The Book of Amos

Zanesville, OH | Sunday AM Bible Study

**Chapter 7**

* **7:1-3– Vision of Locusts**
* Chapters 7-9 begins to discuss with absolute finality the destruction that Amos has been prophesying. A series of 5 visions is described in these 3 chapters demonstrating the climactic end of the wicked.
* The first two visions have a similar structures and themes and occur in chapter 7. Visions 3 (7) and 4 (8) likewise have similar structures and themes while the 5th vision (9) seemingly stands alone. Visions were common avenues through which God spoke to the prophets to deliver to them the messages that they were to pronounce to the people (Num. 12:6; Jer. 1:11-16).
* In v. 1, Amos sees a vision of locusts. Locusts were typical of God’s devastating judgment in the OT (Ex. 10:12-16; Joel 1:4; 2:25; Amos 4:9).
* The text emphasizes God’s hand in His creation (YHWH). He is the one forming the swarm of locusts. The timing of the locusts coming upon the land is significant. The text states that it was during the time when the spring crop began to sprout (late-sown crops). *“These crops would have been the nongrains such as vegetables and onions”* (Paul).
* By this time the earlier sown crops (grain crops) would have been well advanced and near the time of the harvest. Thus, the timing of the locust invasion is precise (not a coincidence) indicating a total agricultural devastation for the people.
* As if that were not bad enough, the King’s mowing had already taken place as well. This refers to the practice of the court or the King having a first share of the produce. Before the people would get their share, the king would get his first (cf. 1 Sam. 8:12-15.) Thus, a portion of the crops has already been exacted even before the locusts come. Everything will be devastated and to make matters worse, some of the crop has already been taken.
* In v. 2, Amos sees the locusts consume all the crops and intercedes desperately on behalf of the people. A prophet often interceded on behalf of the people and their wrong doings (Gen. 18:25; 20:7; Ex. 32:11-14; 1 Sam. 7:5-9; Jer. 7:16; 18:7-11; Ezek. 9:8; 11:13; Dan. 9:9).
* After the devastation, Amos pleads to God to pardon the people (Jacob- used of Israel) by stating they are too small. Compared the to the greatness of God and His power, the people stand no chance against the wrath and judgment of God. They are helpless left to themselves (Amos 5:2).
* In v. 3, God hears Amos’ plea and decides to relent concerning the disaster (Deut. 32:36; 1 Chron. 21:15; Joel 2:14; Jon. 3:10).
* **7:4-6– Vision of Fire**
* In v. 4, a very similar vision in structure and theme is described. God *“calls”* or *“contends”* seems to refer to His act of calling His people to judgment by fire (Isa. 66:15-16; Jer. 4:4). Whether this fire is literal or not is often speculated. Some think it is while others refer to it as a drought.
* Consuming of the great deep (wells, springs, rivers) and the farm land takes place. This description seems to fit very well with a drought that is taking place and it would also match up with the previous vision.
* In vv. 5-6, an identical description unfolds as in the previous vision (vv. 2-3). Amos desperately pleads for the people (Jacob) this time asking God to stop (Psa. 85:4). Again, Jacob’s weakness against God’s might is emphasized as the people have no chance of surviving such a catastrophe.
* As God relented in v. 3 concerning the locusts, so does he do here also in v. 6. On both these occasions Amos pleads to God on behalf of the people and the LORD chooses to relent concerning the disaster.
* **7:7-9– Vision of Plumb line**
* The 3rd vision Amos sees takes on a different structure and theme than the 2 previous ones discussed. It starts out similarly with the LORD demonstrating something, but the end results are different.
* In v. 7, God is seen standing on or next to a vertical wall with a plumb-line in His hand. The exact meaning of the Hebrew word for plumb line is unknown and speculated by many.
* Nevertheless in v. 8, God does the talking this time and questions Amos as to what he sees (Jer. 1:11-13; Zech. 5:2). Amos responds by correctly observing the image of the plumb line. A plumb line is an object often used to determine the depth of water or the extent of how vertical an object is. The use of the plumb line here seems to indicate God’s purpose is the latter.
* God puts this plumb line in the midst of His people. We are not told the purpose nor what exactly happens but the result of it is that He will spare them no longer. God seems to be using the image of a plumb line to describe how He is measuring His people to see how straight their paths are (Prov. 3:5-6).
* This is not to be read as an uncommon practice. The idea is that the people are not living up to the laws and commandments of God and thus their paths have become crooked and are no longer straight. Thus, God declared He will no longer spare them (7:3, 6). Amos does not intercede on this occasion since God has made His decision clear and it is irrevocable.
* In v. 9, the imminent judgment is described. The high places of Isaac will be desolated along with their sanctuaries. In Amos, this may be referring to their cherished places of worship (Bethel, Gilgal, Beersheba). High places were often associated with idolatry and the people’s rebellion (Lev. 26:30; 2 Kings 23:8; 2 Chron. 23:17). Here in v. 9 and again in v. 16, are the only cases where Isaac is used to describe Israel. Isaac may be used as a reference to the covenant established with God that the people have now broken.
* God will bring judgment upon the house of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 15:8-12). The political dynasty of Israel’s day shall not go unpunished for their part in Israel’s demise (2 Kings 14:24).
* **7:10-17– Amaziah’s Rebellion and Judgment**
* The visions are now interrupted by an elongated conversation between Amos and Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (Amos 3:14; 4:4; 5:5-6). It seems that God’s pronunciation of judgment against the house of Jeroboam II is the cause for Amaziah to spring into action.
* In v. 10, Amaziah sends word to the King that Amos is conspiring against him (1 Kings 18:17; Jer. 26:8-11). Notice how Amaziah completely avoids the reality that the LORD has declared this message primarily.
* Amaziah seeks to confine the message solely to Amos as if he is acting on his own. Amaziah further says the land cannot continue to endure all the words suggesting that they don’t want to hear anymore concerning what Amos has to say (Jer. 18:18; Acts 7:54).
* In v. 11, Amaziah cites two things in particular in his message to the King. He says that *“Jeroboam will die by the sword”* and *“Israel will go from its land into exile.”* The first statement is a misquote by the priest since Amos says the house of Jeroboam will fall by the sword (7:9) and not him specifically. The other instance of exile is however very true and a popular message in the book (Amos 4:2-3; 5:5, 27; 6:7).
* Amaziah is seeking to paint a picture to the King that Amos is speaking this message on his own and not from God. The priest is deceiving the King and he purposefully leaves out the other important statements made in 7:9 that points the finger directly to him.
* In v. 12, Amaziah commands that Amos returns to his hometown and cease prophesying in Israel. Amaziah does not like the message Amos has to say. He refers to him here as a seer (Isa. 30:10; connected to the visions). He instructs him to make his living there (eat your bread) and to speak God’s word in Judah instead of Israel. Amaziah’s response was typical of God’s people who disdained His warnings and messages and often arose to kill His prophets and messengers (Matt. 23:37).
* In v. 13, the priest continues by saying he must no longer continue to speak at Bethel since it’s a sanctuary and royal residence (1 Kings 12:29-32). Amaziah is putting Himself in the place of God telling Amos where to prophesy and where not to prophesy (Amos 2:12). God is not limited to speak His message only in some places. In Amaziah’s mind the royal residence is exempt from such things.
* In vv. 14-16, Amos defends himself and what he is doing by directly acknowledging this is God’s will and not his. He explains to Amaziah he wasn’t raised a prophet (he didn’t do this for a living) but just a simple herdsman and grower of sycamore figs (Amos 1:1). He goes on to emphasize that it was the LORD’s doing for him to bring this message to Israel (Jer. 1:4; Ezek. 2:3-4).
* In vv. 16-17, because Amaziah ascends to take God’s place to rebuke the prophet for his message, God will bring calamity upon him and his household in the form of the curses of the covenant (Deut. 28). In v. 16, Isaac is used once again to reference Israel.
* Because of Amaziah’s wickedness: (1) His wife will become a harlot (2) Sons and daughters will die (3) Land taken away (4) Die in unclean land (5) Israel exiled