

QUIZ

1. What were the conditions of Israel in relation to spiritual knowledge of God in the days of Amos and Hosea?
2. When did God take His word away from Israel finally and completely?
3. Is the prophecy, "they shall not find it" still being fulfilled in the unconverted Jews today?
4. How does this section of Amos have relevance for our generation today?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS
PROPHESED—THOROUGH
AND INESCAPABLE

TEXT: 9:1-6

- 1 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar: and he said, Smite the capitals, that the thresholds may shake; and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the Sword: there shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape.
- 2 Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall my hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down.
- 3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and it shall bite them.
- 4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, 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.
- 5 For the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, is he that toucheth the land and it melteth, and all that dwell therein shall mourn; and it shall rise up wholly like the River, and shall sink again, like the River of Egypt;
- 9 it is he that buildeth his chambers in the heavens, and hath founded his vault upon the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; Jehovah is his name.

QUERIES

- a. Why does the Lord specify the smiting of the "capitals"?
- b. How may it be said that the Lord brings evil upon anyone?
- c. What is the Lord's "vault" upon earth?

PARAPHRASE

And I saw in a vision the Lord standing beside the idolatrous altar at Bethel to judge Israel. And He gave orders, saying, Smash the tops of the pillars and shake the temple until the pillars crumble and the roof crashes down upon the people below. Those who may escape this destruction will be caught and slain with the sword. Though they might be able to dig into Sheol, the place of departed spirits, My hand will reach there and find them; though they climb up to heaven in their attempt to escape Me, I will bring them down from there. Let them try to hide in the rocks atop Mount Carmel and I will search them out and capture them. Even if they could hide in the bottom of the sea, I could simply send the sea-serpent after them to bite and destroy them. And even though they think that by willingly going into captivity they may be safe from My judgment, I will see to it that many of them are killed there by the sword and that they receive judgment and not good. For the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the One who is judging, is the One who has but to touch the earth and it dissolves and all its people mourn, while the whole earth rises like the Nile, and sinks like the floods of Egypt. The sphere of this God's existence or His habitation is in the invisible heavens above the visible heavens as well as here on the earth. He is the same God who controls by His almighty power the waters of the sea, calling them up to pour out upon the face of the earth. Jehovah is this God's name.

SUMMARY

The judgment and destruction of Israel is inevitable, thorough and inescapable. This is because of the nature of her God—omniscient and omnipotent.

COMMENT

v. 1 I SAW THE LORD STANDING BESIDE THE ALTAR: AND HE SAID, SMITE . . . We must agree with Lange and Pusey, against K & D, that the "altar" here is the altar Jeroboam set up at Bethel. It would symbolize all the idolatry of which Israel was guilty and which God is about to judge and punish. The whole context and intent of Amos' ministry demands this interpretation. It is not possible in the light of the prophet's ministry that this is the altar at Jerusalem. God is giving Amos a vision of the thoroughness and inescapability of His judgment upon Israel and so it is pictured as being in progress. God commands, Smash the pillars! "Capitals" are really the crowns or

tops of the pillars in the idolatrous temple there at Bethel and other locations. These pillars were probably imitations of those in the true sanctuary at Jerusalem and so the Israelite temple was struck from above and made to collapse in total destruction upon the heads of those worshipping the golden calf. Should any succeed in escaping the crash of the building, even these God would slay with the sword. The point is, none shall escape who justly deserve the Lord's judgment.

The manner in which the Lord addresses Amos, saying, Smite . . . reminds us of God's commission to Jeremiah in Jer. 1:9-10 . . . "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." In a sense Amos did "Smite the pillars," even as Jeremiah "pulled down" kingdoms by foretelling the judgment of the Lord. The Lord's word of judgment is so absolutely certain to come to pass that when it is spoken it is as much as accomplished then.

v. 2-4 THOUGH THEY DIG INTO SHEOL . . . CLIMB UP TO HEAVEN . . . HIDE . . . IN THE TOP OF CARMEL . . . HID . . . IN THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA . . . GO INTO CAPTIVITY . . . THENCE WILL I COMMAND . . . AND . . . SLAY THEM . . . These verses sound very much like David's Psalm 139, praising God for His allseeing providence. It is not unlikely to suppose that Amos may have accommodated this Psalm in expressing the message God wanted him to give to Israel. However, it is not necessary to assume that he *must* have done so. In either instance it would not deny the infallibility of Amos' message. Such phrasing and figurative language is simply natural to the Hebrew expression to picture the omnipotence of God. There is simply no escape for the impenitent, in this world or any other, when God's judgment time has come. Sheol is the O.T. name for the place of departed souls, corresponding to the N.T. word Hades. The word occurs 65 times in the Hebrew OT and is rendered in the King James Version 31 times "hell," 31 times "grave," and 3 times "pit." This difference in translation is due to the fact that "hell" is ordinarily thought of as a place of punishment, while "grave" is substituted when the reference is to the souls of good men. In the American Standard Version no attempt is made to translate the word—it is merely transliterated into "Sheol." Psalms 16:10, quoted by Peter as a Messianic prophecy shows that Hades is the N.T. synonym for the O.T. Sheol. The reference to Mt. Carmel is made because it is a point on the extreme western boundary, immediately next to the Great Sea. As one writer has stated it, "Whoever hides himself there, must

know of no other secure refuge in all the land beside. And if there be no security there, nothing is left but the sea." The "serpent" is the one named Leviathan (cf. Isa. 27:1). Amos describes the people in their misery and terror as going willingly, gladly, into captivity before their enemies like a flock of sheep to escape judgment. Captivity, at least seemed safe. Yet, here too, God would command the swords of their enemies to slay them.

It is the omnipotent God who brings judgment. Judgment is never simply the action of humanity or nature alone. It arises out of the character of the holy God and finds expression through His control of time and history. God is the God of history, and history is the history of God. As such, history reflects God's action and ultimate control; it is not dominated solely by economic, social, or political forces. When judgment falls, let God be seen!

V. 5-6 FOR THE LORD . . . TOUCHETH THE LAND AND IT MELTETH . . . HE . . . BUILDETH HIS CHAMBERS IN THE HEAVENS . . . Now Amos substantiates all that he has promised before. The thoroughness and inescapability of the judgment which Amos prophecies is certain because of the nature and character of Jehovah of Hosts. He speaks and it comes to pass, He commands and the earth stands forth. He has no need to exert anything more than a mere touch and the earth melts! The word "chambers" means literally, "places to which one has to ascend, upper chambers, stories." K & D say, "The heaven in which God builds His stories, is the heaven of clouds; and the vault, according to Gen. 1:7, is the firmament of heaven, which divided the water above the firmament from the water beneath it. Consequently the upper rooms of God are the waters above the firmament, in or out of which God builds His stories (Psa. 104:3), i.e. the cloud-tower above the horizon of the earth, which is raised above it like a vault." "Vault" means literally, "arch." It probably refers to the firmament, or the visible heavens, which seems to span the earth like an arch. We believe Amos is simply picturing God's omnipresence. He dwells everywhere. He is high above everything that man can see or imagine. Not only so, but He is in absolute control of the forces of nature. Even in our own self-sophisticated age of science and technology the sea, the rain, the weather all remain uncontrolled by man yet mysteriously under universal laws which defy human comprehension and analyzation. What with all our advances we still are at the mercy of the sea and floods. Jehovah commands the entire universe and uses it to bring judgment upon His enemies and blessing to His friends.

QUIZ

1. Where was the Lord standing when Amos saw Him?
1. What are the "capitals" God commanded to be smashed?
3. Where is Sheol?
4. What is the "serpent" of the sea?
5. Where are the "chambers" which God builds in the heavens?
6. What is the "vault" upon the earth?
7. What is Amos' purpose in all his figurative language?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS
PROPHESED—DISRUPTION
AND DISPERSION

TEXT: 9:7-10

- 7 Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith Jehovah. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?
- 8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; save that I will not utterly destroy the houses of Jacob, saith Jehovah.
- 9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least kernel fall upon the earth.
- 10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, The evil shall not overtake nor meet us.

QUERIES

- a. Why does God compare Israel to the Philistines and Syrians?
- b. What part of the house of Jacob will Jehovah not destroy?
- c. How will God "sift" Israel like "grain in a sieve?"

PARAPHRASE

What makes you think, O Israel, that you are any better in My eyes than the Philistines and the Syrians? Just because I brought you from Egypt and put in you this land is no reason to think that I will overlook your sin anymore than I do not overlook the sin of these other nations which I also established in their lands. I am no respecter

of person for I am offended with sin in every man. I am fully aware of the sinfulness of the kingdom of Israel, and I will wipe that kingdom off the face of the earth. No, I will not totally destroy the entire house of Jacob for a very few are still righteous and god-fearing people and I will save that remnant. But I am going to give the command and the house of Israel will be disrupted and dispersed among all the nations like grain is shaken and sifted in a sieve. The solid, good grain remains but the trash falls to the ground. So it shall be with Israel. All those sinful, complacent people who say, Evil shall not come upon us, will die violently by the sword. The righteous shall be saved.

SUMMARY

God warns a complacent people that He is no respecter of person. The wicked shall die for their sins. The good shall be saved. God is going to obliterate the kingdom of Israel from the face of the earth.

COMMENT

v. 7-8 ARE YE NOT AS THE CHILDREN OF THE ETHIOPIANS UNTO ME, O CHILDREN OF ISRAEL . . . BEHOLD THE EYES OF THE LORD . . . ARE UPON THE SINFUL KINGDOM . . . " . . . children of the Ethiopians" is also translated "sons of the Cushites," Ham's posterity. This should pierce the pride of the Israelite as nothing else would do—to liken them to the heathen. It certainly was intended to destroy the veneer of complacency with which they had deluded themselves. The bringing of Israel out of Egypt in a special way avails no more than the bringing of the Syrians and Philistines out of their former dwelling places. God did it all. With God it is not where you came from and what you were that counts—it is what you are now and what you are becoming that counts! The sinful of Israel were depending upon their past heritage and special treatment by God. Jesus had to deal with the same complacency and pride with the Pharisees (cf. Jn. 8:31ff). This trust in themselves—"Then Peter opened his mouth; and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," (Acts 10:34-35; cf. Rom. 10:12; Mt. 5:45). Special treatment is no license to sin! God is offended by sin in any people, and especially so in a people whom He has chosen and blessed above others! His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom!

Caphtor is probably Crete or perhaps refers to all the islands of the Aegean Sea. Kir is in the general direction of Elam (today it is Iran).

For other details on the nations see our comments on Amos chapters one and two.

The word of Jehovah is that the kingdom of Israel, as a kingdom, will be totally obliterated from the face of the earth. The fulfillment of this is found in II Kings 17. That does not mean, of course, that God has violated His covenant with Jacob (named Israel). God has kept His covenant, even in judgment and destruction of the sinner. Man, the sinner, has *not* kept his covenant. Those few righteous of the northern kingdom who did keep God's covenant terms were to become (with the righteous of Judah's dispersed) the seed of the messianic nation through which God was going to ultimately fulfill His covenant. Amos is gradually leading into the glorious climax of his prophecy in which he paints word pictures with figurative language of the future blessings of the Messianic age when God shall have fulfilled His promises in Christ and the Church.

v. 9-10 . . . WILL SIFT THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AMONG ALL THE NATIONS . . . YET SHALL NOT THE LEAST KERNEL FALL UPON THE EARTH . . . ALL THE SINNERS OF MY PEOPLE SHALL DIE . . . The heritage of Israel did not grant immunity from judgment, and physical descent from Jacob did not guarantee exemption from accountability. Love is neither blind, nor is it weak. Consequently, as Honeycutt observes, the wrath in God's love and the love in God's wrath should be equally recognized. Remember that one of the backgrounds upon which the prophets are to be read and interpreted is "Judgment-Redemption." Judgment is never the last word in God's scheme. There is a redemptive emphasis which is a result of judgment in history.

Verse 9 definitely refers to the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes of Israel which occurred about 722-721 B.C. The Assyrian emperor transported the Jews and scattered them from one city to another in the vast Assyrian empire. He also imported foreigners into the former territory of Israel. These married the few poor and insignificant Jews left behind in Israel and became the Samaritans. The kingdom of Israel was never to be established again. But there is that righteous remnant still within this rotten nation. Not one of those shall "fall upon the earth." This will be the holy seed-grain out of which the Lord will form a new and holy people (Christians—the Church) and kingdom of God over which the "son-king" in Isaiah 9 and 11 will reign. K & D likens the Gentile nations among whom the northern kingdom (and later the southern kingdom) was dispersed unto the

sieve—"Such a sieve are the nations of the world, through which Israel is purged from its chaff, i.e. from its ungodly members. It is true that among those of Judah who returned from the Babylonian captivity with Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah were some of the ten tribes of Israel.

Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) has left records of the fall of the northern kingdom. Many of the Israelites were deported to Upper Mesopotamia and Media and lost their identity there. Many of the people of Israel lost their national identity through assimilation during the centuries following their déportation. Others made their way southward to Judah, and remnants of them appear among the later Jews. Those who lost their identity are often referred to as the "ten lost tribes of Israel." This is not altogether accurate. From the establishment of the Church until time shall cease, however, all Jews, as well as Gentiles, must appropriate the promises of God through Jesus Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek. We shall amplify this in our next section.

QUIZ

1. Is God a respecter of person? Prove it!
2. When God destroyed Israel did He fail to keep His covenant?
3. Who are the "kernels" which shall not fall to the ground?
4. What finally happened to the kingdom of Israel and all its people?
5. Are there "ten lost tribes of Israel today?"

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— DAVID'S THRONE AND DOMINION RESTORED

TEXT: 9:11-12

- 11 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;
- 12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations that are called by my name, saith Jehovah that doeth this.

QUERIES

- a. What is the "tabernacle of David" and why is it fallen?
- b. How and when will God raise it up and rebuild it?
- c. How will the covenant people "possess" all the nations?

PARAPHRASE

When I have thoroughly sifted and purged the covenant people through captivity and prepared them for the coming of the Messiah I will establish again the Messianic throne which I began in David and promised to perpetuate through his lineage. I will raise up the throne of David from the ruins into which it has fallen and restore it until it far exceeds its former glory. This new Davidic kingdom will conquer in spiritual warfare many people from the former enemies of God's covenant nation. All from the many Gentile nations who become worshippers of Jehovah God will become citizens of this new Davidic kingdom.

SUMMARY

Out of the purging process of captivity God will bring about the fulfillment of His covenant of redemption through the revived lineage of David.

COMMENT

v. 11 . . . I WILL RAISE UP THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID . . . That this has its fulfillment in the establishment and ongoing of the Church cannot be questioned! All one has to do is turn to Acts 15:12-21 to find that Holy Spirit inspired apostles have confirmed such fulfillment. There can be no argument with the authoritative pronouncements of the New Testament when it specifically states the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. The passage in Acts 15:12-21 is one of those "key passages" referred to in our introductory study entitled "Interpreting The Prophets." This passage from Amos (9:11-12) is not the only prophet quoted by James in Acts 15:12-21, but it *is* quoted as having its fulfillment in the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles and their reception into the Church which is the restored kingdom of David, Christ, the son of David, reigning upon that throne. We take the liberty of quoting extensively just here from "*New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecies*," by James D. Bales, pub. The Harding College Press, pages 150, 151, 152, 153, 167, 168:

"James did not say that he was quoting Amos. It is true that much is found in Amos, but it is not true that the context permits one to think that he is quoting Amos and adding to what Amos or any of the prophets said, when he said: After this I will return.

"James expressly said that he was not referring to only one prophet. 'And to this agree the words of the prophets.' (Acts 15:15). *James was using words from the prophets, plural, and not from a prophet, singular.*

"Why, then, when one fails to find all that James said in one of the prophets, such as Amos, must one conclude that James has added something to what one prophet said. James stated that he was using the words of more than one prophet.

" . . . we can take written words of the prophets, and the ideas expressed in those written words, and put them together to say just what James said. And James evidently put together written words for he said that he was giving written words of the prophets which applied to the taking out of a people from the Gentiles for God's name. And the places from whence we take these words will be from passages which deal with the same theme. This is the judgment of God on Israel for her sins, and then the gathering of the children of Israel into His favor—at least the gathering of those who would accept Him. In Jeremiah 12 God describes His forsaking of 'mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.' (12:7). After a time of punishment He said, 'And it shall come to pass, *after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, the Lord liveth; as they taught my people to swear to Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.*' (Jer. 12:15-17). Amos speaks of the same thing. He speaks of the Lord's destroying the sinful kingdom, except that He would not utterly destroy them (9:8-10). Then he stated that He would raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, etc. (9:11-12). They were, just as Jeremiah said, to be planted on their land after he had brought them out of captivity (9:14-15).

"Jeremiah and James use almost identical words. 'After that I have plucked them out I will return,' God said through Jeremiah (12:15). 'After this I will return,' God said through James in referring to what was written in the words of the

prophets (Acts 15:15). God said, in other words, that after He had visited punishment on the house of Israel, that He would return and rebuild the tabernacle of David. It was *after this*—after his punishments on Israel which were stated by Old Testament prophets—that God would rebuild the tabernacle of David. It was not after the new covenant days, and the calling of the Gentiles, that God would rebuild David's tabernacle. And this having been done—God having punished them for the sins which such as Amos and Jeremiah denounced them for—God was now rebuilding David's tabernacle.

"There are words of the prophets written, other than those of Jeremiah and Amos, which show that the Gentiles were to seek the Lord . . . (Isa. 11:10). Words of prophets which James quoted stated that the tabernacle of David was to be rebuilt in the future (future from the time that the prophets spoke) that the Gentiles might seek the Lord (Acts 15:16-17). Christ is that root of Jesse and today the Gentiles seek Him. Paul showed this when he proved from Old Testament prophecies that the Gentiles were to receive mercy of God, and he showed that these promises applied to the present dispensation of mercy. *So Paul proved by Old Testament prophecies the same thing that James proved.* (cf. Rom. 15:8-9). Paul then quotes at least four Old Testament statements to show that God had planned to extend mercy, which was being extended during the gospel dispensation, to the Gentiles. And the fourth quotation is as follows: 'And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.' Paul went on to say that he was 'the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sacrificed by the Holy Spirit.' (Rom. 15:12, 16). Christ, then, is the root of Jesse whom the Gentiles seek in this present age. But Isaiah said that it was to be 'in that day.' (Isa. 11:10), . . . the context is applied by the premillennialists to a future dispensation. Yet, the Gentiles now seek the root of Jesse. They were to seek Him "in that day." So evidently that day has come. *Thus Paul and James agree, and agree with the prophets, that the present dispensation is the one in which the prophets had prophesied that the Gentiles would seek the Lord.*"

Mr. Bales also gives an excellent treatment of the phrase "tabernacle of David." We shall quote briefly from his work but suggest that our readers purchase a copy of his book here quoted for detailed study:

"The rebuilding of the tabernacle of David was evidently not a rebuilding of the Mosaical system, but the restoration of a king to David's throne. And that Christ is now on David's throne we have shown in another chapter. The Mosaical system will not be rebuilt. Its mediator, Moses, has now been replaced by Christ (Deut. 18:15-17; Acts 3:22-26). The old Covenant was to pass away, and it has passed away (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:5-10, 16). Its sacrifices have ceased for the Lamb of God has been offered once for all to bear the sins of the world."

Thus we believe that this "key" passage in Amos 9:11-12, as interpreted by Spirit-borne apostles in Acts 15:15-16, along with the multitudes of other such prophecies as compared with the New Testament teaching that the covenant made to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ, proves that the Old Testament prophets were speaking of the Messianic kingdom—the church of Christ—not some dispensation or millenium which is to follow the age in which we are now living. Of course, the consummation of all that God promised in His covenant with Abraham and has potentially accomplished in Christ, will all be realized when Christ comes the second time, "not to deal with sin," (not to give another opportunity for the salvation of the Jews or anyone else), and when all the ages will be over and time shall become eternity and He shall make a new heaven and a new earth.

v. 12 . . . THAT THEY MAY POSSESS THE REMNANT OF EDOM . . . Connected as it is to what has gone before, this phrase is, of course, fulfilled in the establishment of the church and the evangelization of the Gentiles just as the preceding prophecy is so fulfilled. See our comments on Obadiah, verse 20-21 for further study. The Old Testament prophecies most certainly did not have their ultimate future fulfillment in the mere literal restoration of the Jews to a portion of land. Listen to John P. Milton in "*Prophecy Interpreted*," pages 14, 15, 71, 72, 73:

"The prediction of Amos, 'that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name' (Amos 9:12), implies the conquest of Edom and other Gentile nations and their incorporation by force into the national Israel; which could be one way of sharing the blessing of

the covenant, at the same time as it indicated the victory of God and of His people over their enemies. The imagery fits the historically contemporaneous situation. *But* there are other Old Testament prophecies, such as in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 which have already dropped the imagery of physical conquest in favor of the more spiritual one of a voluntary seeking of the Lord in response to invitation, and have thus prepared the way for the New Testament use of the Amos passage in Acts 15:17 . . . "

There are too many people today who believe that unless God fulfills in a literal way, by restoring the physical Jewish nation to a physical Palestine, the covenant He made with Abraham, that God is not faithful to His word. Mr. Milton continues:

"God is faithful to His word, but He can get along without us if we are faithless. That is both the glory and the tragedy of Israel. That which God set out to do through Abraham as His servant and through Israel as His people He has fulfilled, and is fulfilling now, through Christ and the Christian Church. It couldn't be made any clearer than it is in Acts 3:17-26. Read it in your Bible. And notice, it does not say a word about the land of Palestine, or even about Israel as a nation, but drives straight to the heart of the promise of blessing.

"We must learn to distinguish between that which is the very essence of a promise, or its central idea, and that which belongs to the temporary forms of which God made use in bringing the promise to fulfillment. We must learn to distinguish, too, between the eternal and the transient in prophecy. The possession of the land by Israel was an essential stage in the working out of God's covenant of blessing for all men. So was the call of Abraham and the history of the people of Israel. But nowhere in the New Testament is there the slightest indication that these are of the essence of the new covenant. The 'central idea' in the Old Testament promise which is fulfilled in Christ is not the promise of a bit of territory on earth. If the New Testament is right in what it says, even the patriarchs saw more clearly than to set their hopes on an earthly Canaan: they looked for a better country, a heavenly one:

And, again:

"When Amos says, . . . (9:11-12), James in Acts 15:15-18 puts it . . . The difference is significant. The prophet uses what to him must have been a perfectly natural picture of covenant fulfillment in the form of a national conquest of an ancient enemy. It is as if he visualized the incorporation of Edom in Israel as a result of conquest; in this way the blessing of God's covenant would be shared also by them. The New Testament uses the picture of the Gentiles seeking the God of Israel and a share in the blessings of His people. See Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4. What is the nature of those blessings? A careful study of the covenant will make it clear that even in the case of Israel they were essentially spiritual. Should it then be too difficult to see that when Amos speaks of the mountains dripping sweet wine he may be concerned with more than material prosperity; and that its ultimate reference is to 'every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places of Christ? It belongs to the progressiveness of revelation to bring out the meaning latent in the original promise in and through the fulfillment. The 'times-coloring' disappears . . . and the spiritual reality remains, only more clearly discerned as befits the fulfillment. Which is the more important to stress, the promise of the land or of the blessing? Which is the 'central idea' in the covenant promise?"

This leads us to a consideration of the next section of Amos which describes in highly figurative and "times-coloring" language the future glory and prosperity (spiritual) of the Messianic kingdom (tabernacle of David).

QUIZ

1. How may we be sure of the interpretation and fulfillment of this prophecy?
2. How many prophets did James quote in Acts 15:15-17 besides Amos?
3. What is the "tabernacle of David?"
4. How many more times is Christ coming to the world? What is He coming for?
5. Who is to possess the "remnant of Edom, and all the nations...?"
7. How does prophecy in Amos connect with Obadiah's prophecy?

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— FRUITFULNESS AND PROSPERITY RESTORED

TEXT: 9:13-14

- 13 Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.
- 14 And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

QUERIES

- a. What is the meaning of "the plowman shall overtake the reaper?"
- b. When did God "bring back the captivity of . . . Israel?"

PARAPHRASE

Lo: The days are coming, says the Lord, when there shall be one unceasing inpouring of spiritual harvest in the resurrected dynasty of David. It will be as if a plowman followed right on top of the reaper to prepare the field immediately for another crop! Or, it will be as if those who tread the grapes would have such a large harvest they would be treading the grapes right into the time normally set aside for re-seeding the vineyards! Such shall be the abundance and super-abundance in this spiritual harvest of blessings, that it shall be as though the hills of Palestine are dissolving themselves in the rich streams of mercy and grace which they pour down. I will restore the fortunes of my covenant people. I will sustain them materially that they may serve Me to accomplish the restoration of David's throne and the super-abundance of spiritual blessings.

SUMMARY

Jehovah, through Amos, continues speaking of the great purpose a purged and chastened people are to serve—the restoration of David's throne and fulfillment of the covenant in spiritual blessings.

COMMENT

v. 13 . . . THE PLOWMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER . . .

The prophet takes a phrase from the Law (Lev. 26:5) to describe a super-abundant harvest which is so wholly beyond the natural as to be supernatural. He is, therefore, speaking of the consequences of the restoration of the throne of David, i.e. the reigning of Jesus Christ upon that throne and the establishment of the church. Pusey says, "All this is beyond nature, and so, the more in harmony with what went before, the establishment of a kingdom of grace, in which the heathen should have the name of God called upon them . . . There shall be one unceasing inpouring of riches; no break in the heavenly husbandry; labor shall at once yield fruit; the harvest shall but encourage fresh labor. The end shall come swiftly on the beginning; the end shall not close the past only, but issue forth anew. Such is the character of the toils of the Gospel." Compare the words of Jesus in John 4:35-38! This restored dynasty of David has a glorious future filled with fruitfulness and prosperity! Just as the "raising up of the tabernacle of David" refers to the Gospel age, so this, in the same context, is explained by Paul in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places of Christ . . ." It should be very evident that the prophet is not speaking literally when we are told that "the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt." Pusey, again, "Such shall be the abundance and super-abundance of blessing, that it shall be as though the hills dissolved themselves in the rich streams which they poured down . . . Everything, heretofore barren and unfruitful, should overflow with spiritual blessing. The mountains and hills of Judea, with their terraced sides clad with the vine were a natural symbol of fruitfulness to the Jews, but they themselves could not think that natural fruitfulness was meant under this imagery. It would have been a hyperbole as to things of nature; but what, in natural things, is a hyperbole, is but a faint shadow of the joys and rich delights and glad fruitfulness of grace."

v. 14 AND I WILL BRING BACK THE CAPTIVITY OF MY PEOPLE ISRAEL . . . The Revised Standard Version translates this phrase, "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel . . ." K & D says this, "That this phrase is not used here to denote the return of the people from captivity, but the turning of misfortune and misery into prosperity and salvation, is evident from the context; for Israel cannot be brought back out of captivity *after* it has already taken possession of the Gen-

tiles." (v. 12) K & D interpret verse 14 thus: "As . . . the territory of the re-erected kingdom of David . . . will receive the blessing of the greatest fertility, so will the citizens of this kingdom, be no more visited with calamity and judgment, but enjoy the rich beneficent fruits of their labor in blessed and unbroken peace." It is possible, though the context (as K & D say) does not seem to favor it, that Amos is using what Milton terms "shortened perspective" (see our introductory study of principles and interpretation) here. In other words, it may be that Amos is speaking of what God is going to do historically in restoring the Jews to Palestine in the time of Cyrus (536 B.C.) but that out of that shall come the future blessings in the Son of David, the Messiah. It could be that Amos' perspective is so shortened that the beginning of God's work in the restoration from the captivity is blended right into the eschatological fulfillment of it in the "last days" (the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the Christian age). We must remind ourselves again and again that the prophets spoke primarily for their contemporaries. Whatever they would wish to convey of God's ultimate blessings in fulfilling His covenant the prophets would have to couch in contemporary historical developments and contemporary modes of expression. So God promises here to restore, bless and sustain where He had formerly disrupted, dispersed and judged.

QUIZ

1. How is verse 13 to be interpreted—literally or figuratively? Explain your reasons.
2. What is the RSV translation of the first phrase of v. 14?
3. What reasoning does K & D give to agree with the RSV translation?
4. What do we mean by "shortened perspective?"
5. Why is it necessary to remember that the prophets spoke for their contemporaries?

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— SECURITY-PEACE-PROTECTION RESTORED

TEXT: 9:15

- 15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God.

QUERIES

- a. When did God "plant" them upon their land?
- b. Were the Jews ever again plucked up out of their land?

PARAPHRASE

And I, the Lord God, will establish, sustain and protect this new kingdom of David. The citizens of this kingdom will be guarded by Me and no one shall ever pluck them out of their inheritance which I have given them, says the Lord thy God.

SUMMARY

God is the builder, sustainer and protector of the Messianic kingdom. Its citizens are safe and secure.

COMMENT

v. 15 . . . I WILL PLANT THEM . . . AND THEY SHALL NO MORE BE PLUCKED UP . . . This, of course, is within the context of what we have been discussing—the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant by the restoring of the Davidic throne with the attendant blessings as a consequence of that restoration. Here the emphasis is on the victory, peace and security that will come when David's throne is raised up. We want to share with our readers certain comments here from Lange:

" . . . God will magnify Israel by establishing a new condition of prosperity . . . directly mediated through the action of the judgment. This judgment . . . operates . . . in a purifying direction . . . the divine grace shows itself in this, that after the destruction of the ungodly elements, first and chiefly in the ten tribes, but also in Judah, there arises a single but prosperous and powerful kingdom of Israel under the legitimate monarchy, which attracts to itself all the elements spared and refined by the judgment, including those which belonged to the existing ten tribes . . . "

Again, Lange says:

"The threatening, as well as the promises of prophecy, find their complete fulfillment first in the New Testament, yet not in the literal Israel, but in the people of God represented by Israel in so far as it is apostate.

"A certain fulfillment was no doubt experienced in the restoration accomplished by the Jews who returned from ex-

ile. But this was by no means 'the Messianic salvation,' the consummation of God's kingdom in Israel . . . The Messiah came in the person of Jesus Christ.

"What therefore was promised to Israel passes over by virtue of the new covenant to all who belong to Israel through faith in Christ and form the people of God. And we are not at all to expect a literal fulfillment of these engagements to a national Israel, and in the shape of temporal blessings on the stand-point of the Old Testament. For, if we did, it would follow that there must be a literal possession of the 'remnant of Edom.' But the boldest realist will hardly conclude that in the future Edom will again exist alongside of Israel.

"We may here appropriate in substance the observations of Keil, who says that 'the raising up of David's fallen hut commenced with the coming of Christ and the founding of the Christian Church by the Apostles—(as to which we refer, e.g., only to Luke 1:32, 33, where Jesus is represented as the restorer of David's throne, and one whose kingdom shall have no end).—and the possession of Edom and of all the other nations upon whom the Lord reveals his name, took its rise in the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven set up by Christ . . . The land which will flow with streams of divine blessing is not Palestine, but the domain of the Christian Church . . . The people which cultivate this land is the Christian Church, so far as it stands in living faith and produces the fruits of the Holy Spirit.'

"And—we may add—so far as the Jews are converted to Christ and incorporated into the Christian community, there is 'a bringing back of the captives.' Still this 'bringing back' is not limited to Israel after the flesh. Its fulfillment is to be sought more generally in the freedom which Christ has brought, in consequence of which believers in Him are no longer prisoners under the control of an alien power. They 'possess the glorious liberty of the children of God,' through their enjoyment of communion with God.

". . . this promise for the people of God first began to be fulfilled at the appearing of the Messiah and in the domain of the Christian Church. Its complete fulfillment is to be expected at the *parousia* of Christ; and then the spiritual blessing, the spiritual power and greatness, the spiritual freedom which the people of God now enjoy, will obtain a corresponding outward sensible manifestation."

The promise of God that in Messianic days He would establish a kingdom so securely that it would never be conquered or "plucked up," is found in a number of places in the prophets (cf. Jer. 24:6; 31:28; Isa. 60:21; Ezek. 37:25). One should read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 37 to get the full impact of prophetic expression. Notice in Ezek. 37:24-28 that the resurrected dynasty of David is central! Isaiah spoke gloriously of the peace and victory that was to come when God's covenant would be fulfilled (cf. Isa. 25:1—26:6).

Old Testament prophecies were viewed by New Testament authority to have been fulfilled in spirit. Yet, the attendant physical phenomena were not recorded. Obviously they did not accompany the fulfillment of the principle, or real content of the prophecy. This does not invalidate the prophetic ministry of the prophets. Rather *it illustrates that the physical descriptions were literary devices used to express a truth that otherwise would have defied description.*

Pre-millennial literalism in seeking physical fulfillment in a physical Jewish nation misses the whole point of the prophetic message and, in our opinion, is completely out of harmony with plain, unequivocal New Testament teaching as to its fulfillment. Lange finds it worthy of note that a Hebrew with the background and hopes such as James would have failed to see a literal fulfillment of these closing words of Amos. Lange says, ". . . it is remarkable that James, who was so pronounced a representative of the Judaistic tendency, should regard such a promise as we have in Amos, as fulfilled, so far as regards its meaning, in the appearance of Christ and the spiritual blessings thence resulting, without even once referring it to the second coming of the Saviour. Even he therefore is a patron of the so-called spiritual interpretation of the prophecies; and if the theological explanation here finds itself in agreement with a disciple of the Lord, and him a man of strong Jewish-Christian feeling, that is a proof that it is on the right track, and has so much the more reason for disowning the doctrine of a future glorification of the national Israel as guaranteed by the prophets."

This last verse of Amos reminds of Jesus who said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (Jn. 10:27-29). It also reminds of Romans 8:31-39—read this passage again. The peace, security, fruitfulness, blessing which we find in Christ, God planned ages and ages ago and revealed it to the minds and

hearts of stalwart men of God like Amos to deliver to those who would take comfort in it. Those men, in turn, master artists all, each in his own way, splashed in variegated hues, now bold and arresting, now shaded and peaceful, using hyperbole, simile, metaphor and parable as their paints, one glorious picture after another of God's holiness and love working for man's redemption in every historical event.

We would like to know more about this great spokesman of God. But here our association ends until it is renewed, we trust, in that day when what he preached and predicted shall be consummated. Amos, man of holy conscience, unselfish motives, unshakable courage and uncompromising conviction was not a prophet by profession or training. He was a simple rustic, a shepherd, whom God charged with delivering to his countrymen the Lord's message of judgment, repentance and redemption. He received "a divers portion" of the message of God and communicated it in "divers manners." Every Christian today, even the least in the kingdom, is greater than Amos in the sense that God has spoken to the Christian in these last days Son-wise. The least the Christian can do is seek to exemplify Amos' holy conscience, unselfish motives, unshakable courage and uncompromising conviction.

QUIZ

1. What is the emphasis in v. 15 as it is connected with the whole context?
2. How are we to interpret the whole passage? Where is it fulfilled?
3. Where else in the O.T. prophets is the principle of v. 15 found?
4. What is remarkable about the fact that James interprets the context as fulfilled in Christ?
5. Where in the N.T. do we find the principle of security, peace and victory pronounced?
6. How should Amos, the man, become an example for the Christian?