

He was a prophet by virtue of God's call.

On the part of the faithful prophet we see that Amos was: 1) *humble*-- he confesses his lowly origin; 2) *loyal*-- he kept the divine commission given to him; 3) *zealous*-- "the land could not bear his words"; 4) *bold*-- look at his reply to Amaziah.

Amos has a word from the Lord for the unfaithful priests: 1) his family will be dishonored; 2) impoverished; 3) exterminated; 4) Amaziah will die in a polluted land; and 5) all Israel will be led away captive out of their land.

Death in a Polluted Land

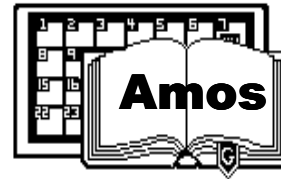
One of the personal tragedies that Amaziah himself would face was "*death in a polluted land.*" At the time of Amos' confrontation Israel was wealthy and powerful militarily. But within about thirty years the Assyrians would become dominant in the area and subjugate Israel.

Among the ancient empires Assyria was the most brutal and inhumane to their captors. They bragged about their terrible treatment of prisoners, and carvings left behind on their palace walls verify everything that is said about them. Their land was everything opposite of what God wants his people to be. Indeed, Amaziah and all the Israelites led there would die in a polluted land!

The pollution we're talking about is not oil spills, chemical spills, or toxic waste. It's not acid rain or nuclear contamination. It's the garbage heap of moral failures, situation ethics, and irreverence for God and the Bible that pollutes a nation. A land given to sensuous living and material greed must grieve the Lord greatly. Will you and I die in a polluted land?

What can we do to curb the breakdown of homes, the murder of thousands of innocent babies each year, a disregard for God's plan for sexual behavior; and insatiable appetite for "things"? Is this not what it's all about? Is this not the great task God has given Christian today? Change our world, or die in a polluted land!

– Windell Gann



AMOS

Lesson # 4

"You Shall Die In A Polluted Land"

Text: Amos 7:1-7

The Setting

Amos has been called by the Lord to come and preach his word at Bethel, the religious seat of the northern kingdom during the divided kingdom period, about 760 B.C. It has been a time of prosperity and luxury for both Israel and Judah and a time of political corruption and social injustice.

Amos chapters 1 and 2 contain the introductory message of Amos that got the attention of the people and announced God's coming judgment upon the nations that surrounded Israel. But then the message also included God's displeasure with Judah and Israel for the sins they were committing.

In this study of Amos, we note in particular how the sins of that day were so parallel to our own time, Human nature has not changed! Men who are given to live according to the flesh are sensual, greedy, cruel, and irreligious. The very same sins of Amos' day are those prevalent today.

Book Divisions

We have notice that one accommodative outline of the book is:

1. The oracles against foreign nations, chs. 1 - 2.
2. Three sermons against Israel, chs. 3- 6.
3. The visions of God's judgment on Israel, chs. 7-9.

Our lesson text today begins the series of Amos' visions.

The Vision of the Locust -- 7:1-3

The Lord proposes to send a plague of locust like that that devoured the land of Egypt in Exodus 10. It would attack the vegetation and devastate the land just as the second crop was coming in and serve as God's punishment on Israel for her idolatry. The king and the government took the first crop of the year because of the demands of big government. Thus the people would be left without food. Amos prayed that God would spare the people from this plague and He did.

[Q-1] Do you think God sometimes uses "nature" to work his purpose?

[Q-2] Can God summon any or all of his "creatures" to do his will?

The Vision of the Devouring Fire -- 7:4-6

The second dramatic vision of God's judgment involved the threat of an all consuming fire, lapping up the sea and land. Whether this was something like a forest fire engulfing land, cities, fields, etc., or more likely the figure for a terrible scorching draught I'm not sure.

Against Amos intercedes and the first two visions symbolized judgments averted by the prophet's intercession. They were not announcements of coming disaster, but announcements of what they had missed so far.

[Q-3] Do you think prayer can work to change God's planned activity?

[Q-4] Is God's basic nature a merciful God, or a hurtful God?

[Q-5] What was Amos' attitude and concern for Israel?

Vision of the Plumbline -- 7:7-9

In the third vision Amos sees the Lord "standing" or stationing himself in such a posture of firmness and determination that he would not relent of the action He planned next. The Lord is seen standing beside a wall with a plumbline in his hand. A plumb line is a standard by which a wall's vertical trueness is tested. So the Lord was going to test the people by His standard. (The same figure is used also in 2 Kings 21:13; Isaiah 28:17; 34:11; and Lamentation 2:8.)

But the plumbline is also a symbol of destruction. The large "wrecking ball" is also a kind of a plumbline. The "wall" that doesn't

measure up to God's standard will be knocked down, destroyed.

God says to Amos He is setting this plumbline in the midst of his people. He is going to "measure," and destroy their "high places," that is, their places of idolatry and the golden-calf sanctuaries in Israel (vs. 9).

There is no mention of Amos now praying. There is no need to pray for something that is against God's will.

[Q-6] What is the standard of God's plumbline in measuring people today?

[Q-7] Do you think there will come a time when God will no longer pass by rendering a judgment upon wickedness and religious corruption?

[Q-8] How might He come in judgment? All of his temporal judgments are a forecast and an assurance of what?

Jehovah's Prophet and Jeroboam's Priest -- 7:10-17

As we might expect, in prophesying against the idol shrines Amos met some opposition from those priests who served the idol altars. Read verses 10-17.

Amaziah reports to the king. Vss. 10-11. "The land cannot bear his preaching!" It appears also that Amaziah may have misrepresented Amos' threat to the "house of Jeroboam" to apply personally to Jeroboam himself.

Amaziah confronts Amos. Vss. 12-13. We're not sure if Amaziah is taking matters into his own hands or if he has the king's approval for this rebuke. He urges Amos to leave Bethel and return to his own home and make a living there preaching. Judah ought to be happy to hear him preach about the north's destruction.

Apparently with soldiers or others backing him Amaziah runs Amos out of the king's sanctuary, but Amos gets in the last word from the Lord. (Notice however, how right Amaziah is about describing the shrine there as "the king's sanctuary" for it certainly was not the Lord's!)

Amos' Answer to Amaziah. Vss. 14-17. Amos assures the Bethel priest that he is not a professional prophet nor from a family of professional prophets. The Lord called him from following the sheep and from dressing the sycamore-fig tree to come and preach at Bethel.