Gave gifted men to the church (Ephesians 4:11)
Raised up Nazirites (Numbers 6:1-8)	Example of Christ and godly believers who exemplify separation (2 Corinthians 6:14-17) that insulates but does not isolate us from the world (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

D. Summary of Judgment on Israel and its implications for believers living in the present church age (Amos 2:13-16):

1. God is weighed down with the sins of His people (cp. Isa. 1:14; 43:24). Other interpretations such as the CSB would understand verse 14 to be saying that God would crush the people of Israel in judgment as though they were run over by a wagon full of grain.
2. Notice that the following will not help us in dealing with God's judgment: our swiftness to flee it, our strength or might, our skill, our methods, our courage. God's judgment is inescapable and brings disgrace.
3. For the unbeliever this judgment involves condemnation in Hell (John 3:18 cp. Mt. 10:28) and for the believer God's discipline (1 Cor. 11:30-32) and loss of reward but not salvation at the judgment seat of Christ (John 5:24 cp. 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

PART THREE: Judgments on Israel Explained (3:1-6:14)

A. Israel's sin and its consequences (3:1-15)

1. Basis of God's warning of judgment on His people Israel (Amos 3:1-8): (a) This warning is not just for the northern kingdom of Israel but for the southern kingdom of Judah noted by the words "the entire family brought up from Egypt (3:1). (b) Because God has a special relationship with Israel (the word chosen=literally "known") among all the families or nations of the earth, He is going to punish them for their sins. God in the present age also has a special relationship with the church (all those who have trusted Christ for salvation) as seen in Gal. 4:9 and 2 Tim. 2:19. (c) We cannot live or walk in harmony with God unless there is agreement (3:3 cp. 1 John 1:6-7). (d) Just as a lion does not roar for nothing so God does not speak warnings to us in His word for nothing (3:4). (e) Just as traps don't act for no cause, so God's judgment does not come without cause (3:5). (f) Just as a trumpet warning of attack produces fear so God's warning of judgment should produce fear, a fear that changes behavior to respond to the warning (3:6a). (g) All calamity passes through God's hands even if inflicted by people or Satan (3:6b cp. with Lam. 3:37-38; Is. 45:7). (h) God gives advance warning of His judgment (3:7 cp. Psalm 19:11; Acts 17:30-31). (i) The two-fold response to God's judgment is fear and sharing God's word of warning with people who are going to be judged.
2. Warning to unbelievers (Amos 3:9-10): (a) Both Ashdod (a Philistine city) and Egypt are called upon to witness the sins and judgment of Israel, God's people from their strongholds (3:9). One of the reasons they are called as witnesses is to be warned that God is serious and that they need to respond with faith in the gospel (1 Pet. 4:17 cp. Rom 10:16). That is one of the reasons God disciplines believers. (b) The sins are disorder, oppression, knowing how to do right, violence and devastation. These will bring a judgment that fits these (Gal. 6:7). The remedy for these sins in the lives of God's people are sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7), a commitment to love and service (Gal. 5:13), a passion for living righteously, i.e. by God's standards (Mt. 5:6), gentleness (1 Tim. 3:3) and a love for one's fellowman (Rom. 13:9-10).
3. The nature and extent of God's judgment (Amos 3:11-15): (a) In 3:11, the enemy surrounding the land shows that God's judgment is inescapable. There is a loss of strength (1 Cor. 11:30 "weak"). There is a loss of protection and wealth pictured by the strongholds being looted. (b) The vast destruction of material prosperity is pictured by the sheep eaten by the lion with only a couple of legs or an ear left and is also pictured by the idea that the only furniture left in the house of a wealthy person would be the couch cover and the corner of a bed (3:12). (c) The prophet as a man of God is to testify against God's people concerning a coming time of judgment with regard to their sins (3:13). (d) The complete destruction of the false religious system embraced by God's people is pictured by altars of Bethel being destroyed (1 Kings 12:26-31) and the horns (Psalm 118:27) of the altar will be cut off which will make further sacrifices impossible (3:14). (e) God's people will lose their entire homes (the summer part as well as the winter part), the ivory layering, the greatness showing that the most wealthy people will not be exempt (3:15). (f) The lessons for us as believers are found in Eph. 6:10; Mt. 6:19-21; 1 Tim. 6:5-7; Col. 2:8-10; John 14:1-3 cp. Heb. 13:14.

PART THREE: Judgments on Israel Explained (3:1-6:14)

B. Israel's sins and judgments despite opportunities (4:1-13)

1. 4:1-5 - The sin and consequences for the northern kingdom of Israel are clearly laid out. The leading women of the nation in the capital of Samaria were referred to as cows of Bashan (cp. Deu. 32:14-15; Ezek. 39:18. These women were caught up in a lifestyle of self-indulgence (cp. Mt. 23:25; 24:49). This was characterized by drinking and was supported by oppression of the poor. God has called us to a life of self-control rather than a life of self-indulgence (Gal. 5:22-23) and a genuine concern for the poor as illustrated by the godly woman in Prov. 31:20. In 4:4-5 these women and the husbands they influenced for ungodliness were going through the motions of worshipping God at locations contrary to God's word (Deut. 12:5-11). To be sure they brought the correct offerings (e.g. Lev. 7:13) but were worshipping idols in place of the true God (1 Kings 12:25-33). The certainty and unchanging nature of God's judgment on these women and their husbands is shown by the fact that He swore (see Heb. 6:16-17) that they would be taken out of the land to a gathering place of captives (i.e. Harmon). The fact that they are taken by meat hooks and fish hooks shows us that they lost control of their lives and they were taken out of the place of blessing, i.e. the land of Israel. The place of blessing for believers living today under the New Covenant is to abide in Christ (John 15:1-5). If we walk by the Holy Spirit, then we will produce the fruit of the Spirit including self-control (Gal. 5:16, 22-23). John 4:23-24 reminds us that true worship of God is in spirit (authentic) and truth (accurate).

2. 4:6-11 – Note the discipline that God send upon Israel to try to get their attention so that they would repent of their sins and turn in full fellowship to Him.

<i>Verse(s)</i>	<i>Discipline or judgment</i>	<i>Response of Israel</i>
6	Lack of bread, i.e. food	Fail to return to God
7-8	Lack of rain, water, satisfaction	Fail to return to God
9	Hot winds, mildew, plant eating creatures	Fail to return to God
10	Disease and war, lack of health and peace	Fail to return to God
11	Overthrew some cities while sparing others	Fail to return to God

Under the New Covenant, when God disciplines us, He works to get our attention because He loves us (Heb. 12:5-11). When we fail to confess and forsake sin (1 Jn. 1:9; Prov. 28:13), we lose: the joy of His salvation (Ps. 51:12), answered prayer (Ps. 66:18); the peace of God in our hearts (Isa. 48:18, 22); good things from God (Jer. 5:22); freedom from sin's power (Prov. 5:22); spiritual power, health or even physical life (1 Cor. 11:30-32).

3. 4:12-13 – God refers back to the judgments of vv. 2-3 and urges His people Israel to prepare to meet their God, i.e. the true God. This is the God who forms the mountains and creates the winds, knows and declares to people their very thoughts (cp. 2 Chr. 6:19, 30; Ps. 139:2), turns the light of dawn into the darkness of night. His treading upon the high places of the earth shows that He is unhindered in His ability to deal with sins and to bring judgment. These verses have a two-fold application: For the one who has trusted Christ for salvation, He needs to be prepared to meet with God in fellowship by confessing and forsaking any sins (1 Jn. 1:9; Prov. 28:13). For the unbeliever, He need to recognize that he is under God's wrath and

condemnation and to accept God's love gift of salvation by trusting Jesus Christ for His salvation (John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 6:23).

C. Israel's present day of sin and the coming day of judgment (5:1-27)

1. 5:1-7 – (a) The song of mourning shows that our sin brings grief and sorrow to God. (b) Israel was referred to as a virgin because she had been unconquered. (c) The song presents her discipline/judgment to come as a fact. It consists of: without future hope, loss of God's sustaining work, powerless, loss of numbers. (d) God's people are urged to seek Him to survive His discipline/judgment. At the same time, they were not to seek the false god substitutes at Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba because the consequences would be bondage and trouble. (e) The call to seek God is repeated for Israel led by Ephraim or the house of Joseph (Ezekiel 37:15-17) or they would experience God's judgment as a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). Their sins were turning justice into bitterness and suppressing righteousness (Rom. 1:18).
2. 5:8-9 – (a) God is the one who made the constellations of stars, who changes the dark of night into the light of day and the light of day into the dark of night, and brought the flood in which the waters of the sea were poured out upon the earth. (b) This same God is able in His discipline/judgment to bring down the powerful and their strongholds.
3. 5:10-13 – (a) The sins of the people were: Hating honest judges, imposing excessive rent on the poor, and a tribute of grain (their food supply), distressing the righteous (cp. Prov. 17:26), accepting bribes, not giving justice to the poor, multiple sins. (b) The consequences of these sins will be: inability to continue to enjoy their nice homes and not receive the benefits of their vineyards. (c) God assessed it as an evil time for the nation of Israel and it was not safe to speak up. We as believers are reminded to be making good use of the time because the days in which we live are evil (Eph. 5:17). Sin unconfessed and unforsaken renders us unable to understand justice (Prov. 28:5).
4. 5:14-17 – The need for a solution to the sin problem: (a) 5:14 - Action - Seek what is good and not what is evil. The result will be the avoidance of God's most severe discipline for His people, i.e. premature physical death as in 1 Jn. 5:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:30-32. The second result will be the presence of God (Heb. 13:5) to uphold and strengthen them. Under the Old Covenant, believers could lose the presence of God (Ps. 51:11) while under the New Covenant we do not lose that presence (Mt. 28:20). (b) 5:15a - Attitude – Hate evil and love good (cp. Prov. 8:13; Ps. 97:10; Rom. 12:9). (c) 5:15b - To experience the workings of God's grace, don't be part of misusing the justice system but use it as God intended (Deut. 16:19-20; Lev. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19-21). (d) 5:16-17 - The failure to repent will bring sorrow to God's people because God will pass through in judgment.

THE DAY OF THE LORD (Jehovah or Yahweh)

The Day of the LORD is the special intervention of God in the affairs of human history. Three facets of this Day are to be discerned:

- 1. The fulfilled past historical Day for the affairs of Israel (Zeph. 1:14-18; Joel 1:15) and for the heathen nations (Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3).*
- 2. The illustrative Day in which a past historical event represents a partial fulfillment of the yet future historical Day (Joel 2:1-11).*
- 3. The unfulfilled future historical Day. Prior to that Day these events will occur: (a) the rapture of the church, i.e. all believers will occur (1 Thes. 4:16-17), (b) a great falling away by those who merely profess to be Christians (2 Thes. 2:3a; Mt. 24:10) in the early 7 year tribulation period, (c) the Antichrist will be revealed when he makes his 7 year treaty with Israel (2 Thes. 2:3b) at the beginning of the 7 year tribulation, (d) Elijah will be sent by God (Mal. 4:5); (e) the sun darkened and the moon turned to blood (Joel 2:31 cp. Rev. 6:12 cp. 6:16-17. During the last part of the 6th seal of Revelation, the Day of the LORD begins (Rev. 6:16-17) The remainder of the tribulation will occur, then the return of Christ with His saints, i.e. believers, followed by His 1000 reign on earth and the destruction of the present heavens and earth.*

5. 5:18-20 – God’s special intervention in the affairs of Israel at the time of the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel was not going to be the kind of intervention many were longing for. Because they were spiritually unprepared the Day would be darkness for them and not light because they were walking in darkness and not in light (5:18 cp. 1 Jn. 1:6-7). In trying to flee the judgment, they will run into a judgment that is equally or more severe (5:19). The fact of the darkness of this time is re-emphasized and there was no real brightness in it which carries the idea that there will be nothing good happening for them (5:20).

6. 5:21-24 – The sin of substituting pretentious rituals for practical righteousness: (a) 5:21 - Because of the people’s sins, their festivals and assemblies (cp. Isa. 1:10-15 for a similar problem in the southern kingdom of Judah) are rejected for approaching God. When New Testament believers meet together the Lord Jesus is present with them in a special way (Mt. 18:20) and when we partake of the Lord’s Table together, we are to examine and judge ourselves to be in fellowship with God and avoid His disciplinary judgment (1 Cor. 11:28-32). (b) 5:22 - Their sacrifices were rejected because they were not backed by obedient hearts. While the sacrificial system was prescribed by God at that time, it was never a substitute for obedience to God’s word (1 Sam. 15:22). (c) 5:23 – God even rejected their music. Isa. 5:12 suggests that when the content and heart of music does not pay attention to or consider God’s working, God is not pleased. (d) 5:24 – The solution is to embrace practical righteousness (Mt. 5:6; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22) in the personal life of the believer and to practice justice with the fellowship of God’s people and with people as a whole.

7. 5:25-27 – The legacy of a divided heart: (a) 5:25 cp. Acts 7:42-43 – The same divided heart was a problem when God’s people Israel were in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt in relation to trying to substitute sacrifices for obedience. (b) 5:26 - They tried to serve God and the idols from their former way of life instead of putting God first (Mt. 6:24, 33) and fleeing from idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14). A divided heart struggles with trusting God to help us in the trials of life (James 1:8pp) but is helped by prayer for this problem (Ps. 86:11) and by surrendering our hearts to the Lordship of Christ (1 Pet. 3:15). (c) 5:27 – The consequences of a divided heart

were the northern kingdom of Israel being carried into captivity by the Assyrians outside of the land of Israel. The land was the place of blessing for Old Testament believers. For New Testament believers, blessing comes when we abide in Christ by obeying His commandments (Jn. 15:9-10).

D. Rebuke of their indifference, indulgence and impudence (6:1-14)

1. They were indifferent (6:1-2): (a) Warning was to the Northern kingdom of Israel (Samaria the capital) and to the Southern kingdom of Judah (Zion, i.e. Jerusalem the capital). (b) The ease of the lifestyle of the upper class leaders had them trusting in their feelings of security. Feelings are not faith (Jer. 17:9; Prov. 28:26 cp. Rom. 4:20-21). (c) The family of Israel looked to or came to these upper class leaders for their security (cp. Psalm 118:9). (d) They were overlooking the demonstrated power of Assyria which was God's instrument of judgment in the capture of Gath, Hamath and Calneh. How could they go on depending on themselves when these powers that were greater in power had been subdued.

2. They were indulgent (6:3-7) : (a) (6:3) They saw God's judgment for a future time and for future generations (Ezek. 12:27-28). Bringing the seat of violence closer was a way of stating that they were hastening God's judgment. (b) (6:4) They had the best furniture and foods. Wealth and luxury now does not exempt from God's judgment later (Luke 12:16-21: 16:19-23). They were resting when they should have been repenting. (c) (6:5) They were using their God-given creativity to compose songs for themselves rather than for the praise and glory of God (cp. 1 Chr. 23:5). (d) (6:6) Instead of drinking their wine by the cupful, they were drinking it by the bowlful (Luke 12:42-46). In anointing themselves with the best oil, they were like many believers today who are more concerned with their comfort rather than being conformed to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29). They failed to grieve over the ruin of Joseph (i.e. Ephraim who represented the northern kingdom of Israel – Ezek. 37:16, 19). This ruin consisted of the coming judgment and present mistreatment of the poor and needy among them. Sin among God's people should bring about mourning (1 Cor. 5:2). (e) (6:7) – God's judgment ends the party. These upper class leaders would be the first to be taken to exile away from the land, i.e. the place of blessing.

3. They were impudent (6:8-14): (a) (6:8) Because God hates arrogance and pride and false sources of security, He destroys these (James 4:6). (b) (6:9) – God's judgment is inescapable – no place to hide (cp. Rev. 20:11). (c) (6:10) Because these people had brought such disrepute on God's name, they would fear to even mention it (cp. Rom. 2:24; 1 Tim. 6:1). (d) (6:11) This judgment fell upon all classes of people - great and small (cp. Rev. 20:12). (e) (6:12) Just as it is ridiculous for horses to try to run on rocks or to plow the rocks so it is senseless from God's viewpoint to fail to practice justice (cp. Lev. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:21) and to cause bitterness for those who produce righteousness in their lives. (f) (6:13) – Pride brings judgment and failure (Prov. 16:18). It is God's power not our own that brings achievement and victory (Jer. 10:23-24) and our joy should be in the Lord Himself (Phil. 4:4). The joy of the godless is only temporary (Job 20:5). (g) (6:14) – The judgment through Assyria fell on the entire northern kingdom of Israel. These people of God were cast out of the place of blessing.

PART FOUR: Judgments on and Restoration of Israel (7:1-9:15)

A. Amos the advocate (7:1-9)

1. 7:1-3 – God uses a vision which proposes His plan of forming locusts to devour the spring crop which followed the king's mowing completely by eating the crops on which the poorer people would rely. Amos prayed to God because of the smallness and weakness of Israel and God changed His mind and stated that it would not happen. See note below.

God's will can be divided into His flexible will and His firm will. With respect to His firm will, God never changes (Jeremiah 33:25-26). With respect to His flexible will, God is responsive when people pray in faith as in this case in Amos 7:1-6. He may change what He proposes to do based on how people respond to Him as in Jeremiah 18:5-10. Many times when we pray, we do not know whether God's firm will or flexible will is until the outcome of the prayer or unless God in some way shows us. Examples of such prayers are the prayer of Moses in Deut. 3:24-26 and David in 2 Sam. 12:14-22 where the answer was God's firm will. A good example of God's flexible will was the prayer of Hezekiah (Isa. 38:1-8).

2. 7:4-6 – God uses another vision which proposes His plan to burn up or dry up the sources of water as well as the land. Again Amos interceded for Israel because of their smallness and helplessness. Once again God was responsive in changing His mind.

3. 7:7-9 -God gave Amos a third vision. This showed Him standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line to see if the wall was straight. The wall pictured the nation of Israel which God had measured by His standards and found them lacking. For this reason He stated that He would spare them no longer from His judgment and discipline. This was His firm will and no intercession was going to change it. The high places of the land were going to be destroyed along with their places of worship. The house of Jeroboam was going to be removed with the sword. Note that it did not say that Jeroboam himself would be removed with the sword.

Many of the high places used were where Isaac had offered his sacrifices hundreds of years before. These were either hills or mounds. The people of Israel twisted God's word to justify using these places for worship and sacrifice. They were in error on two accounts. God had made clear that the only acceptable place was the temple at Jerusalem (2 Chr. 7:12 cp. Deut. 12:5, 11). The second error was the fact that these places were used for sacrifice to idols and only occasionally for the true God. The people of Israel justified using these places on the grounds that Isaac pre-dated Moses and therefore these places were okay with God – a twisting of God's word (2 Peter 3:16).

B. Amos the accused (7:10-17)

1. 7:10-11 – Amaziah, the priest of Israel's false religion, accused Amos of: a. conspiring against King Jeroboam II by predicting His death. Amos was not conspiring against Jeroboam but simply declaring God's word. Furthermore, Amaziah added to God's word (Deut. 4:2) and twisted God's word (2 Pet. 3:16) by saying that Amos predicted his death. He only predicted that the sword would come upon Jeroboam's house not on Jeroboam himself (cp. 7:9). b. stating that Israel would surely go from its land into exile – a loss of God's blessing. This was soon to be fulfilled. Along with this he stated that the word of God given by Amos was a message the people could not bear. We see a similar condition today in which people cannot bear sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2-4).
2. 7:12-13 – Amaziah, the priest of Israel's false religion, orders Amos to return to Judah. He put down Amos' message by calling him a seer. He maligned him by implying that he was a hireling prophet doing this to earn bread. Finally he stated that Amos had no business there because Bethel was the holy place of the king and not the common people. Apostate false Christians today tell those who speak God's word to go where it will be more welcome. They consider Bible-believing Christians as people who do not present a true view of God. They attack them for giving out God's word for monetary gain.
3. 7:14-15 – Amos pointed out that he was not a prophet full time nor was he part of the order of prophets, i.e. the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 2:3; 4:1). His normal employment was as a herdsman and nipper of sycamore figs. This process involved pinching the fig at a certain time which caused them to ripen more quickly and more completely so that it was edible. He defended his presence in Israel by pointing out that God had specifically called him to leave what he was doing and prophesy to the northern kingdom of Israel. He was directly commissioned by God to be there. Therefore he was not a hireling, and he did have business there – God's business.
4. 7:16-17 – He had a personal message for Amaziah. As a result of the Assyrian invasion and captivity, his wife would become a harlot to survive (loss of his marriage). His sons and daughters would be killed by the sword (loss of his kids). His land would be divided up (loss of property). He himself would die in a foreign land (loss of being in the place of honor and blessing). His people would lose the place of blessing by being exiled from the land.

C. The sentence of Judgment

1. Statement of judgment (8:1-3): (a) 8:1-2 - God showed Amos a basket of summer (NIV "ripe") fruit. This type of fruit would rot if not quickly eaten. This symbol has a plain meaning. The time is ripe for judgment on the Northern kingdom of Israel. God had spared them in judgment after judgment but they had not repented. God has a time for every event. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 gives us numerous examples. God sent Jesus into the world at just the right time (Gal. 4:4). God will send Jesus back to earth for the second coming at just the right time (Acts 1:6-7; 2 Peter 3:8-9). When God said He would spare them no longer, it literally says that He would pass by them no longer. (b) 8:3 - This judgment would be so severe that the people would be silenced by all the dead bodies (Rom. 3:19). Their music would be turned to mourning.

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF AMOS

and grief because there would be no time to bury everyone. It would be a time of dishonor and death.

2. Sins bringing judgment (8:4-6): (a) 8:4 – Their mistreatment of the poor among their people. God's word gives definite instructions concerning the poor among the brotherhood (Gal. 2:10; James 2:5, 15-16; 1 John 3:17-18). When we vote we need to vote for candidates who will truly help the poor (Ezek. 16:49-50; Dan. 4:27) but not simply indulge them (2 Thes. 3:10; Gal. 6:5). As we have opportunity as believers, we can help the poor through charities or some type of personal involvement (Gal. 6:10; Mark 14:7). (b) 8:5a – Their pretentious religiosity (2 Tim. 3:5) in which they had a form of godliness but denied its power in the way that they treated each other. They observed the Sabbath and New Moon but like the leaders of Jesus' day, they were involved in dishonest and exploiting behavior (Mk. 12:40; Lk. 16:13-15). (c) 8:5b-6 -Notice the dishonest business practices of making the real measure less than the selling measure and the real weight less than the selling weight plus selling what was supposed to be pure wheat with the refuse from it mixed in for regular price. These practices were contrary to God's word and detestable to Him (Deut. 25:13-16; Lev. 19:35-36). They were to do this motivated by the fact that God had delivered them from the old life in Egypt and would take them out of the land, i.e. the place of blessing if they did these things. These behaviors are stealing (Eph. 4:28) and wanting to get rich (1 Tim. 6:9-10) and are part of the Christians old life and not the new life that we received from Christ. These behaviors were motivated by the desire to control their fellow Jews so as to enslave them. Jesus said that servanthood not lordship is the path to greatness in His kingdom (Mk. 10:42-45).

3. Specifics of God's judgment (8:7-14): (a) 8:7 - God will judge every deed. The saved will be judged for rewards or loss of rewards (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15) while the lost will be judged by their works and punished by degrees (Rev. 20:11-15; Luke 12:47-48). (b) 8:8 - An earthquake – Amos had all his visions two years before the earthquake which occurred during the reign of King Uzziah, king of the Southern kingdom of Judah (about 765 B.C.). It shook the land so bad that it was like the rising, tossing and subsiding of the Nile River at flood season. Prior to Christ's second coming God has promised that He will once again shake the earth (Heb. 12:26-27 cp. Rev. 16:17-21). (c) 8:9 – God so timed a total eclipse of the sun in 763 B.C. to give Israel warning of the dark days ahead. Right before the return of Jesus, there will be total darkness (Mt. 24:29-30). (d) 8:10 – God uses the picture of a funeral to describe His judgment on the Northern kingdom. Jesus warned the lost that though they rejoice now, they would mourn later (Luke 6:25 cp. Mt. 24:30 cp Rev. 1:7). When believers choose to walk in spiritual darkness (1 Jn. 1:6) it will bring mourning and sorrow. (e) 8:11-13 – God describes the judgment as a time when the real problem would not be a famine of lack of food and water. It would be a famine of not hearing God's word. At this point the people of Israel will be interested in God's word and want to hear it but will be unable to hear it despite extensive efforts to hear it. We are told to keep on preaching God's word with patience and instruction because there will come a time when people will turn their backs on the truth of God's word and search out man-made explanations for spiritual matters (2 Tim. 4:2-4). (f) 8:14 – The terms refer to swearing by the substitutes they have made for God, i.e. idols. God promises that they will be destroyed not to rise again. The promoters of idolatry will enter the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

D. God's Judgment is inescapable and backed by His power (9:1-10)

1. God's judgment is inescapable (9:1-4): (a) 9:1 – False religion is no protection from God's judgment. It will be destroyed along with those who participate in it. (b). 9:2 – Distance from the scene of judgment is no protection. God's reach extends from Sheol beneath to Heaven above. Psalm 139:7-8 states that God is present everywhere so that no one can flee from Him. (c) 9:3 – Concealment from the scene of judgment is no protection. There is nothing hidden from God's eyes (Jer. 16:16-17; Job 34:22; Heb. 4:13). (d) 9:4 - Surrendering to the enemy is no protection from God's judgment. The sword of the enemy will shatter their peace (Isa. 48:22) and protection. God's protection acts as a shield to those who trust Him (Prov. 30:5) and to those who walk (=live their lives) in truth or integrity (Prov. 2:7). God's eye would be on them for harm and not good (contrast 2 Chr. 16:9).

2. God's power to judge (9:5-10): (a) 9:5 – God touches the earth and melts it and makes it rise and fall like the swelling and subsiding of the Nile River at flood stage. The judgment that ends the earth as we know it is described in 2 Peter 3:10-14. His power in judgment brings mourning (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7). (b) 9:6 – God controls the waters of the sea and the waters above the earth. He is in charge of the waters evaporating and then being poured out as rain on the earth. This also shows His control at the time of the great flood during the time of Noah. (c) 9:7 – God's people by their sinfulness made themselves look no different than the pagan nations around them. God's power worked on behalf of each nation just as it had worked on behalf of Israel. His power had destroyed the million man army of Ethiopia (2 Chr. 14:9, 12). His power worked to bring these nations out of other areas to their land. The Arameans from Kir, the Philistines from Caphtor (=Crete) as well as the people of Israel from Egypt. God is not a God of partiality (Rom. 2:11). Just as He had delivered these nations, now He was going to bring them all to judgment. (d) 9:8 - God was carefully watching the sinful course of Israel to punish it and bring it to an end. However, not all the nation would be destroyed. There would be a remnant saved (see Rom. 9:27 cp. 11:25-27). There would be judgment at that time in their near future as a nation and mercy and blessing for the nation at a later time. (e) 9:9-10 – God would sift the nation in judgment and save the remnant who were righteous by faith and punish those rebels who boast that they would not face God's judgment. See a description of God's judgment on the nation in the end times (Mal. 3:13-4:3; Mt. 3:11-12).

E. Future blessing (9:11-15)

1. 9:11a – That day refers to the future Day of the Lord which follows the time when: Jesus Christ comes for His own, the 7 year tribulation during which Israel will end up being saved as a nation, the return of Jesus Christ to earth with His own to set up the 1000 year kingdom.
2. 9:11b,c-12 – This passage will be fulfilled following the present time period. During this time period, God is taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14-17). The first six words in Acts 15:16-17 are the words of James and not of Amos. These words are to introduce the quote from Amos 9:11-12 contained Acts 15:16-17. This is saying that God will re-establish and rebuild the house of David to rule over the earth. See Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 1:31-33.
3. 9:13 – Crops and farms will be so fertile during this time that people will be planting next years crop before last years crop can be harvested.
4. 9:14 – The captivity of Israel will be restored including those in the land (Zech. 13:8-9) and those who are living in other nations abroad (Ezek. 20:33-38). They will rebuild the ruined cities to reside and they will enjoy the fruits of their labors.
5. 9:15 – They will no longer be thrown out of their land. This will fulfill God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 13:15).