

## PROPHECIES PRESENTED, CHAPTERS 7-9

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED—  
NOT ALIGNED WITH GOD'S STANDARD

## TEXT: 7:1-9

- 1 Thus the Lord, Jehovah showed me: and, behold, he formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.
- 2 And it came to pass that, when they made an end of eating the grass of the land, then, I said, O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small.
- 3 Jehovah repented concerning this: It shall not be, saith Jehovah.
- 4 Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, the Lord Jehovah called to contend by fire; and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land.
- 5 Then said I, O Lord Jehovah, cease, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small.
- 6 Jehovah repented concerning this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord Jehovah.
- 7 Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.
- 8 And Jehovah said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more;
- 9 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.

## QUERIES

- a. Why did God "show" in vision these judgments He was preparing?
- b. Why did God "repent" in two instances when Amos interceded?
- c. What is the message of the "plumbline"?

## PARAPHRASE

This is what the Lord God showed me in a vision concerning the future: He had prepared a vast swarm of locusts to destroy all the main crop that sprang up after the first mowing, which went as taxes

to the king, so that none of the people had any grain. These locusts devoured every stalk of grain and blade of grass. Then I cried, O Lord God, forgive your people, I beg you, and do not send this judgment upon them. If you turn against Israel and so utterly destroy them, what hope is there? For Israel is so small! The Lord turned from this plan and did not fulfill the vision and told me: I will not do this, Then the Lord-God showed me a great burning-up by which He intended to judge the people; it dried up the deepest rivers, lakes and springs and would have devoured the land. Then I said, O Lord God, Stop, I pray, If you so utterly consume them, what hope is there? For Israel is so small! The Lord turned from this plan also and did not fulfill the vision and told me: I also will not do this. But then He showed me another vision: The Lord was standing beside a wall which supposedly had been built according to a plumbline and He was checking it with His plumbline to see if it was straight. And the Lord said to me, Amos, what do you see? I answered, A plumbline. Then the Lord said, I will test My people against My plumbline. I will no longer turn away from punishing them if they are out of line with My standard. The idol altars and temples of Israel will be destroyed; and I will destroy the dynasty of King Jeroboam with the sword.

## SUMMARY

God will have patience for a time, and spare the land the plagues it deserves. But if there is no repentance by the people from this goodness of God, His forbearance will cease and the downfall will come.

## COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . HE FORMED LOCUSTS . . . THEY MADE AN END OF EATING THE GRASS OF THE LAND . . . I SAID, O LORD . . . FORGIVE . . . JEHOVAH REPENTED CONCERNING THIS . . . Amos is given a vision of a future judgment God has planned for Israel. Amos sees it as if it had already happened. God prepared a vast swarm of locusts, as He did in the days of Joel, and they devoured all the grain and grass of the land. The first mowing of the grain and grass crops (at least the greater part of it) was claimed by the king (cf. I Sam. 8:12-15; I Kings 18:5-6) for feeding the army horses. If the second growing was destroyed by locusts everyone else would soon perish. There would be no grain or grass for human or animal consumption. K & D feel this and the succeeding vision of the "fire" should be interpreted symbolically. We must agree with Lange that a literal interpretation best fits the facts. Amos intercedes and God's plan calls for forbearance or goodness

which will lead men to repentance and thus God turns from immediate judgment. This, however, does not contradict the immutability of God's counsel. See our comments on Jonah 3:9 for a discussion of God repenting. We should like to quote Lange here:

"What was threatened was deserved, but still the punishment as destructive has not yet become a necessity. God can still spare. If the stroke did fall, there would be no unrighteousness in God, and also just as little, if it did not. How the case stands only He who is the searcher of hearts and the Judge of all the earth can certainly know. But men may and should presume that forbearance is possible, and therefore should intercede. Even this has its limits, and cannot be a duty under all circumstances, otherwise the conviction of a moral government of the world would grow weak."

What happens to man in his relationship to God depends upon man's response to God's immutable will. If man rebels against God's righteous and wise government then he will suffer the consequences already decreed and determined. If he repents he may avert those consequences because that salvation is also a part of God's unchanging government. On the other hand it is also a part of that sovereign purpose of God to lead men to repentance by showing them His forbearance and mercy and kindness for a period of time decreed and determined by Him. This is what Amos prayed for and what the Lord, having already purposed to do, granted. One of the functions of a prophet was, by demonstrating his faith and dependence upon God by prayers of intercession, to lead the people to a penitent, dependent attitude toward God (cf. Gen. 20:7; Ex. 32:11ff; Num. 14:13ff; I Sam. 7:8; Jer. 14:8ff; 15:1).

v. 4-6 . . . THE LORD . . . CALLED TO CONTEND BY FIRE . . . IT DEVoured THE GREAT DEEP . . . JEHOVAH REPENTED CONCERNING THIS . . . In a second vision of the future Amos is given to see a great "burning-up" where God is going to punish and try Israel by "fire" as it were. Most scholars agree that this is a drought. Such an intense drought as to dry up all the stream beds, the lakes, the deep springs and the deepest wells. All life would soon cease to exist in the land. K & D make this symbolic of God's judgment upon the heathen nations. The heathen nations, according to them, compose the "great deep" and God's judgment comes like a "fire" which devours the "great deep." This great judgment by God, after having consumed the nations, would also begin to consume Israel. So Amos prays and God relents. But again we must agree with Lange:

"How gratuitous is all this! Nothing of it is found in the visions themselves. What the prophet saw in the second vision is certainly not to occur; therefore the judgment upon the heathen, if it is contained there, is not to occur. Of a remnant remaining over, not a word is said."

In other words, God promises not to send this judgment. Now we know that the heathen nations were judged by God. If this is to be taken symbolically of their judgment and God promised not to do and yet did it, someone is wrong!

v. 7-9 . . . THE LORD STOOD BESIDE A WALL MADE BY A PLUMBLINE, WITH A PLUMBLINE IN HIS HAND . . . BEHOLD, I WILL SET A PLUMBLINE IN THE MIDST OF MY PEOPLE ISRAEL . . . Plumb-lines were used then just as they are now to build walls perpendicularly straight. They are a standard or a rule or a norm to follow. Now Amos sees God standing upon a wall which had been, in the beginning, made according to this standard or divine plumb-line. God is also holding along side this wall the divine plumb-line again and, behold, the wall is out of plumb. It veers away from the plumb-line. It is crooked and in danger of falling. It is ready to be condemned. God's revealed Word is the standard by which it is judged and it shows that Israel is no longer true to their covenant promise of loyal obedience (Ex. 19:7-8; 24:3-7). Instead, they make it their practice to be out of line with God's rule, disregarding His Law, which demands holiness, justice and righteousness. No more leniency will be shown to Israel. He will not again forgive Israel. God is a God of patience, and He does not come in judgment without a purpose. But this does not abrogate the fact that there is a point beyond which God, because of His own character, cannot go in dealing with man's sin.

To every man and to every nation there comes a time when the plumb-line of God's revealed Word has been set. Judgment moves on with its inevitable tread and nothing is left for man's degenerate condition but judgment. When justice is turned into poison and the fruit of righteousness becomes wormwood and light is turned into darkness it shows that that which God has raised up is out of plumb and the time for tearing down has come!

Does America, raised up straight and true, dare now to see what God's plumb-line indicates concerning her status? America with all her anarchy, licentiousness, materialism is leaning, nay, teetering dangerously out of plumb!

## QUIZ

1. How would you summarize this whole section as to what it teaches?
2. What does it mean, "God repented?"
3. What is the judgment of "fire" mentioned in verse 4?
4. What picture does Amos get when he is shown the plumbline of God?
5. What is the plumbline of God?

## CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— CORRUPT RELIGIOUS LEADERS

TEXT: 7:10-17

- 10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.
- 11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.
- 12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:
- 13 but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.
- 14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees:
- 15 and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.
- 16 Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac;
- 17 therefore thus saith Jehovah: Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

### QUERIES

- a. Why was the land "not able to bear all Amos' words?"
- b. What did Amaziah mean, "flee . . . into . . . Judah and there eat bread?"
- c. What did Amos mean by saying he was not "a prophet's son?"

## PARAPHRASE

Then Amaziah, the high priest at the sanctuary of the golden calf at Bethel, rushed a message to King Jeroboam which said: Amos has plotted a conspiracy against you and our nation. And he is preaching his treason right here in the religious center of the nation. The nation cannot survive his seditious words for it will soon lead to rebellion all across the land. Amos is saying you will be killed in war, O King, and all Israel will be taken far away into exile and slavery. When the King took no action against Amos, Amaziah sent orders, saying, Amos, get out of the land of Israel; go on home to your own land of Judah and earn your salary as a prophet there! Never again are you allowed to preach in Israel, and especially at Bethel, for it is the royal center of religion in Israel. Then Amos gave this reply to Amaziah: I am not a prophet by profession and simply for the livelihood involved—neither was I trained to become such a professional religionist. My livelihood was earned by herding sheep and dressing sycamore fruit trees. The Lord God Himself called me and told me to leave my flock and commissioned me to go and preach unto my kinsmen and countrymen in Israel. The Lord has commissioned me personally, I am no professional prophet preaching merely for the money as you falsely assume, Amaziah! Whoever forbids me to preach sets himself in opposition to the Lord God. Now therefore listen to this message to you from the Lord. You say, Do not prophesy against Israel—the Lord's reply is this: Because of your enmity to the word of the Lord your wife shall become a prostitute in this very city, and your sons and daughters will be slain violently, and your property will become the booty of an invader. You yourself will die in a heathen land, and the people of Israel will most definitely become slaves in exile, far away from their homeland.

## SUMMARY

The daring announcement by Amos of the overthrow of the dynasty of Jeroboam excites the wrath of the high priest at Bethel. He relates the affair to the king. The king apparently does not intervene. The high priest then takes it upon himself to banish Amos from Israel. Amos announces the terrible wrath of God upon Amaziah and Israel.

## COMMENT

v. 10-11 . . . AMAZIAH . . . SENT TO JEROBOAM . . . AMOS HATH CONSPIRED AGAINST THEE . . . Evidently Amos' preaching had met with some response among some of the people of Israel. The people were

responding or taking notice of the prophet's warnings enough to cause Amaziah, high priest of the golden calf worship at Bethel, to be concerned about rebellion. If the people had paid no attention to Amos' preaching, Amaziah would not have bothered the King with it. Amaziah sends an urgent appeal to the king that Amos be dealt with for what Amaziah says is a plot of conspiracy against the king's life and the nation. Amaziah very shrewdly does not even mention the main content of Amos' preaching; the apostasy of Israel, his pleas for repentance, etc. As a good politician he turns it into a threat against the king's life and unpatriotic sedition against the nation. This is the first show of the corruption in the heart of Israel's religious leader. He is not concerned with worshipping Jehovah God nor with righteousness; his only concern is that the status quo not be disrupted.

v. 12-13 . . . AMAZIAH SAID . . . FLEE UNTO JUDAH . . . AND THERE EAT BREAD, AND PROPHECY THERE . . . BUT NOT AGAIN ANY MORE AT BETH-EL . . . We can only conjecture as to whether Amaziah acted on authority from the king or on his own authority in banishing Amos from Israel. It seems that Amaziah was determined to get rid of this "trouble of Israel," king or no king! His command to Amos is to "flee" (get out of Israel, while the getting is good) to Judah, Amos' own country. Amaziah adds a nasty insinuation that if Amos expects to make any money at this preaching business it won't be in Israel. His insinuation is that Amos was only prophesying for the money or livelihood it brought. Furthermore, Amos' assault upon the very center of the calf worship of the northern kingdom jeopardized its independence. Jeroboam I realized in the very birth of the northern kingdom that if the people of Israel were allowed to return to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah in the temple they would soon move to dissolve the divided kingdoms and reunite them into one. His first move (I Kings 12:26ff) was to institute the calf worship as distinct from the worship in Jerusalem. Amos' attempt to overthrow this apostate religion threatened the very existence of the nation of Israel. Now we see the next indication of the corruptness of Amaziah's religious leadership. He was only a priest because of the livelihood—he was a hireling and insinuated that Amos was also. Amaziah was not a priest in order to serve the people as a minister of the word of God—he was a priest to be sustained and served by the ignorant and sensual worshippers of the calf. The corruption of his heart led the people of Israel in a corrupted religion. And this became a major cause of the judgment of God upon Israel.

v. 14-17 . . . I WAS NO PROPHET, NEITHER WAS I A PROPHET'S SON . . . HEAR THOU THE WORD OF JEHOVAH . . . THY WIFE SHALL BE A HARLOT . . . THY SONS AND DAUGHTERS SHALL FALL BY THE SWORD . . . THOU . . . SHALT DIE IN A LAND THAT IS UNCLEAN . . .

Calmly Amos repudiates the insinuation that he was in the business of prophesying for the sake of money. He was not a prophet by profession neither had he ever been trained to preach the Law of God as others had (see Special Study Eight "The Schools of The Prophets"). Professionally or vocationally Amos was a herdsman in the hills of Tekoa. He also dressed sycamore trees to provide his living. The sycamore tree of Palestine bore a kind of fruit that required piercing, nipping or scratching in order to ripen. K & D call it a "mulberry-fig" tree. He earned his living this way—he was not a hireling preacher like Amaziah. God took this honest-hearted, willing, God-fearing man from the flocks and commissioned him with a divine command to Go! tell my people! He was not sent by the religious leaders of Judah; no human had advised Amos what to preach. His commission and his message were both from Jehovah Himself. Who was Amaziah to forbid that this message should be preached? Who was Amos that he should disobey the Lord God, merely because a human priest, and an apostate one at that, did not like his message?

Whoever sought to oppose the message of Amos opposed the Most High God! Since Amaziah had rebelled against the word of God, God, through Amos, pronounces His judgment upon His enemy, Amaziah. Amaziah's wife was to become a common prostitute, selling her body and soul to other men. This is probably what she did because of the extreme conditions of privation and starvation during the siege of the cities of Israel just before the captivity. Amaziah's sons and daughters were to die violent deaths by the sword, either by murderers or soldiers in battle. His property, undoubtedly a large and rich estate, would become the booty of the invaders and be divided amongst heathen soldiers and conquerors. As for Amaziah himself, he would be taken captive with all the people of Israel and he would die in a heathen land, never again to see his beloved homeland. The encounter between Amos and Amaziah reminds us of the encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer. 38). God's word shall not return unto Him void but shall accomplish that which He purposes (Isa. 55:6-11).

Honeycutt in *"Amos And His Message,"* has said, "In a day when the ministry tends toward a cold professionalism, the message of Amos carries a severe warning for the contemporary minister." The world will always need men of integrity who cannot be intimidated, coerced, or



threatened into silence at the very time when a prophetic voice is needed most. Here is to be found the acid test of preaching: Will a preacher speak for God in the face of adversity and hardship, even the threat of both job and life? Knudson has well observed: "Someone has said that there are two classes of preachers—the good preachers who have something to say, and the poor preachers who have to say something. But there is yet another and higher class. It consists of those who both have something to say, and who have to say it. Such are the prophets. Such a one was Amos." A poet has said it this way:

God give us men. The time demands  
 Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and willing hands;  
     Men whom the lust of office does not kill;  
 Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;  
     Men who possess opinions and a will;  
 Men who have honor; men who will not lie;  
     Men who can stand before a demagogue  
 And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;

Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog  
 In public duty and in private thinking!  
 For while the rabble with their thumb-worn creeds,  
 Their large professions and their little deeds  
 Mingle in selfish strife; lo! Freedom weeps!  
 Wrong rules the land, and waiting Justice sleeps.

by J. G. Holland

## QUIZ

1. Why was Amaziah so excited about Amos' preaching?
2. Why would Amos' preaching at Bethel be particularly threatening to Israel?
3. What is a "son of the prophets?"
4. Name the specific judgments of God upon Amaziah and his family?
5. How does Amos furnish an example for preachers today?

## CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— GOD'S LONGSUFFERING HAS EXPIRED

TEXT: 8:1-6

- 1 Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, a basket of summer fruit.