

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: AMOS

AMOS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

AMOS CHAPTER 1

Amos 1:1 *The words of Amos*- The prophets typically begin with something like "The word of the Lord...". But here we have "the words of *Amos*", which were God's words. This is a useful insight into the Divine-human cooperation which we now call "inspiration". They were the Lord's words, but through the words of Amos; just like Paul's letters to his friends were just that, and yet more than that, because they were inspired by God.

Who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa- A wilderness (2 Chron. 20:20). We have the impression that Amos was a very isolated individual who likely knew little about the national let alone international scene. And yet exactly such a person is chosen to be an international witness; for the threats of judgment upon the Gentile nations were presumably in order to give them the chance of repentance. This was a fact realized by Amos himself in Am. 7:14. We likewise are often chosen for service on the basis of our inadequacy rather than our secular, apparent qualifications.

Which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel- It seems Amos spoke mostly against the northern kingdom of Israel, perhaps stationing himself near the sanctuary at Bethel and condemning them. He was then expelled from Israel and took his message to Judah. Israel were

prosperous in the days of Jeroboam II, hence the repeated criticisms of wealth. Amos, a poor herdsman, was the appropriate one to do this.

Two years before the earthquake- This earthquake is alluded to in Am. 8:8 and is stated as actually happening in Am. 9:5. The prophetic word is so certain of fulfilment that it can be spoken of in the present or even past tenses, even though the fulfilment is yet future. And yet as happened with Nineveh, in the gap between pronouncement and fulfilment, there is the possibility of repentance and a change to God's stated purpose (Jer. 18:7-9, and the example of Nineveh and Moses changing God's purpose of judgment about Israel).

Amo 1:2 He said: Yahweh will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem- As the subsequent context makes clear, this will happen when Yahweh emerges to judge both Judah, Israel and her surrounding neighbours. And we have that idea in Joel 3:16 too- for in Joel 3:14 we read of the judgment of the nations, and in Joel 3:15 of the judgment of Israel. The idea of a thunderous roar likens Yahweh to a lion (as in Rev. 5:5, in the person of the Lord Jesus); but the invader is likened to a lion in Joel 1:6 and often elsewhere. This is a standoff between two lions; just as Yahweh's mighty ones face off against the mighty ones of the Gentiles (Joel 3:9,11). This thunderous roar in its latter day aspect can be associated with the Lord's return being with a great shout (1 Thess. 4:16; Jn. 5:28,29), the 'calling' for the sword of judgment to fall upon the invaders (Ez. 38:21; Is. 11:4). This is the "roar" of Jer. 25:30, which Yahweh will utter as He treads the winepress, which is also the context in Joel 3:13. Joel may have been contemporary with Amos and was giving Judah the same message as him, so the many points of overlap with Amos are to be expected.

And the pastures of the shepherds will mourn, and the top of Carmel will wither- Am. 3:12 implies that Yahweh is the good shepherd to Israel, whereas they had many bad shepherds, as Ez. 34 also laments. The idea may be that the suffering of the people in their "pastures" was due to their bad shepherds, the spiritual leadership.

Amo 1:3 Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Damascus, yes, for four- There are six surrounding nations mentioned, and then Israel and Judah, who could be counted as one. Seven judgments connect with similar series of seven judgments in Revelation, which I would interpret as likewise referring to judgments on the nations around Israel and also including Israel. It could be argued that the gravity of the offending increases, coming to a climax in the sins of Israel and Judah. They would have heard Amos' prophecies and agree heartily that the Gentiles deserved punishment- but then the point is made that they have sinned even worse and will be punished along with the surrounding nations by the cataclysm of judgment which was and is to descend upon the *eretz* promised to Abraham. The seven nations to be judged connect with their sins of "three, yes for four", making seven- as if God notices and is sensitive to every sin, and all these nations had now filled up their sin to completeness, seven times. And so judgment would fall (Gen. 15:16).

I will not turn away its punishment- As explained on Am. 1:1, there is the possibility of repentance and the averting of Divine judgment. But that turning away of judgment is now not going to be possible because of the complete filling up of transgression to seven times, three plus four. The same Hebrew is used of how God's people and the Gentiles refused to "turn away" from sin (Jer. 44:5); and so He did not turn away from their punishment (Jer. 30:24 s.w.).

Because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron- LXX "Because they sawed with iron saws the women with child of the Galaadites". The actions of one Gentile nation against another were noted by God. They had cruelly abused those they

conquered; and God noticed that extreme abuse of power, the weak over the strong, and condemns them for it. God's sensitivity to sin is huge; and how much more does He watch us, His people, with our far greater responsibility.

Amo 1:4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazeel, and it will eat up the palaces of Ben Hadad- God is sensitive to the opulence of Gentiles and their misuse of resources. Hazeel means 'whom God looks on', perhaps the develop this point. How much more then is He to His people. Assyrian obelisks describe their destruction of Hazeel's glory with fire.

Amo 1:5 I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him who holds the sceptre from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity to Kir, says Yahweh- The way Gentiles trusted in their human strength and defensive military technology is noted by God. And these Gentiles were judged by other Gentiles, under God's hand. He took away their kingdom / rulership because of this. His sensitivity to His people trusting in their human defences is therefore so much the greater.

Amo 1:6 Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Gaza, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they carried away captive the whole community, to deliver them up to Edom- LXX "Because they took prisoners the captivity of Solomon". Being too cruel, even between Gentiles, registers with God and He counts over-reaction and seeking of revenge to be sinful. Did Israel ever go into captivity in Edom because of Gaza? Perhaps not. In this case, the thought of doing so was judged by God so severely. We are judged according to our thoughts and plans, rather than all we actually are in physical terms. "The whole community" may mean that Gaza intended to get all the Jews into captivity when they supported the Babylonian invasion, when God intended only a third of the community to go into captivity (Ez. 5:12). Punishing sinners more harshly than God intends is therefore presented as a serious sin. And this sort of thing often happens in church life; some sins are seen as deserving disproportionate punishment simply because they have offended deeply held human tradition.

Tyre is condemned for not honouring her covenant with Edom (Amos 1:9); Moab for being too harsh in judging Edom (Am. 2:1); Gaza likewise for being too cruel (Amos 1:6). Even amongst the Gentiles, God sees some as sinning more than others (Ez. 7:24). And even amongst God's people, some sins are "greater abomination" than others (Ez. 8:13). This doesn't mean that the 'smaller' ones don't count. But it reflects God's great sensitivity to human sin. The varying scale of sacrifices for various sins reflects this too. And of course our Lord Himself spoke of the man with "greater sin", and of other men who owed varying amounts to the Father. The penal structure of the law of Moses itself reflects differing degrees of sin.

Amo 1:7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, and it will devour its palaces- Destruction of the wall and palaces by Divinely sent fire was exactly the judgment to come upon Samaria and Jerusalem. The judgments upon the surrounding Gentile nations were intended as a warning to Israel; and we too encounter others in life suffering judgments for sins which we too commit in essence. And we are intended to learn from those encounters.

Amo 1:8 I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him who holds the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn My hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines will perish, says the Lord Yahweh- All Bible prophecy comes to its ultimate moment in the situation of the last days, just prior to the Lord's return. Here in Amos 1 and 2 we read of judgments upon Israel's neighbours and upon them too. This is to happen in the last days, possibly in the same sequence. And so we note the focus upon Lebanon (:9), the Gaza strip

(:7) and now upon the Philistines / Palestinians. That these very areas are today the centre of strong anti-Jewish sentiment and jihadist extremism must surely be highly significant. At no other time in history has the stage been set like this. But as noted on :7, Israel were and are intended to learn from the judgments on their neighbours, described as they are in identical terms to those used about judgments to come upon Israel- the sceptre removed, Yahweh's hand turned against, their remnant perishing.

Amo 1:9 Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Tyre, yes, for four, I will not relent on its punishment; because they delivered up the whole community to Edom- "The whole community" may mean that Tyre like Gaza intended to get all the Jews into captivity when they supported the Babylonian invasion, when God intended only a third of the community to go into captivity (Ez. 5:12). Punishing sinners more harshly than God intends is therefore presented as a serious sin. And this sort of thing often happens in church life; some sins are seen as deserving disproportionate punishment simply because they have offended deeply held human tradition.

And didn't remember the brotherly covenant- This could refer to the effective covenant between Tyre and Israel first made in the times of David and Solomon (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:2-6; 9:11-14). Typically such covenants included a clause to the effect that it was binding upon their descendants. But it is typically human to shrug off the binding nature of an ancient covenant. But God takes covenant relationship seriously. And we learn from this that God's wrath is upon those who despise their brotherly covenant with their brethren.

Amo 1:10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, and it will destroy its palaces- As noted on :7, destruction of the wall and palaces by Divinely sent fire was exactly the judgment to come upon Samaria and Jerusalem. The judgments upon the surrounding Gentile nations were intended as a warning to Israel; and we too encounter others in life suffering judgments for sins which we too commit in essence. And we are intended to learn from those encounters. The wall of Tyre was perceived as an invincible human defence. But all such human strength will be progressively be revealed as useless before God's judgments.

Amo 1:11 Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Edom, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because he pursued his brother with the sword- Perhaps the focus is upon the word "pursued". Esau was indeed to live by the sword (Gen. 27:40), and to break the yoke of Jacob from off his neck. But to pursue Jacob with the sword over the generations was going beyond. Again we see God's particular wrath against those who punish sinners over severely; this is so against His own principles and way.

And cast off all pity- God understood that Esau / Edom's anger with Jacob was understandable and legitimate. But what was wrong was to cast off all sense of compassion when Jacob was now under judgment. To be heartless is for God an awful sin.

And his anger raged continually, and he kept his anger forever- God was willing to understand the gut reaction of anger [in Esau / Edom's case, over Jacob's deception]; but He does expect us to work through the stages of it, not to be caught up on the 'anger' stage of our reactions to loss and grief. This perhaps explains God's ready overlooking of Job's fist shaking against God. Again we see God condemning men not for being human and having human reactions, but for going too far in them. This is why Moab in turn is condemned not for attacking Edom, but for being sadistic against him (Am. 2:1).

Amo 1:12 But I will send a fire on Teman, and it will devour the palaces of Bozrah- As noted on :10, this was to give Israel and Judah an example of the kinds of judgment to come upon them at the hands of the Babylonians and Assyrians.

Amo 1:13 Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they have ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead, that they may enlarge their border- Ammon would only have achieved a very small territorial advantage by attacking Gilead. They used disproportionate behaviour; abusing pregnant women was not proportionate even to a campaign motivated simply by greed. As noted on :11, God shows here that although He recognizes human weakness, He does see a gradation in sin, and there are things which are bound to call forth His definite judgment even in this life.

Amo 1:14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it will devour its palaces- As noted on :10, this was to give Israel and Judah an example of the kinds of judgment to come upon them at the hands of the Babylonians and Assyrians.

With shouting in the day of battle, with a storm in the day of the whirlwind- "The whirlwind" was a common figure for the Babylonian and Assyrian judgment to come upon God's people. For sowing the wind, living in a vapid, empty way... they would reap the whirlwind (see on Hos. 8:7). But that same whirlwind of the Babylonian invasion was to shatter the Gentile nations too, and God's people were intended to learn from this (Is. 17:13).

Amo 1:15 And their king will go into captivity, he and his princes together, says Yahweh- This is precisely what happened to Judah; king and princes together went into captivity at the hands of Babylon. They were intended to have learnt the lesson from seeing the nations judged by Babylon; just as we are supposed to learn from the historical judgment of the nations, and the judgments of people who are brought into our lives for our observation and learning.

AMOS CHAPTER 2

Amos 2:1 Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Moab, yes, for four- We may well ask why God bothered warning Gentiles of their judgment. Surely the point was that they could repent- as Nineveh did- and the proposed judgment would then not come. This is how open God is. For "three... yes, for four", see on Am. 1:3.

I will not turn away its punishment- The implication is that God states coming purpose or judgment, but is willing to change it in some cases. Nineveh would be the classic example. This is what gives intensity to prayer and repentance- outcomes which God has previously predicted can be changed, such is His sensitivity to human words and behaviour.

Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime- We gasp at the intense knowledge of God, noting the details of how Gentiles treat each other. Edom has been the subject of God's own judgment in Amos 1; but He is saying that others do not have the right to abuse others, even if those others are the subjects of His wrath. When we see misfortune or judgment come upon our enemies or those who abused our own dear ones, we are tempted to shrug. But God isn't like that. His sensitivity to the human condition is too great. He had condemned Edom for abusing His people (Am. 1:11), but He condemns Moab for punishing Edom too cruelly. See on Am. 1:11. Moab had made a covenant with Edom, and to break it with such impunity provoked God's anger. Amos was obviously making the point that breaking

covenant with God was therefore going to provoke His even greater wrath. Another reading for "the king of Edom" is "his son", in which case the reference would be to the king of Moab burning his son to Moloch (2 Kings 3:27).

Amos 2:2 But I will send a fire on Moab, and it will destroy the palaces of Kerioth; and Moab will die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet- This is similar language to that used about the judgments upon Israel and Judah [death with tumult = Hos. 10:14]. Destruction of the wall and palaces by Divinely sent fire was exactly the judgment to come upon Samaria and Jerusalem. The judgments upon the surrounding Gentile nations were intended as a warning to Israel; and we too encounter others in life suffering judgments for sins which we too commit in essence. And we are intended to learn from those encounters. The king of Moab had used fire to judge others (:1), and yet his anger and judgment of others with fire was now to be used against him and his people. We have here a classic example of a man being judged as he judged (Mt. 7:1).

Amos 2:3 And I will cut off the judge from their midst, and will kill all their princes with him, says Yahweh- Again, as noted above, this is similar language to that used about the judgments upon Israel and Judah. Their king is also called a judge, whom they would lose (Mic. 5:1); and as Ezekiel and Jeremiah state so often, the princes of Judah went into captivity. Jer. 52:10 uses this language to describe the killing of the princes of Judah. Truly, the judgments upon Israel's neighbours were intended as their warning.

Amos 2:4 Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Judah, yes, for four- For "three... yes, for four", see on Am. 1:3. Amos prophesied at the time of Uzziah (Am. 1:1) who was apparently a good king and held meetings where the Law was taught and obedience was encouraged. But the message is that beneath that religious veneer, Judah was seriously sinful. The same rubric ["For three... four"] is used about the Gentiles and also Israel and Judah. The point is that they were not radically different from the Gentiles.

I will not turn away its punishment- The great paradox is that God did turn away from the ultimate punishment of Judah (Hos. 11:9) despite their impenitence. Yet their sins were three plus four, seven- complete sin. This highlights God's extreme grace. As often seen in Hosea, God does change His mind about condemnation, even when He says He will not. This is the extent of His grace and passion for human salvation.

Because they have rejected Yahweh's law, and have not kept His statutes- The word translated "rejected" is also translated "despised" and 'cast away'. The allusion is to where these words are used in Lev. 26:43,44: "They have *despised* My judgments... yet for all that... I will not *cast them away*". They rejected / despised / cast away God, but He did not treat them as they treated Him. Despite this grace, judgment still had to come, as Amos explains. But that judgment is not the same as being 'cast away'.

And their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked- The reference is to idols. Any lie becomes an idol- that's a penetrating psychological observation being made here. Yet Uzziah supposedly cleansed Judah from idols. That was therefore the kind of surface level repentance which we are all so prone to. We might consider that following the understandings of our fathers, and be led astray by untruths received by tradition... is wrong, but not that terribly wrong. But this is

chosen as a reason for Yahweh's wrath. He held them responsible for these things because He expects people to turn away from inherited untruths, not go with the flow, individuate from their fathers, and stand independently before Him. But that might just seem petty stuff to secular man; yet to God it is of critical importance.

Amos 2:5 But I will send a fire on Judah, and it will eat up the palaces of Jerusalem- The fortifications of Jerusalem built by Uzziah (Am. 1:1). As noted on Am. 1:10,14; 2:2, the judgment of the palaces of the surrounding nations by the Babylonians was recorded so that Judah might reflect and repent. The "palaces of Jerusalem" could refer to the fortifications which they had trusted in rather than in God (Jer. 17:27; Hos. 8:14); or they could refer to the large houses of the wealthy, which the Babylonians burned with fire (2 Kings 25:9). This would better fit the theme of social justice and condemnation of opulence which we find in Amos.

Amos 2:6 Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Israel, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment- Significantly, seven (3+4) specific sins are now mentioned here for Israel; but the number of individual sins listed for the other nations doesn't come to seven. I would suggest that seven is the number of completion, and the idea is that the sins of these nations had built up to a point where judgment had to come. The sins listed here seem nothing compared to the sins of the Gentile nations which have been enumerated previously. But the point is that sin is serious, and that things like opportunistic abuse of individuals is as huge in God's sight as the most extreme murder and perversions of idol worship.

Because they have sold the righteous for silver- Justice was perverted for the sake of bribes. Or the reference could be to selling debtors into slavery, forbidden by the law and also criticized in Am. 8:6. We note that "the righteous" can still get into debt to the point that all they have to give is their bodies. Poverty, whether from unwise decisions or acts of God, still befalls "the righteous". This is another major problem for the prosperity Gospel's claim that the righteous will always get wealthy.

And the needy for a pair of shoes- As noted above, this could refer to bribery, or to selling into slavery. But the point is, that is was done for very small gain, a pair of shoes (LXX "sandals"). And we see this principle today; for very small gain, in whatever way, those in power will cause long term hardship for the weak.

Amos 2:7 They trample on the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and deny justice to the oppressed- The denial of justice would lead us to read :6 as referring to judging or accepting bribes in order to gain just a very small personal gain- a "pair of shoes" (:6). Not giving people justice is trampling on their heads. Only mourners have dust on their heads, so the idea may be that denying justice resulted in real pain, loss and mourning for the poor; but the feelings of others were despised as 'the strong' pursued their agenda, with no thought for the collateral damage of their actions or how others would feel emotionally. These principles are not merely relevant to judges or those in authority. We are all called upon to make decisions, to show justice- especially in our family and church communities. In some contexts we are all 'the strong' who must consider how we act toward 'the weak'. We are placed in these communities really for our testing. So often the denial of justice to another is for the sake of personal gain to us, in some way. And the gain is often petty. So often, believers judge one person one way and another differently, fellowshiping this brother but not that sister, even if they are morally and theologically identical; simply

because they fear they might lose some kudos in the eyes of others. See on :13 and Am. 4:1.

And a man and his father use the same girl, to profane My holy name- The connection may be with their laying down on clothes beside the Baal altars (:8); for this was where men slept with the cult prostitutes. This is indeed in view here, but the context is about the abuse of the poor and injustice. As noted earlier on this verse, the strong were abusing the weak in that they cared nothing about the emotional or collateral damage done, just for the sake of very small gain- be it materially, or as in this case, the temporary 'pleasure' of such illicit sex. They didn't care for the girl's feelings or humiliation- that was the point. This point is being made along with the obvious criticism of Israel's idolatry. The abuse of the weak, the lack of justice which was part of using cult prostitutes, was every bit as bad as the idolatry itself.

Amos 2:8 And they lay themselves down beside every altar on clothes taken in pledge- As noted on :7, the condemnation of idolatry and sleeping with cult prostitutes has incorporated within it the injustice which was just as wrong. The clothes upon which they slept with the prostitutes were actually not theirs; they had taken them in pledge for debts overnight, which was specifically condemned in the law (Ex. 22:26; Dt. 24:12). It was lack of basic sensitivity to the needs of a poor person to keep their pledge overnight; for the person would have nothing warm to sleep in. And this was just as bad as sleeping with cult prostitutes.

And in the house of their God they drink the wine of the condemned- Paul alludes to this in 1 Cor. 11. The Christians of Corinth were drinking condemnation to themselves; and the cup we take is likewise either of blessing or condemnation. This is part of the condemnation of Israel, the ten tribe kingdom. They didn't worship at the temple, but rather at shrines. Their worship of Yahweh was performed as worship of the idols. Their sin was the worse, because they were justifying their idol worship as Yahweh worship. By so doing they were condemning themselves. But "the condemned" is literally 'the punished / fined'. The idea may be that they had demanded fines from the poor for insignificant violations, and were drinking the wine they had bought with this money. But they were drinking it as a drink offering to Yahweh, albeit performed as idol worship. As noted in earlier verses, the grossness of their sin was because their idolatry incorporated the abuse of the poor and injustice.

Amo 2:9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath- They had worshipped the cults of the Amorites, and were to share their judgment. The Baal cult has been in view in :6-8. So far in this chapter I have alluded to the idea of the weak and the strong, and God's condemnation of those who were 'strong' for abusing the weak. This thought is made explicit here, where the pride, strength and human advantage of the Amorites is mentioned. The height and strength of the Amorites was what had caused a faithless Israel to want to return to Egypt (Num. 13:22,32,33). But now, Israel were acting like the Amorites, when they should have overthrown them in faith.

Amo 2:10 Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness to possess the land of the Amorite- All in :9-11 was specifically done by an Angel (cp. Zech. 1:1-8). Angels would then have been the mechanism through which God gave motivation to some young people to become prophets and Nazirites. God makes His Angels spirits, and it is the Spirit which does the same

today. This is all cited as a reason for Israel's condemnation. They had been led out of the world, baptized in the Red Sea, led of the Spirit- and yet they rebelled against it.

Amo 2:11 I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Isn't this true, you children of Israel? says Yahweh- Apparently freewill decisions such as being a Nazirite are still influenced by God. For the Nazirites were "raised up" by God. Our freewill decisions for Him are confirmed by Him; such is the work of the holy Spirit on human hearts. This could refer to a specific raising up of Nazirites and prophets during the wilderness wanderings. God's willingness to work upon human hearts must not be despised. The fact He so worked with Israel but they refused is being cited as the ground of their condemnation. We note that it was "young men", "your sons", who were moved by God to offer themselves from the freewill devotions of being Nazirites or prophets. Youth is the time when temptation to use human strength and indulge pleasure is perhaps the most acute; and it is to youth that there is a special appeal by God, to give their best years to His service.

Amo 2:12 But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, 'Don't prophesy!' - Their sin was in that they disabled others from achieving the spiritual future for them which God had enabled. Out of all the things God could have condemned His people for, causing others to stumble was paramount to Him. We need to give this due weight in all our decisions and attitudes and responses to others. Amos was one of those forbidden to prophesy (Am. 7:12-14), so we can assume that he was a young man when he began his ministry (:11). He gave his best years to the Lord's service, in a thankless ministry of condemning the cult worship, materialism and injustice of his elders.

Amo 2:13 See, I will crush you in your place, as a cart crushes that is full of grain- As they had crushed beneath their feet the poor and the feelings of those they dealt with unjustly; see on :7 and Am. 4:1. Grain must be stamped upon; the idea is of a cart on the way to the threshing floor, full of judgment imagery. By stamping on the poor (:7), they were condemning themselves; they too would be crushed at the threshing floor, as the chaff and not the grain. The grain perhaps speaks of the poor whom they had stamped upon; through condemning them, and the poor correctly responding to the abuse, they had been the vehicle which brought about the salvation of the poor in spiritual terms. And so it has been so often; the experience of abuse and condemnation by the strong leads to the weak's salvation, through their correct response to it.

But another reading is as AV: "I am pressed [crushed] under you"; as if God identified with the oppressed poor of :7. What we do to others we do to God. And so again, we find minor prophets with major messages: God can be crushed in that He identifies with the crushed. This is the extreme sin of all abusive, crushing behaviour towards others. We note that Amos as a young (:12) country man is full of rural allusions.

Amo 2:14 Flight will flee from the swift; and the strong won't strengthen his force; neither shall the mighty deliver himself- Again the analogy of the weak and the strong continues; the strong would be unable to flee from their condemnation at the hands of the invaders. They would have no place to run, although they would seek to do so; "flight" may stand for 'place of flight / to flee'. This is the awful picture of condemnation. Human might will then be revealed as weakness, and the weak saved. Only God's deliverance through His Son will save; human might will not enable self deliverance.

Amo 2:15 Neither shall he stand who handles the bow; and he who is swift of foot won't escape; neither shall he who rides the horse deliver himself- As noted on :14, self deliverance is impossible when faced with Divine judgment; the strong in this life who used that strength to abuse others shall not be saved. The fulfilment initially was in Israel fleeing before their enemies as predicted for disobedience, and it will be the same for all who meet God's wrath at the last day.

Amo 2:16 And he who is courageous among the mighty will flee away naked in that day, says Yahweh- Again and again, the theme continues- the human strong and mighty will not be saved by their strength. Nakedness is associated with condemnation; they will flee, but have nowhere to run to (:14). The primary fulfilment was clearly in the flight of Zedekiah and his mighty men, and being overtaken by the Babylonians on the Jericho road.

AMOS CHAPTER 3

Amos 3:1 Hear this word that Yahweh has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family- "The whole family" refers to Israel and Judah. There is *one* body- this is a very common theme in the New Testament. But it has strong Old Testament antecedents. There was one chosen nation, one land, one tabernacle, one altar, one covenant, one temple- unity was God's evident intention for His people even in Old Testament times. Israel were redeemed from Egypt as one family (Am. 3:1). The earliest anticipation of the one body was the fact that man and woman become one flesh / body in the marriage process (Gen. 2:17). If we are all members of the one body, this fact requires us to strive for unity with each other. We can't just sit back and think 'OK, so there's one body'; rather like a married couple can't just say they are one because they are "one flesh". They must work on it if they want to be truly one. And likewise with the one body of Christ.

Which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying- Amos spoke against the background of the calf cult, built and presented by Jeroboam with clear allusion back to the golden calf, whom an apostate Israel had liked to believe had brought them out of Egypt (Ex. 32:8 s.w.). The point is that Yahweh and not the calves brought Israel out of Egypt. To reconstrue Israel's national history wasn't possible; and yet that is what is done by all who turn away from faith. They reinterpret God's previous, clear involvement in their lives, shrugging it off as coincidence or tricks of the mind. Just as Israel reinterpreted God's 'bringing them forth' from Egypt as the work of the calves.

Amos 3:2 You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all of your sins- This is the theme of Hosea. God was in exclusive relationship with Israel, having entered a marriage covenant with them at Sinai (see on Hos. 8:1). As He was exclusively theirs, so they were to be for Him. "Chosen" is *yada*, 'to know', in the sense of relationship. And the sexual sense of a man knowing a woman is not completely out of view here. God's exclusive commitment to us His people of itself has to elicit our similar response. He is not one enthusiasm out of many, one god in a pantheon; He is to our only God. And this is the huge force of the first commandment, that for us, in our hearts, there is to be only one God.

Amos 3:3 Do two walk together, unless they have agreed where to meet?- The AV rendering "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" has been misused by exclusivists to demand

total agreement between fellow believers. But this is not the context here; neither is it required that there be total agreement before two can walk together. Both Old and New Testaments are full of examples of where believers had differing interpretations, and yet walked together toward the same Kingdom. And unity is not the same as uniformity. What is important here is that there must be an agreed meeting point before the journey can begin. And God and Israel had indeed met together at Sinai and there entered covenant relationship (Am. 3:1). They were being reminded therefore of their ongoing commitment to the covenant, and the need to continue to walk together with God. The idea is picked up in Am. 4:12, where Israel are told to "prepare to meet your God". This was no mere grim pronouncement of doom to come, but a desperately urgent appeal for repentance, for preparation and willingness to meet their God in renewed covenant relationship, as they had done at Sinai.

Amos 3:4 Will a lion roar in the thicket, when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing?- The lion represents Israel's Babylonian and Assyrian enemies. They were roaring (see on :7). Israel were already caught; but there was a desperately brief window of repentance. Amos was appealing with urgency and intensity; Israel were already in the mouth of the lion (:12). But they refused to perceive their true position before God and the urgency of the need for repentance.

Amos 3:5 Can a bird fall in a trap on the earth, where no snare is set for him? Does a snare spring up from the ground, when there is nothing to catch?- The original is difficult; the idea may be that a snare definitely works, and an animal or bird cannot trigger it without being caught in the jaws of the trap. Amos is addressing the deep psychological mentality that assumes that in fact we can sin and get away with it; somehow, we reason, in my case it will be different.

Amos 3:6 Does the trumpet alarm sound in a city without the people being afraid?- The trumpet was being sounded by Amos; the invaders were at the gates, indeed in :12 we read that Israel were already being consumed. Amos struggled to express the intensity and urgency of their position, just as we do in our appeals to men and women.

Does evil happen to a city and Yahweh hasn't done it?- This could be translated to the effect that if evil happens God will judge it. God *will* judge sin. This will be the terror of His latter day judgments. I would paraphrase Am. 3:6,7 like this: 'If there's evil in a city, God will do something, i.e. He will punish it. But He *now* does nothing, but He reveals His future judgments to His servants the prophets'. In the context, Amos has been forth-telling judgments to come on various cities (Am. 3:9,12,14,15). The text however may be read as it stands; as Is. 45:5-7 makes clear, evil in the sense of calamity comes from God. All is of Him, and there is no room therefore for the classical idea of a cosmic Satan figure responsible for all our calamities and negative experiences.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord Yahweh will do nothing, unless He first reveals His secret to His servants the prophets- This is not simply stating the obvious; the implied idea is that God reveals His intended behaviour to the prophets, who are intimate with God and know His 'secrets'; and they then reveal them to men. But the implication is that in the gap between the statement and the fulfilment, there can be repentance. And this was what Amos was appealing for.

Amos 3:8 The lion has roared- who will not fear? The Lord Yahweh has spoken- who can but speak it forth?- Amos sees himself as the prophet (:7) who is the roaring lion. But the lion is a clear symbol of Israel's enemies, Babylon and Assyria (:4). Through the prophetic word of

judgment, Israel had the opportunity to repent. The word of judgment was therefore the roar of the approaching lion. The Hebrew for "Speak it forth" can mean to pray or appeal; the idea is that although God's word of judgment is certain, in the gap between the statement and the fulfilment, there can be repentance; and God may then change His stated purpose, as He did with Nineveh.

Hebrew poetry rhymes according to the ideas presented rather than the assonance of the words. However, this doesn't mean that in a couplet, the first part is directly equal to the second part. Subtle differences are set up in order to make a point. Am. 3:8 is an example of this. "The lion has roared: who shall not fear? God has spoken: who can but speak forth [AV 'prophesy', but not only in the sense of predicting future events]?" If a lion roars, so a man naturally fears as a result of it. God speaks, and just as naturally we can do nothing but speak it forth. Hence Am. 3:9 goes on to exhort the hearers to publish God's purpose to the Gentile nations around them. The lion roars, and man fears; and we are set up to expect: God speaks, and man should fear. But there is an intended dashing of this expectation. God has spoken, just as the lion may roar; but we are not to *fear* but rather to *speak it forth* to others. We come down, therefore, to something very basic, something in the foundation of our faith: that the Bible is the inspired word of God. But if we believe that, if we hear that voice of Yahweh, we will inevitably, axiomatically, speak it forth to others.

Amos 3:9 Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see what unrest is in her, and what oppression is among them- Samaria was built on a hill, but that hill was surrounded by higher hills. God is judging Israel (see on :13), and He invites the Egyptians and Philistines to come and take their place seated on the vantage points around the city of Samaria, to view His just judgment of the Israel whom their influence had corrupted. They aren't listed in the list of nations condemned in chapters 1 and 2; we can assume that the invitation was in order that they might learn from God's judgment of Israel and repent. This is consistently the purpose of His judgments. Just as He had expected Israel and Judah to learn from the judgments upon the "palaces" of their neighbours in Am. 1 and 2, so here God desires those who lived in the palaces of Ashdod and Egypt to learn from the judgment of the "palaces" of Samaria. God's desire to save comes through so strongly, even during His judgment of sinners.

Amos 3:10 Indeed they don't know how to do right, says Yahweh, who hoard plunder and loot in their palaces- We noted on Am. 1 and 2 that the "palaces" of the surrounding nations were destroyed by Divine judgment. Israel were intended to learn from this. The wealth they had gotten from abusing their brethren is described as "plunder and loot" because as they had plundered their brethren, so their wealth was to become "plunder and loot" for their invaders (:11). When sin is persisted in, sinners lose any taste for righteousness; they become incapable of knowing how to do right. Only the direct working of God's Spirit on the human heart can change this. A new psychology is required.

Amos 3:11 Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: An adversary will overrun the land; and he will pull down your strongholds, and your fortresses will be plundered- Just as they had obtained their wealth and expensive gadgets by plundering their brethren (:11). The overrunning of the land clearly refers to the coming up of the Assyrians throughout the land. All human defences would be destroyed and shown to be just that- the pathetic hopes of the flesh, which before God were nothing at all. And again, the essence of this filters down to us

in our age, with our tendency to trust technology, health science, bank balances, hoped for inheritances... rather than in the God who promises to supply our daily bread. See on :14.

Amos 3:12 Thus says Yahweh: As the shepherd rescues out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued who sit in Samaria- As explained on :4 and :8, Israel was already consumed, but they could avert this by intense repentance. Amos was a herdsman (Am. 1:1), and he may be alluding to the way the sheep were branded on their legs and ear. The brave shepherd wished to extricate these parts from the lion's mouth to demonstrate simply that "this was mine". In this we see God's hope for the tiny remnant; that they would be His, saved out of the mouth of the invaders, proven to be His. And yet the remnant didn't repent and were not spiritually strong nor obedience at the time of the restoration. God is here presented as the shepherd, and yet Amos was a shepherd (Am. 1:1). We observe again the closeness between God and His prophets.

On the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed- The idea was that the couch in the corner was the most desirable place. They who now lived in luxury at the expense of the poor were in fact in the mouth of the lion. Part of the prophetic mission was to persuade Israel of the seriousness of their position. And God's word does likewise with us. Why spend our time and passions for that which shall fade away? If we are to spend eternity being spiritually minded and doing God's work, then should we not be seeking to do this now? If we get even a glimpse of the extent of eternity, are we not to use this brief life to the maximum for the things of the Kingdom?

Amos 3:13 Listen, and testify against the house of Jacob, says the Lord Yahweh, the God of Armies- This continues the sense that God has entered into judgment with Israel, and the Philistines and Egyptians were seated in the gallery as observers; see on :9. The invitation may be to Amos personally, or to the gathered Philistines and Egyptians.

Amos 3:14 For in the day that I visit the transgressions of Israel on him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel- This repeats the prediction of the man of God against that altar in 1 Kings 13:1-4. Amos was making the same prophesy; perhaps he literally stood near Bethel or the altar and repeated the message.

And the horns of the altar will be cut off, and fall to the ground- The horns were considered the place of certain refuge (1 Kings 2:28). The repeated point is that what we consider to be our human strength and defence will surely be revealed as nothing before God's judgment; see on :11.

Amos 3:15 I will strike the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory will perish, and the great houses will have an end, says Yahweh- We noted on Am. 1 and 2 that the judgments of the "palaces" or grand houses of the surrounding nations were intended as warnings to the wealthy Israelites; for their similar houses would be destroyed unless they repented. But they didn't learn the lesson from others' judgments, and so the record of the invasions records that the great houses of Jerusalem and Samaria were indeed pulled down. "Houses of ivory" refer to houses in which ivory was stored or where the decorations were of ivory. Ahab had such a house (1 Kings 22:39). Instead of repudiating his apostate lifestyle, the Israelites had eagerly followed it.

AMOS CHAPTER 4

Amos 4:1 *Listen to this word you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who tell their husbands, Bring us drinks!-* Having made clear that judgment was about to burst in Am. 3, Amos now desperately appeals for repentance. I noted on Am. 2:7,13 that economic abuse of the poor and the weak by the 'strong' is described as crushing them. But here we read that it was the obese women of Bashan who did this. The idea is that they demanded of their husbands a lifestyle that meant their husbands abused the poor. God sees all things, and every human motivation. And so they were all condemned for their part in the abuse. These obese women were "on the mountain of Samaria"; perhaps referring to the cult shrine there, just as the mountain of Zion referred to the temple. The drinks they demanded would have been wine offerings, drunk supposedly to Yahweh through their worship of the calves. Their sin was the worse because it was tied up with religious and pseudo spiritual justification.

Oppressing and crushing the poor and needy uses the same Hebrew words as found in Dt. 24:14 about not oppressing poor and needy people, including Gentiles living amongst them. And this was what Israel and Judah had done (Ez. 22:29). It was appropriate therefore that it was Gentiles who would "oppress", "crush" and spoil Israel (Dt. 28:29,33 s.w.). The motivation for not oppressing the poor was to be a continual awareness and reflection upon the fact that they had been the poor, needy and oppressed in Egypt, but had been saved from that by God's grace, just as Messiah would save the poor and needy and destroy the oppressor (Dt. 24:18; Ps 72:4). This is why Amos seeks to remind Israel of their spiritual beginnings and often alludes to the great salvation from Egypt (Am. 3:1). We too need to ever be aware of our salvation by grace alone, from our spiritual poverty. To oppress another will not come at all naturally if we are ever aware of our personal experience of grace. God is particularly sensitive to how we treat the poor or the weak in whatever sense. What we do to them, we do to Him; for he who oppresses the poor reproaches his maker (Prov. 14:31). The "oppression" of Israel by the Assyrians was therefore just and appropriate (Jer. 50:33); and yet Is. 52:4 says that the Assyrians "oppressed them without cause". I take this therefore as the in-loveness of God, imputing righteousness and innocence to His disobedient people.

Amos 4:2 *The Lord Yahweh-* "Lord" is *adon*, the same word used for "husband" in :1. Instead of being partners in abuse with their husbands, they ought to have had Yahweh as their lord.

Has sworn by His holiness that, behold, the days shall come on you that they will take you away with hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks- Clearly a reference to the captivities at the hands of Babylon and Assyria, where hooks were placed in the bodies of the captives. This was the judgment upon Egypt, to be captured by hooks (Ez. 29:4). They had acted as Egypt had towards them (see on :7) and so were to be punished as Egypt- all because they had oppressed the poor. Abuse of the weak by the strong, in whatever sense, makes us as the world, as Egypt; and such abuse is not limited simply to financial abuse. For we are all the strong in some contexts. But the original is difficult and the LXX offers: "And fiery destroyers shall cast those with you into boiling caldrons", which would explain why the same Hebrew word for "hooks" is used of the pot or cauldron which Jerusalem would become (Ez. 11:3; 24:3,6).

Amos 4:3 *You will go out at the breaks in the wall, each one straight before her; and you will cast yourselves into Harmon, says Yahweh-* The "her" reminds us that the subject of these words are the obese women of :1, who had grown fat as a result of abusing the poor. This

attempted escape through the breaches in the wall is exactly what happened when Zedekiah and the royal family sought to escape the Babylonian siege, and we can assume that something similar happened when the Assyrians surrounded Samaria. They were to go out "straight before", as if they were fattened calves being led out of their pens to slaughter. As explained on :1, they had fattened themselves for the slaughter by abusing others. The allusion to calves is appropriate because they had worshipped the calves of Jeroboam rather than Yahweh; they became like that they worshipped, and were judged appropriately. We become like what we worship, and the desire to worship something is coded within our natures. It's a case of choosing to exclusively worship the Lord and being totally devoted to Him rather than anything else.

The LXX has: "And ye shall be brought forth naked in the presence of each other; and ye shall be cast forth on the mountain Romman". This could refer to a mountain in Assyria; where in scenes reminiscent of the holocaust, the Israelite women would be cast down naked. But (NEV) "you will cast yourselves" - they had done this to themselves.

Amos 4:4 *Go to Bethel, and sin; to Gilgal, and sin more-* This could equally be read as meaning that this is what they had done. But we can also read it, as NEV, as God encouraging them in their sin. This is how He works; a holy spirit from Him encouraging us in righteousness, and an "evil spirit from the Lord" encouraging sinners in the downward spiral they delight in. This is why we can never take a break from our spiritual path; we are being propelled in constant motion, in the direction we choose.

Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days- We see here how the Israelites were mixing Yahweh worship with their paganism at the calf shrines of Bethel and Gilgal. For it was to Yahweh that morning and evening sacrifices were to be made; and the three yearly tithe is that referred to as due to Yahweh in Dt. 14:28; 26:12. This is the biting challenge of Amos and the situation he describes; we can mix Yahweh worship with our idolatry and consider that because we have a semblance of devotion to Him, then all shall be well with us. This is the danger of organized religion. The organized side of it is perhaps a necessary evil; but it can so easily take away from the true spirituality which is so essential to acceptable worship and relationship with God.

Amos 4:5 *Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings and brag about them: for this pleases you, you children of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh-* As noted on :4, Israel were using elements of Yahweh worship in their devotions to the idols at Bethel and Gilgal. Yet they offered thank offerings with leaven, representing their malice and wickedness (1 Cor. 5:8). They even liked to claim that they offered voluntary offerings to Yahweh, over and above those required. And it 'pleased' Israel to do this, they liked doing it. It is no bad exercise to set ourselves the task of working out how we might do so today. Buying and boasting about luxury goods and homes, which we claim are part of our care for the needy when they are really for our own indulgence; proclaiming strict adherence to Divine principles as a means of shunning those we have a gut dislike of... and so we could continue the list.

Amos 4:6 *I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in every town; yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh-* God had already tried to bring Israel to repentance. The threatened invasion was but the last of a series of attempts to bring them back to God. He had given them famine to try to make them "return", implying they had already as it were gone away from Him into Gentile lands from which they would have to "return" (s.w.) to God. Their exile and captivity was therefore but a reflection of their own distancing of themselves from God. We noted on :1 that the wealthy women were obese; and

yet this was achieved during a time of want and famine in the land. Their abuse of the poor for their own luxury at such a time was therefore the more obnoxious.

Amos 4:7 I also have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain on one city, and caused it not to rain on another city. One place was rained on, and the piece where it didn't rain withered- This selective rain was to recall how the Egyptians suffered some of the plagues but the Israelites didn't. As noted on :1, God was seeking to remind Israel of their salvation from Egypt (see on Am. 3:1). They had been saved by grace, but by oppressing their brethren as the Egyptians had oppressed them, they were no better than the Egyptians. They had therefore reversed the exodus; they were now the Egyptians, because in their hearts they had returned there. The allusions to the Egyptian plagues continue in :9,10.

Amos 4:8 So two or three cities staggered to one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh- The drought was intended to make the people go to God; but instead they went to try to get water from elsewhere. We wonder which city had water whereas the others didn't; possibly it was a Gentile city, or a city where there were members of the righteous remnant. "Staggered" or 'wander' is the word used about Israel's wandering away from God (Jer. 14:10) and into captivity (Am. 9:9; Lam. 4:15). The drought therefore gave them a foretaste of what condemnation and judgment would be like; but they stubbornly refused to perceive it. We also see such foretastes of judgment; in Scripture, in our lives and those of others. And it is for us to respond.

Amos 4:9 I struck you with blight and mildew- Literally, "blasting" (as AV). Again the allusion is to Egypt, whose corn was likewise blasted (Gen. 41:6).

Many times in your gardens and your vineyards- "Many times" reflects the multiple efforts of God with Israel. He so many times nudged them to perceive the similarities with Egypt.

And your fig trees and your olive trees have the swarming locust devoured: yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh- See on :7. Locusts were one of the plagues on Egypt; but the fig and the olive, the very symbols of Israel, were now being treated like the Egyptians. They were supposed to perceive these multiple prods and nudges, to join the dots and see the picture. But like so many today, they refused.

Amos 4:10 I sent plagues among you like I did upon Egypt. I have slain your young men with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh- See on :7. The "camps" were again to recall Egypt; "horses" typically came from Egypt, and were the symbol of human strength, which the law of Moses forbade the kings of Israel to use; see on:11. Already there had been incursions into the land, and young men and horses killed or carried away. By all means God had tried to prod and nudge Israel to repentance without an all out invasion and devastation of the land. The various seals of judgment upon the land and people of Israel in the last days, as detailed in Revelation, are intended to have the same effect; and will be augmented by our witness to Israel and Jewish people. For all these multiple nudges and opportunities to repent, Israel refused.

Amos 4:11 I have overthrown some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a burning stick plucked out of the fire; yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh- As noted on :10, there were incursions of the land before the main invasion in order to try to bring them to repentance. Hence "some of you". They were as Sodom, as Isaiah 1

makes clear; but were treated like Lot who was saved out of the burning by grace alone. This was undeserved grace. And yet still they didn't learn; they were saved from rightful judgment, but still they wouldn't perceive God's grace and repent. The historical situation is that of 2 Kings 13, where in the time of Amos, "The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben Hadad the son of Hazael, continually. Jehoahaz begged Yahweh, and Yahweh listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, how that the king of Syria oppressed them. Yahweh gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel lived in their tents as before. Nevertheless they didn't depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, with which he made Israel to sin, but walked therein. There remained the Asherah also in Samaria. For the king of Syria didn't leave to Jehoahaz of the people any more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria destroyed them, and made them like the dust in threshing" (2 Kings 13:3-7). We note here the destruction of their horses, which is mentioned here in Am. 4:10.

Amos 4:12 Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel; and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel- Amos speaks of Israel's final judgment as a day of their meeting their God, and he urges them to prepare to meet Him. This was no grim fatalism, as if an angry final statement. The language is shot through with allusion to how both Israel and Moses were told to prepare to meet Yahweh at Sinai (Ex. 19:11,15; 34:2). But that meeting involved a declaration of God's Name, the foremost characteristic of which was that God is a God *full* of mercy and love for His people. Their preparation to meet God was therefore a call to repentance and moral preparation, so that the threatened judgments could be averted. It was because judgment had been pronounced and would surely happen, that Amos urges Israel to repent; because in the gap between pronouncement and actualization, there was the possibility of repentance which would as it were change God's mind, as happened with Nineveh. This is the eternal intensity of the moments we now live in. The idea of meeting God is a development of the idea in Am. 3:3 (see note there), where Israel are told that two (God and themselves) can walk together once they have an agreed meeting place; and God and Israel had "met" in covenant at Sinai. So the command to prepare to again meet God, just as they had 'prepared' themselves to meet Him at Sinai by sanctification rituals, was no mere grim pronouncement of doom to come, but a desperately urgent appeal for repentance, for preparation and willingness to meet their God in renewed covenant relationship, as they had done at Sinai.

Amos 4:13 For, behold, He who forms the mountains, and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought; who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the high places of the earth: Yahweh, the God of Armies, is His name- The armies of Babylonians and Assyrians were God's armies. The very mountains around Samaria alluded to in Am. 3:9 had been created by God. The God of endless physical ability has the same boundless abilities when it comes to matters of the spirit or "wind"; He who created all things knows the thought of man. And this was where repentance needed to occur. He could invert His creative work, making light into darkness; and He would destroy the "high places" of the land through the forthcoming invasion. The invaders typically destroyed the shrines of those whom they conquered; hence the God of those armies would as it were tread on their high places, just as they had trampled upon the poor (see on :1).

AMOS CHAPTER 5

Amos 5:1 *Listen to this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel-* "Lamentation" is literally a funeral lament. It was as if they were already dead, and now God and Amos were as it were lamenting at the funeral; although the lamentation was yet future (:16). But although the prophetic word of destruction was so certain, yet there was still space to repent. In this was the desperate urgency of the appeal Amos is making. Israel were being asked to "listen" to their own funeral lamentation. We too can try to fast forward in time and reflect what could legitimately be said about us.

Amos 5:2 *The virgin of Israel has fallen; she shall rise no more. She is cast down on her land; there is no one to raise her up-* But the idea of the restoration was that God would raise up Israel. So terms like "no more" and "never again" are relative to that generation, at that time; see another example in 2 Kings 24:7. This is quite normal language usage within Semitic thought, but it can cause difficulties of understanding and interpretation for more literalistic Western readers. All the same, that generation would fall and die, their bodies cast out in the open (Ez. 29:5; 32:4); and they were being asked to imagine the scene of their death and the funeral lament over them- and repent to avert that judgment. The present and past tenses are used to bring home how certain are God's words of fulfilment.

Amos 5:3 *For thus says the Lord Yahweh: The city that went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went forth one hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel-* As with the destruction of Jerusalem, there was always a remnant left. Samaria was to be left with just 10% of its former population; a major destruction. And it was with this tiny remnant that God hoped to work. They were perhaps the tenth, the tithe, which were intended for God's work. The idea of only a tenth surviving is repeated in Am. 6:10.

Amos 5:4 *For thus says Yahweh to the house of Israel: Seek Me, and you will live-* We are frequently reminded in the prophets that the spiritual way of life is one which *is seeking* God. We are to seek His face (Ps. 24:6; 27:8)- which it is impossible to behold (Ex. 33:20). Actually finding God in the ultimate sense is therefore unattainable in this life; but our whole mortal life must be lived in this spirit of *seeking* ultimate perfection. Seeking God is often defined in the prophets as forsaking our sins and desiring to be righteous (Amos 5:5,8,14,15). None of us are completely successful in our seeking of God in terms of quitting every sin and becoming perfect, and therefore it follows that none of us *completely* forsakes all our sinfulness. And yet righteousness is imputed to those who seek it, who love God's ways but like Paul in Rom. 7, allow themselves to be all too constrained by their human location. In Hebrew thought, to seek is to worship. God is worshipped by our seeking of Him. And thus the Kingdom blessing is for those who hunger and thirst to be righteous, even though they are not of themselves righteous (Mt. 5:6).

Amos 5:5 *But don't seek Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and don't pass to Beersheba-* Which required passing right across Judah. Judah too had her idol shrines in addition to Yahweh's temple.

For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing- There is a word play here, as if to say "For Gilgal shall taste the gall of exile"- "Ha-Gilgal galoh yigleh". And likewise "Bethel", the house of God, "shall become an idolatry / idol house". No mention is made of Beersheba's judgment, perhaps because there appeared more hope for Judah's repentance.

Amos 5:6 *Seek Yahweh, and you will live-* "Seeking" God is explained on :4.

Lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, and there be no one to quench it in Bethel- Tiglath-Pileser first took into captivity all Gilead and Galilee, the majority of the territory of the ten tribes (2 Kings 10:32,33); but didn't touch the territory of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph. That earlier invasion had been a warning; the outpouring of wrath upon Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, could yet be averted. The fire had started, but it could still be quenched by repentance. But despite the message being so clear, they refused to repent; just as we can see the writing on the wall and refuse to note it. This blindness is a sad feature of human nature.

Amos 5:7 *You who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth-* This is the thought of Am. 6:7 "But you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness". Israel's judgment was to be cast down to the earth (Is. 28:2; Dan. 8:12), and wormwood was to be their condemnation (Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15). It was serving other gods which would lead to the bitterness of wormwood (s.w. Dt. 29:18). But they are condemned here not for idolatry, but for injustice, abusing the weak so that they left them with a bitter taste in their mouth, just as we feel when we have been misused or ripped off. This was the essential sin, and it was the egoism and selfishness behind that abuse which led further to idolatry. By making others feel this bitterness, by refusing to show justice / righteousness [the two ideas are closely connected in Hebrew], the abusers were securing their own condemnation when they would taste as it were the bitterness of wormwood.

Amos 5:8 *Seek Him who made the Pleiades and Orion-* This is emphasized because Israel are rebuked for worshipping the star of Remphan in :26 (cp. Acts 7:43). God had made not just one star but the "seven stars" (NEV "Pleiades"), all of them, and the entire constellation of stars seen in "Orion".

He who turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night; who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth, Yahweh is His name- According to God's Name / essential character, He would reverse the creation process. Darkness would become night, and the waters of the sea, representing the armies of the invaders, would be poured out by Him upon the surface of the *eretz* / land promised to Abraham, just as they were at the flood. The same imagery is used in Revelation, where judgments are poured out as if from bowls / vials upon the same geographical area.

Amos 5:9 *He who brings sudden destruction on the strong, so that destruction comes on the fortress-* The citadel of Samaria, their human strength and defence, would be destroyed. It would be sudden, in that they had previously trusted in their various alliances. This is the nature of divine judgment- to reveal all human strength as hopelessly weak, and it is for the faithful to perceive that before judgment comes. We live in an age when such human strength has been perfected and honed as never before, with insurance against every eventuality. "The strong" refer to the group within Israel who were abusing the weak. The lesson for us is not simply regarding financial exploitation of the poor. We can all be strong in some contexts. You may be standing in line at a check out, and the person in front of you doesn't speak the local language. You suddenly become the strong, and they the weak; it is not for you to be impatient and irritated with the weak. You may be an accepted member of a family or community; and an outsider comes within the circle. You are the strong, and they the weak.

Amos 5:10 *They hate him who reproves in the gate-* Perhaps a reference to Amos who stood in the gate of Samaria or Bethel delivering his warnings. I discuss on Ps. 15:2 how there was

a well attested practice of priests standing at the temple gates and assessing the worthiness of worshippers by posing questions to those seeking entrance.

And they detest him who speaks blamelessly- Insofar as Amos spoke God's words. This detesting of Amos led to him being banned from Israel, as he records in Am. 7.

Amos 5:11 Forasmuch therefore as you trample on the poor, and take taxes of wheat from him- therefore you who have built houses of cut stone will not dwell in them. You who have planted pleasant vineyards shall not drink their wine- The taxes demanded had to be paid in kind, in agricultural produce, because the poor had nothing else to give; see on Am. 7:1. And Am. 4:6-9 has explained that this was at a time of famine. The strong took away what little food the poor had, just in order to continue their own opulent living. We live in a world where there is every opportunity to do this, and on a global scale. In time of famine, everyone had to go down a step on the ladder. But the motivation for taxing the hungry and therefore taking their little food from them was because it was unthinkable that the strong should take a step down on the ladder. And this again is a principle which cuts to the core of our society. When it comes to actually stepping down a peg and going without some aspects of our current lifestyle, all within us rebels against it. We may be generous, but only if our current level of living is not undercut. And if circumstances require us to downsize or downgrade in whatever way, it is human nature to do literally anything, at any cost to the weak, in order to save us from doing so.

Amos 5:12 For I know how many are your offences, and how great are your sins- Israel like us were tempted to think that the apparent silence of God meant that He had as it were not noticed their sins. But God is deeply sensitive, and every offence was noted and felt, and the magnitude of it. But His sensitivity never turns off. What was apparently just an on paper series of offences are described here as "your mighty sins". What we may shrug off as just surface level failure are "mighty sins" to God.

You who afflict the just- We note it was the righteous who were abused, in this case. The poor are not always "the just", for poverty is no guarantee of spirituality of itself. So it was the righteous remnant who were being abused, and God was particularly sensitive to that.

Who take a bribe, and who turn aside the needy in the courts- Is. 29:21 uses the same phrase but adds that they turned aside the needy for "a thing of nothing". The bribes they received were very small, just as Judas betrayed the Lord for a mere 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave, that couldn't even buy more than a small parcel of muddy, useless land. Amos has made this complaint elsewhere, that even for a pair of sandals, cheap shoes, the cause of the righteous was perverted (Am. 2:6; 8:6). The allusion may be to Num. 35:31, where bribes are forbidden to cover murder. By hating their brothers and abusing them, they had effectively murdered them. And the Lord confirmed in His teaching that hatred is as murder in God's book.

Amos 5:13 Therefore a prudent person keeps silent in such a time, for it is an evil time- The reference may be to the righteous keeping silent in respect of the rightness of Divine judgments (Lev. 10:3; Ps. 39:9). The "evil time" was to come because they had themselves sought "evil" (:14). Constantly we see that the judgments which came were essentially that which they themselves sought. See on Am. 6:10.

Amos 5:14 Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so Yahweh, the God of Armies, will be with you, as you say- They claimed that Yahweh was with them, when He was not (Mic. 3:11). Hence they claimed to desire the day of Yahweh, when in fact it would be their condemnation (:18). The promises of the Kingdom, the comfort of God's love, are often

appropriated by passive believers in times of crisis. But these promises, and the active presence of God, are to be experienced in daily life now. And this requires a seeking of good, rather than of evil. The unjust profiteers and materialists would likely have objected to the charge of actively seeking evil; but this is how God sees anything other than seeking good.

Amos 5:15 Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the courts. It may be that Yahweh, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph- The prophets called upon men to "hate evil and love good", to have some passion about our positions. As noted on :6, only the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh was left intact after the earlier Assyrian invasion. And if they repented, and loved good rather than evil and were just, then they could experience the grace of God's plan to save a remnant. The essence of spirituality is not achieving perfection, but loving good, loving the things of the Spirit; and therefore all who love the Lord's appearing, with all that requires, shall be saved (see on 2 Tim. 4:8).

God's forgiveness and salvation can never be presumed upon; even if we are genuinely repentant. For the wages of sin has always been death (Rom. 6:23); we as sinners have no right to life. This is a theme stamped right across the Old Testament. Consider: "You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to Yahweh. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). "Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the courts. It may be that Yahweh, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (Am. 5:15). "Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious... Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him?" (Joel 2:13,14). "Let them turn each one from his evil way... Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we might not perish?" (Jonah 3:8,9). Possibly we could add Esther 4:14 to this list: "Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this?". This is why Daniel's friends can reason: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods" (Dan. 3:17,18). They believed in Yahweh's salvation, but were quite prepared not to receive it. They knew that His ability to dramatically save them at that moment was not at all certain of fulfilment for them. The same words "is able" and "save" are used by Darius in Dan. 6:21 when he again expresses a doubt as to whether God is able to save in this case: "Was the God whom you served so regularly able to deliver you from the lions?". Against all this we must balance the fact that those in Christ have been given the "right" to be God's children (Jn. 1:12). But the bold confidence we have in the Lord Jesus must somehow never fail to be nuanced by an awareness of our total unworthiness and inability to presume upon God's forgiveness.

Amos 5:16 Therefore thus says Yahweh the God of Armies, the Lord: Wailing will be in all the boulevards; and they will say in all the streets, 'Alas! Alas!'; and they will call the farmer to mourning, and those who are skilful in lamentation to wailing- As noted on :1, it was as if the lamentation was already in progress, so certain was it that Israel would perish in the judgment to come. But that future reality could still be changed by repentance, such was and is God's sensitivity to human repentance. "The farmer" seems to be used in order to give the impression that there would be mourning from city streets to country areas.

Amos 5:17 In all vineyards there will be wailing; for I will pass through the midst of you, says Yahweh- See on :1,16. The passing through the midst in judgment is the language of God's judgment of Egypt on Passover night (Ex. 12:12). Israel had returned to Egypt in spirit and were judged accordingly, as Egypt. The wailing or funeral mourning was in the vineyards because they were symbolic of the wealthy life (:11). But those vineyards had already been smitten by the drought (Am. 4:9). They ought to have learnt the lesson, that the wealthy life and symbols of opulence were already of no meaning. But they continued in their hope that

their vineyards would again flourish. We too are at times given premonitions about the meaninglessness of wealth and opulence. And if we don't take the lesson, that wealth will be removed totally at the last day.

Amos 5:18 *Woe to you who desire the day of Yahweh! Why do you long for the day of Yahweh? It will be darkness for you, and not light-* This and Mal. 3:1,2 warn that just desiring the coming of the Lord isn't enough; for what end will it be, if we don't *truly* love His appearing? Yet Amos goes on to say that Israel "put far away" the reality of the day of the Lord, in their minds (Am. 6:3). And yet they desired it. We can study prophecy, but not really love His appearing in seriously preparing ourselves for that day. Indeed, we can subconsciously put it far from us. When we grasp for a fleeting moment how *very near* is the second coming for us; can we dwell upon it, retain that intensity? Or would we rather put it "far away"? This is surely why the Lord brings the list of signs of His coming to a close with some chilling parables concerning the need for personal watchfulness. It's as if He could foresee generations of believers straining to interpret His words carefully, correctly matching them with trends in the world... and yet missing the essential point: that we must watch and prepare ourselves for His coming, whenever it may be for us. Having given so many indicators of His soon appearing, the Lord then says that His coming will be unexpected by the believers (Mt. 24:36,44). He wasn't saying 'Well, you'll never properly interpret what I've just said'. He meant rather: 'OK you'll know, more or less, when my return is imminent; but all the same, *in reality* it will be terribly unexpected for most of you unless you prepare yourselves. You need to make personal changes, and be watchful of yourselves; otherwise all the correct prophetic interpretation in the world is meaningless'. Those described in Rom. 1:32 know the judgment of God; they know it will come. But they have a mind "void of [an awareness of] judgment" (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.). We can know, know it all. But live with a mind and heart void of it. Tit. 1:16 AVmg. uses the same word to describe those who "profess that they know God" but are "void of judgment". We can know Him, but have no real personal sense of judgment to come. These are sobering thoughts.

Amos 5:19 *As if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him-* The allusion may be to the idea that the lion may spare its prostrate prey, but the bear will not do so. This idea may be incorrect, but God uses it here; if they had repented to God prostrate before the invaders, then the judgment could have been averted. But they did not, and so they faced the merciless destruction of a bear.

Or he went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a snake bit him- They may flee for refuge into their houses, so often criticized by Amos, but find no safety there either. Again, human wealth and strength is to be no refuge. The point is so repeated by Amos because we are so slow to accept it. See on Am. 6:9.

Amos 5:20 *Won't the day of Yahweh be darkness for you, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?-* They were perhaps grabbing hold of the promises in Joel about the day of Yahweh being of bright light, a new dawn for Israel. But it would not be so for them. It's rather like an uncommitted nominally Christian person grabbing hold of words of comfort about the future Kingdom of God coming on earth; the question is, will that day be of judgment or salvation for us? The question here, rather than a simple statement, is to desperately appeal for them to imagine what judgment day would be like, and change the outcome by their repentance.

Amos 5:21 *I hate, I despise your feasts, and I can't tolerate your solemn assemblies-* The feasts and related gatherings are repeatedly described as feasts of Yahweh, assemblies of

Yahweh. But Israel had hijacked God's religion and made His table, His feasts, their own- hence "*your* feasts". The New Testament likewise describes the feasts as "feasts of the Jews" and Yahweh's temple as the temple of the Jews. By making the Lord's table effectively ours, we are doing the same; taking over His house as our own, with all the house rules of our denominationalism. The same language is used of God's anger at the sacrifices and feasts held in the Jerusalem temple in Judah (Is. 1:10-15). Again we see that the shrines and rituals of the calves in the ten tribe kingdom were imitations of the Jerusalem temple.

Amos 5:22 *Yes, though you offer Me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat animals-* They had failed to appreciate what the New Testament makes apparent- that the blood of sacrifices, the performance of religious ritual of itself, was not a ground for acceptability. Rather was a contrite, repentant heart required, and the cleansing was from God's response to that rather than for the sake of the blood itself. And as noted on :21, we see that they in the ten tribe kingdom were carefully imitating the Mosaic rituals of the Jerusalem temple. But they were doing so in worship of their calves.

Amos 5:23 *Take away from Me the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps-* The same language is used of how God was angry with the songs and harp music of the Jerusalem temple (Is. 1:14; 24:8; Ez. 26:13). The calf shrines of the ten tribes were imitations of the Jerusalem temple worship. They were therefore the more irritating to God.

Amos 5:24 *But let justice roll on like rivers, and righteousness like a mighty stream-* In Hebrew, the word for justice is that for judgment. So we have here a double meaning; God was to send judgment upon Israel like mighty rivers, and such rivers are Biblical imagery for invading armies, Assyria especially (Is. 8:6). And yet this could be averted, if the country became awash with the justice which Amos so frequently appeals for.

"Mighty stream" suggests "Ethanym", the seventh month, just before the early rains, was called Ethanym, the month of the perennial streams. Perhaps the idea is that the final Assyrian judgment was to come in this month.

Amos 5:25 *Did you really bring to Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel?-* The historical record says that they did, so the idea is that although they did, God didn't accept them because they were also offering to other gods. This is a biting, incisive challenge to all of us who perform religious rituals, such as collective meetings, prayer, breaking of bread etc. We can do all these things, but not do them as God accepts. Such things are all a natural and correct part of communal life together, but they are also part of organized religion, and human nature tends to seek justification through ritual and religion rather than heartbroken faith in the God who saves by grace.

Amos 5:26 *You also carried the tent of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which you made for yourselves-* Right at their birth by the Red Sea, the Almighty records that "the people feared Yahweh, and believed Yahweh, and His servant Moses" (Ex. 14:23). No mention is made of the Egyptian idols they were still cuddling (we don't directly learn about them until Ez. 20). Nor do we learn that this "belief" of theirs lasted a mere three days; nor of the fact that they rejected Moses, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. "There was no strange god" with Israel on their journey (Dt. 32:12); but there were (Am. 5:26). The reconciliation is that God counted as Israel as devoted solely to Him. The references are to Moloch [the planet Mars] and Chiun [Saturn]. Hence the emphasis that in fact God had created all the planets (:8).

Amos 5:27 *Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, says Yahweh, whose name is the God of Armies*- Quoted in the New Testament as "beyond Babylon", which is more relevant to Judah's captivity than that of the ten tribes to Assyria. We see here how the New Testament 'quotes' the Old Testament often with paraphrase. The idea is that the judgments upon Israel were in essence to come upon Judah; and Amos had a ministry to both Israel and Judah.

AMOS CHAPTER 6

Amos 6:1 *Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who are secure on the mountain of Samaria*- As noted throughout Am. 5, the ten tribe kingdom of Israel had set up shrines to the golden calves, and a centre of worship in Samaria, which consciously imitated the Jerusalem temple which was in Judah. Judah were also apostate, and the abominations performed in the Jerusalem temple were in essence as those found at the calf shrines in Israel. This explains why Zion, the temple mount, is here paralleled with the central hill in Samaria where the idol shrine was located. Amos preached to both Israel and Judah, often with the same material; so we can better appreciate why he uses this parallel. The LXX suggests that the ten tribes were despising Zion, the mount of the Jerusalem temple, and considered that God had replaced it with the idol shrine in Samaria: "Woe to them that set at nought Sion, and that trust in the mountain of Samaria".

They felt "at ease" and "secure" because they kidded themselves that the coming day of Yahweh would be for their salvation (see on Am. 5:18). The latter day equivalent is in those amongst God's people who say "peace and safety" when sudden destruction is about to come (1 Thess. 5:3). "Secure" or 'trusting' is the word used in warning Israel that the high walls and fortifications in which they would 'trust' would be brought down (Dt. 28:52 s.w.). The word is often used by the prophets in their appeal for God's people to "trust" in Him and not human strength (Is. 12:2; 26:3,4 etc.) and not trusting in idols (Is. 42:17; 47:10; Hab. 2:18 etc.). Their trust in their idols was however understood by them as trust in Yahweh. They had mixed the flesh and the spirit to such an extent.

The notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!- The idea is as GNB, reading "nations" as an intensive plural: "You great leaders of this great nation Israel, you to whom the people go for help!".

Amos 6:2 *Go to Calneh, and see; and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms? Or is their border greater than your border?*- "These kingdoms" would refer to Israel and Judah, or perhaps as in :1, to the "great nation Israel" (:1 GNB). The GNB therefore offers: "Go and look at the city of Calneh. Then go on to the great city of Hamath and on down to the Philistine city of Gath. Were they any better than the kingdoms of Judah and Israel? Was their territory larger than yours?". This is therefore a repeat of the appeal in Am. 1 and Am. 2, to reflect upon the destiny of Gentile nations around Israel, and to realize that unless they stopped acting like the Gentiles, then they would be judged as Gentiles. "Calneh" had just been conquered by the Assyrians (Is. 10:9). Hamath had been conquered briefly by Jeroboam II in the time of Amos (2 Kings 14:25), but Assyria had just captured it (2 Kings 18:34). Gath had also been conquered by Uzziah king of Judah in the time of Amos (2 Chron. 26:6), but would also be conquered. The kings of Israel and Judah had not conquered Calneh and

Hamath because they were "better than these kingdoms". Secular success is no certain sign that we are right with God; and here again we see the great error of the prosperity gospel.

Amos 6:3 Those who put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near- See on Am. 5:18 *Why do you long for the day of Yahweh?* They desired the coming of the day of Yahweh; but God's word through Amos penetrates their deepest psychology. For deep in their hearts, they knew they had sinned and would be judged, but they were putting that reality far away. By doing so they were hastening the coming of judgment, as if that day was somehow flexible within God's purpose. More positively, we can hasten the Lord's coming. The final date is unknown because it will factor in both the 'hastening of judgment' factor due to human sin, and the 'hastening of salvation' due to the prayers of the righteous.

Amos 6:4 Who lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves on their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall- This decadence was all the worse because a famine preceded the final invasion; and as noted on Am. 4:6, the wealthy only retained their extravagant standard of living by forcing the weak and poor to pay them taxes in the form of food. We note that they both worshipped calves and ate them. They became like that which they worshipped, and that message is taught time and again in the prophets. It has strong relevance to us today. Likewise 'stretching' is the word used for 'pouring out' as if in the libations of sacrifice. They justified their decadence as service to God. And we have that same basic human tendency today.

Amos 6:5 Who strum on the strings of a harp; who invent for themselves instruments of music, like David did- I suggested on :4 and :6 that this decadence had overtones of religious worship. They claimed to admire the spirituality of David and to be continuing his style of worship. When really they were just enjoying a decadent meal accompanied by music. This mixture of flesh and spirit is really our acutest temptation. They drunk wine and anointed their faces with oil- the language of rejoicing in God's blessings, assuming they were righteous, and that the wealth they had wrongly gained was in fact Divine blessing. Many a corrupt Pentecostal pastor must have done the same in our days. They looked back to the heritage of their spiritual ancestors (David), and on a surface level appeared to follow them. They chanted the temple songs at their shrines in Samaria and Gilgal, and yet there was no grief within them for the affliction of God's people (:6).

Amos 6:6 Who drink wine in bowls- This is the language of the drink offerings being poured out in bowls (Zech. 14:20). As noted on :4 and :5, their decadence was performed with the appearance of religious worship to it.

And anoint themselves with the best oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph- This could refer to this historical Joseph, whose affliction was caused by his own brothers, and they ignored it (Gen. 42:21). The suffering, spiritual, innocent Joseph then becomes representative of the righteous remnant who were being abused. Or the reference could be to how the areas of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, were to be afflicted, unless they repented; but those addressed were not grieved for that. They didn't repent because of the suffering they saw their brethren passing through.

Amos 6:7 Therefore they will now go into captivity with the first who go captive- The idea is that those who had gone into captivity first, during the early Assyrian incursions, were intended as a warning to them. But they had not taken that warning, and so they too would go into captivity as those who had "first" or earlier gone into captivity.

And the feasting and lounging will end- "Lounging" is Heb. *mizrach*, a word play with *mizraq*, "bowls", in :6. "Will end" is the same word used in Am. 5:23, when God asks for their songs of worship to Him to be taken away or ended. Their feasting with bowls of wine was therefore performed as a feast to Yahweh. He ended it through the invasion, seeing they refused to stop. This is how obnoxious is self-gratification performed in the name of serving God.

Amos 6:8 The Lord Yahweh has sworn by Himself, says Yahweh, the God of Armies, that I hate the pride of Jacob- For all the issues which the prophets could have condemned people for, pride was high on their list. Jeremiah wept in secret, his eyes running with tears, "for your pride" (Jer. 13:15-17). Isaiah gets passionate about the way that Assyria thought that "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom" (Is. 10:13). Because Ephraim trusted in his wealth, the most awful words of judgment are pronounced upon him (Hos. 12:8; 10:13,14). We shrug when we see pride and trust in wealth. Rich or poor, we all tend to trust in money. Thinking that that's life... under the sun. But the prophets went ballistic about this. We've developed established patterns of indifference to this kind of thing. But the prophet's consciences were keenly sensitive to these patterns, and they openly challenged them. They weren't just empty moralizers, bleating on about the state of the nation; their words are an assault of the mind and conscience.

And detest his fortresses. Therefore I will deliver up the city with all that is in it- As noted often, the fortresses were the human strength which Israel trusted in, rather than in God; see on :1. God hated, even detested, all such trust in human defences. We need to take that lesson. For we have so many temptations to trust in human strength. And it is bank balances, reserves, health plans etc. which God detests if they are used to replace trust in Him.

Amos 6:9 It will happen, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die- We note again the reference of Amos to fortified houses, which the wealthy thought would be their defence against invaders. Such a large house must be in view, if ten men remained within it. Even if these houses were such a defence, God would send a snake on their walls inside to kill them (Am. 5:19). We really need to hear all this repetition- all human strength and defence is not so at all.

Amos 6:10 When a man's relative carries his body out of the house to burn it, he will ask him who is in the innermost parts of the house: 'Is there yet any with you?'. And if he says, 'No', then he will say, 'Hush! Indeed we must not mention the name of Yahweh'- The idea may be as in Am. 5:13. The righteous keep silent in respect of the rightness of Divine judgments (Lev. 10:3; Ps. 39:9), even if they fall upon their own relatives. And again, even the innermost, most fortified parts of their homes would not preserve them. The innermost parts, the very core, of our various human defence mechanisms will likewise be revealed as nothing before God's judgment. It was the duty of the closest relatives to bury the dead; and AV "uncle" may imply that only an uncle was left in this family to bury the younger men. This relative was therefore the only one of the ten (:9) who survived in the house and family. This is mentioned also in Am. 5:3; Samaria was to be left with just 10% of its former population; a major

destruction. And it was with this tiny remnant that God hoped to work. They were perhaps the tenth, the tithe, which were intended for God's work. To mention that Name of Yahweh was part of covenant relationship, but that was to be interrupted for the remnant who survived. They had called upon Yahweh as part of their idol worship; and now that was to be no longer possible. They would realize that they had in reality not called upon His Name at all.

Amos 6:11 For behold, Yahweh says it, and the great house will be smashed to pieces, and the little house into bits- Repeatedly Amos drives home the idea that their houses will not save them. Their fortified homes and hidden recesses within them were what they so trusted in, rather than turning to God. We too tend to have those hidden recesses of our own device.

Amos 6:12 Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plough there with oxen?- The answer is obviously "no". But this was how utterly foolish they were being in being unjust and causing bitterness to those they abused. It ought to have been obvious. But that which is spiritually obvious is not perceived because of the way that sin distorts our vision. But the Hebrew is difficult. The GNB offers: "You brag about capturing the town of Lodebar. You boast, 'We were strong enough to take Karnaim'". The military victories earlier in the time of Amos, under Jeroboam II and Uzziah (2 Kings 14:25-28), were to be now revealed as meaningless; such secular success was no reflection of spirituality. And they would realize that all too late.

But you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness- See on Am. 5:7. Justice and righteousness are God's intentions for His people; but just as a horse can't run on rocky crags, so they had inverted the entire sense of spirituality.

Amos 6:13 You who rejoice in a thing of nothing, who say, 'Haven't we taken for ourselves horns by our own strength?' - The horns of the Jerusalem altar were thought to be the ultimate source of safety (1 Kings 1:50; 2:28). It seems that the ten tribes had replicated this by adding horns to their calf statues, which were "a thing of nothing". They had created their own strength, rather than realizing their weakness and trusting in God's strength. They were aware that a righteous Ephraim would push her enemies as with the horns of a unicorn (Dt. 33:17), and as noted on :1, they were "at ease" with God, assuming they were righteous, appropriating the blessings of the righteous to themselves. Only condemnation would make them realize how wrong they were.

Amos 6:14 For, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, says Yahweh, the God of Armies; and they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of the Arabah- From the north to the south. The same terms of definition are used to describe the territory which Jeroboam II had recently recovered (2 Kings 14:25). All that secular success was no sign at all of God's blessing. All this so easily translates into our modern terms. We need not assume that nice homes and possessions are God's blessing and His approval of our spirituality. Not at all. It can be that we merely blessed ourselves with those things. Those armies sent to take these things away were effectively God's armies, totally under His control.

AMOS CHAPTER 7

Amos 7:1 *Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me: and behold, He formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and behold, it was the latter growth after the king's harvest-* GNB "Just after the king's share of the hay had been cut and the grass was starting to grow again". Am. 4:6-9 has explained that this was at a time of famine. The strong took away what little food the poor had, just in order to continue their own opulent living, as explained on Am. 5:11. The king was chief in this offence. The punishment was therefore that locusts would eat up the harvest of the wealthy. However "the shooting up" may refer to the temporary revival of prosperity under Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25) after it had as it were been mown down by the incursions of Hazael and Benhadad (2 Kings 13:3,22).

It could be argued that the timing of the judgment reflects God's grace- the first harvest had already happened, the King taking the best of the hay. Note how Uzziah, the King in Amos' time, Am. 1:1, "loved husbandry", 2 Chron. 26:10; like us, he was tested at his weakest point. The grasshoppers [Heb. locusts] were prepared to destroy the secondary harvest which was not so crucial to survival. It could be that the locusts ate the grass but hadn't moved on to the crops. God's grace is seen in the midst of His judgments; He could have judged Israel far more severely, by destroying the primary harvest. The creation of a locust plague by God naturally alludes to the plague of locusts upon *Egypt* - which was ended by Moses' mediation for Egypt just as Amos now interceded for Israel; see on :3. This is one of many examples of where God's apostate people are treated as and spoken of in the language of Egypt / the world; the ultimate punishment for the rejected will be to be sent back into the world, the Egypt which they had preferred in their day of opportunity, and share their destiny. Hence Paul writes of being "condemned with the world". See on :4.

Note that God consciously "forms" locusts... He sends His rain on the earth, there's a consciousness about every movement in the natural creation, a conscious expenditure of His energy and Spirit.

The LXX of Amos 7:1 is interesting: "Behold, a swarm of locusts coming from the east; and, behold, one caterpillar, king Gog". Yet Amos intercedes: "Repent, O Lord, for this. And this shall not be, says the Lord". This would suggest that the Gog invasion was conditional and was forestalled by the intercession of Amos; thus not only Ezekiel 40-48 would be conditional prophecy, but Ezekiel 38 and 39 also.

Amos 7:2 *It happened that when they made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, Lord Yahweh, forgive, I beseech You! How could Jacob stand? For he is so small-* The only other time we read of Jacob being "small" is when the same Hebrew word is used about Jacob being the "younger" son (Gen. 27:15,42). God delights to work through the weak, the younger sons, the spiritually weak, the sinners... and Amos appeals to God's grace, to continue working through the weak Israel. For how else shall Jacob "arise"- and the same Hebrew words are used of the historical Jacob 'arising' and being saved by God's grace from a just destruction for his sins (Gen. 31:17; 35:1). We can use these ideas to comfort those who feel they have fallen so far into sin that God has stopped working with them. His style is quite the opposite- to use such desperate situations to bring men and women to be His truest servants.

The historical fulfilment of this may be in that the incursions of Hazael and Benhadad into Israel could have destroyed them; but it was the prayer of Amos which saved those

"locusts" from totally destroying the kingdom. There was still some space for repentance; hence the intensity of Amos' appeal. And in the time allotted, Jeroboam II did restore much land to Israel (see on :1), but still there was no repentance.

The idea of prophets was well known in the world around ancient Israel. The idea of a prophet was that a person was caught up in some kind of ecstasy, transported into some 'other' world, and leaving behind their humanity. The true prophets were different. Their inspiration was about being attuned to the mind of God, they remained very much in the flesh and in the world, and the subjects of their prophecy related to very real, human things- injustice, a guy building an extension on his house without paying the labourers. Not flashing lights and ethereal coasting through space. The pagan prophets (e.g. the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:26-29) worked themselves into a frenzy in order to reach a state of depersonalization and loss of consciousness, in the hope that then they would be filled with Divine consciousness. True prophets like Amos were absolutely different; the inspiration process required them to be fully in touch with their own consciousness and personality, and it was exactly through their humanity that the personality of God came through in the inspired words they spoke and wrote. Amos perceived the Lord's word, and then 'butted in' as it were, in full consciousness: "O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" (Am. 7:2). This is the very opposite of the pagan prophets losing touch with their human senses and reasoning.

The relatively small amount of human repentance needed to make the Angel repent is shown here in Amos 7. Amos sees visions of the impending judgements on Israel. After each he prays for Jacob to be forgiven; and the answer comes: Yahweh repented for this. It shall not be, says the Lord". He repented for the sake of one intense prayer! Notice too Amos asking "Who shall stand for Jacob?". Michael the Angel stands for Israel in the court of Heaven (as the Angel 'God of Jacob'; Dan. 12:1), and thus it appears Amos is pointing out that if Israel is condemned and punished they will have no Angel with them- and so the Angel / God changes His mind.

Although the prophets were on God's side as it were, sharing His spirit, speaking His words, they were also men, and they were largely Jews, members of the nation upon whom He was announcing His wrath. At times, they reason with God. Amos delivered God's judgment against his people, and then pleaded with God about them, and He changed His mind. Other examples in Is. 6:11; Jer. 4:14; Ps. 74:10. This was how well the prophets knew God; and yet again, it shows that they weren't merely impersonally reproducing a message from God. They were involved in it and highly sensitive to it.

Amos 7:3 *Yahweh relented concerning this. It shall not be, says Yahweh*- There really were intended Divine judgments upon Israel at this time which didn't happen thanks to a subsistence farmer praying to God to change His mind... Note the huge implications of the two words "for this" [NEV "concerning this"]. For those few words of Amos, Almighty God changed His mind. What's amazing is that Amos had opened his prophecy by relaying the statement that God would *not* repent of His judgment of Israel. God is not the stone faced, unchanging Allah of Islam, nor the emotionless deity of the Greeks. He changes, just as He did over Nineveh. The only thing that is unchanging in Him is grace, whereby the sons of Jacob are not ultimately consumed when they ought to have been (Mal. 3:6 cp. Jer. 10:25).

Amos 7:4 *Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me and behold, the Lord Yahweh called for judgment by fire; and it dried up the great deep, and would have devoured the land*- "Called" raises the question 'to whom?'. Maybe to the Angels in the court of Heaven? "Contend by fire" (AV) suggests a reference to Elijah calling God to contend by fire against an apostate Israel.

Israel are likened to the sea, being burnt up by the heat of God's wrath. But the sea is usually a symbol of the Gentile world- as in the notes on 7:1, apostate Israel are being likened to the Gentiles. God at that time would've burnt up all Israel- had not Amos interceded. This is exactly what happened with Moses. The idea of "part" of God's land and people being burnt up by judgment is common in Revelation- the implication of the allusions back here to Amos could be that *all* God's land / people aren't destroyed in the last days because of intercession by third parties- ourselves?

Destruction by fire is more radical and total than a locust swarm. As explained on :2, the locust swarm was stopped from totally destroying the kingdom by Amos' intercession. But still Israel didn't repent, and so destruction by fire was promised. But Amos again interceded and even this was delayed- explaining how all the more desperately intense was Amos' appeal for repentance.

Amos 7:5 *Then I said, Lord Yahweh, cease, I beg You! How could Jacob stand? For he is small-* God is open to changing His stated plan due to the mediation of others. It would even appear that Amos believed God could forgive the sins of others because of *his* prayers rather than their repentance. For Amos doesn't merely ask God not to execute His judgments, but to actually forgive Israel. There's an obvious similarity with the intercession of Moses; the only other person to pray "Forgive, I beseech You" is Moses- the same Hebrew words are found on his lips twice (Ex. 34:9; Num. 14:19). Moses' amazing example had been meditated upon by Amos as he did his agricultural work- and he rose up to the same level. He prayed the same prayer. We too should be motivated in our prayer lives by Biblical examples, even using the same words. So many Biblical prayers use the words of previous Scripture. God leads us to see the similarities between our situations and those of Biblical figures- e.g. by giving Amos a vision of judgment upon Israel in terms of a locust plague, which was intended to lead Amos to see Israel as Egypt and himself as Moses in making intercession to end the plague. Amos gets into the spirit of Moses by asking God to "cease", using the same word used to describe how the plagues "ceased" as a result of Moses' intercession (Ex. 9:29,33,34). Amos the humble herdsman rose up to the spirit of Moses, the figure set within Judaism as it were in stained glass as unapproachable and beyond imitation, to be revered but not copied. And we can rise up in the same way.

Amos 7:6 *Yahweh relented concerning this. This also shall not be, says the Lord Yahweh-* Amos pronounced what the Lord had shown him: that the land would be destroyed by grasshoppers, and then by fire. But each time he begged Yahweh to relent. And "the Lord repented for this: It shall not be, saith the Lord" (AV). Israel's salvation was to some degree dependent on the love and prayer of Amos. God may have prepared great things potentially, which are only 'released' by our prayer for them. James reasons that because we have seen "the end intended by the Lord" (James 5:11 NKJ) we ought therefore to do the maximum of *our* ability in prayer for others, and as Job praying for his friends, we can really influence the outcomes for third parties (see on Mk. 2:5).

Amos 7:7 *Thus he showed me: Behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand-* Measuring was an idiom for preparation for judgment, and like all prophecy, this will have its ultimate application in the last days (see on Rev. 11:2). The idea may be that God had built the wall perpendicular, but Israel had built further upon it, and now He would assess precisely how far they had strayed. Every sin and failure led to others, just as building a wall with slight errors to begin with leads to the wall becoming more grossly out of shape as the building proceeds. This is the problem with considering that there are small sins, some 'out of line' stuff in our lives that we shall just let be.

Amos 7:8 *Yahweh said to me, Amos, what do you see? I said, A plumb line. Then the Lord*

said, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel. I will not again change My mind about punishing them- God is aware that He has changed His mind... elsewhere He warns that *this* time, His threatened punishment of Israel will not be as another echo in the mountains (Ez. 7:7). But... He *still* doesn't destroy them fully. Hos. 11:8 describes His unbearable tension: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together" (Hos. 11:8). This is the God whose word is ultimately firm still being open to changing it- such is the extent of His love for Israel; and us.

Amos 7:9 *The high places of Isaac will be desolate, the sanctuaries of Israel will be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword-* We never read of Isaac having any idolatrous "high places", but all the patriarchs were amazingly weak at times and so it doesn't surprise us. The point could be that the secret sins of God's people, e.g. those of Isaac which by grace aren't recorded in the Biblical record, will be revealed in the time of judgment. Hence the reference in 7:16 to "the house of Isaac". But Isaac had a vision from God at Beersheba and likely built an altar there (Gen. 26:23,24). The apostasy of God's people was in continually seeking to justify their idolatry by daubing it with references to true Yahweh worship; and Beersheba was one of the idol shrines (Am. 5:5).

Amos 7:10 *Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words-* This was his commentary upon Amos preaching the word of :9, that the house of Jeroboam was to be destroyed. It would seem that Amos announced this word at Bethel, not Samaria. Perhaps he stationed himself there at the idol shrine and warned the people daily. As always happens, the words of the faithful are twisted; Amaziah implied that Amos was taking into his own hands to fulfil the prophecy against Jeroboam, and was plotting to murder him. "Conspired" is literally "banded", as if Amos had built up a group of followers; perhaps indeed a minority did repent. And indeed the word of God could not be abided by Israel when it finally came to fulfilment; the same words are used in Joel 2:11.

Amos 7:11 *For Amos says, 'Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land'* - The implication is that Amos kept on saying this; and that although he was appealing for repentance, he recognized that the captivity was going to happen. To keep on giving an unpopular message is difficult; it's one thing to whisper something once, but to keep warning is bound to make us unpopular. Amos is really an example to us.

Amos 7:12 *Amaziah also said to Amos, You prophet, go, flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there-* "Eat bread" may be an idiom to imply that he would be sponsored there, implying that Amos was just saying what his financial supporters wanted him to say. This would explain why his response is that he is not a professional prophet as they understood a prophet, i.e. a man just saying things for the sake of those who employed him (as in Ez. 13:19); but rather was he just a humble herdsman and fig gatherer (:14).

Amos 7:13 *But don't prophesy again any more at Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house!-* This is typical of how money controls spirituality in apostate religion. Jeroboam had funded the sanctuary, it was his [and not Yahweh's]; therefore Amos shouldn't be condemning the king in the king's sanctuary. The record is making the point that Bethel, the house of God, was no longer the house of God but the king's house. Israel had hijacked God's house, just as the Lord's table has so often been hijacked by those who act as if it is their table, and decide who may or may not enter the Lord's house / family. Telling the

prophets not to prophesy was the sin of God's people in Am. 2:12. Reading or hearing God's word but not letting it bite us is just the same.

Amos 7:14 Then Amos answered Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore figs- This was Amos' answer to the implication he was a career prophet just saying what those who paid him wanted to hear (:12). He was not even the son of a prophet, probably referring to the "sons of the prophets" who had attended the schools of the prophets (2 Kings 4:1,2). Amos was for whatever reason not within the mainstream and not apparently associated with the schools of the prophets. He was as he says, just a humble labourer. This is evidence enough that one can teach God's word without any pedigree or theological education. Indeed it seems God prefers to work through outsiders such as Amos. He was poor- a herdsman who also gathered sycamore fruit, which was plentiful in Israel but inferior to figs.

When asked who he was, John's reply was simply: "a voice". Amos, in the same way, was told not to keep on prophesying; but he replies: "I am no prophet...the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy" (Am. 1:14,15 RV). It's almost contradictory: 'I'm not a prophet... I am a prophet'. He was truly selfless, like, John, just a voice for God. Samuel also spoke of himself at a distance from himself when he told Israel: "The Lord sent Jerubbaal... and Samuel... and delivered you" (1 Sam. 12:11).

Amos stresses that speaking forth God's word wasn't at all what he wished to do or was cut out for. Likewise Paul says that because preaching God's word was against his natural inclination, therefore a calling to preach the Gospel had indeed been given to him (1 Cor. 9:17). Paul was sent to the Gentiles and not the Jews as he might naturally have preferred; the disciples were unlearned and ignorant men called to preach to the Jewish intelligentsia; women weren't accepted as legal witnesses and yet the Lord asks women to be the first witnesses of His resurrection; always in the preaching of His word does God use those who humanly aren't qualified to do so. He doesn't use slick presentation, but rather human weakness in order to convert others. Amos doubtless alludes to himself in Am. 3:8 where he says that a prophet cannot but speak out God's word- and this is alluded to by the apostles when they say they cannot but speak out what they have seen and heard of Christ.

Amos doesn't actually answer the serious false allegation against him personally, but gets on with speaking forth God's word. This is rather like Peter, who when forbidden to preach just continues to do so. Paul also was forbidden by the Jews to teach the Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:16). Both Paul and Peter must have recalled Amos going through the same. Situations repeat within the lives of God's children who are contemporary with each other, and also between our situations and those of Bible characters. This is the basis in practice for the unity of the Spirit. We are given real life examples of others who have walked this path before.

Amos 7:15 And Yahweh took me from following the flock, and Yahweh said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel'- The context is responding to the idea that he was only saying what men had paid him to say (see on :12). Amos seems to purposefully use the language used about David who was likewise taken from the flock to do God's work (2 Sam. 7:8; Ps. 78:70,71). David and Moses were seen as untouchable founding fathers of the Israelite culture and religion; for a humble labourer to act like Moses in mediating for Israel (as in :1-5), and now to see himself as David, was significant spiritual ambition. We too can rise up to these patterns rather than just admire them. The low status of Amos is therefore emphasized; he was a "herdsman" (Am. 1:1), a *noqed* because he shepherded *naaqaad*, a stunted and ugly breed, leading to the proverb "viler than a *naaqaad*". Likewise he gathered not figs, but sycamore fruit, the cheapest, commonest and least tasty fruit (:14).

Amos 7:16 Now therefore listen to the word of Yahweh: 'You say, Don't prophesy against

Israel, and don't preach against the house of Isaac - To forbid the teaching of God's word led to the serious condemnation of :17. And church politics today often lead to a similar forbidding of preachers, especially those considered to be outsiders like Amos. The same situation is criticized in Mic. 2:6, where the command to stop others preaching was because those who forbade it didn't want to "take shame". We can claim belief in an inspired Bible and yet refuse to be shamed by what we read, and effectively we are thereby shutting down God's word. This shows that 'belief in an inspired Bible' can never remain a mere theological tenet; it demands so much of us, and one can so easily deny it in practice despite giving lipservice to the theory.

The Israelites considered themselves the house / family of Isaac because they had transformed his shrine to Yahweh at Beersheba into an idol shrine, through which they claimed to worship Yahweh; see on :9. They thought their much proclaimed connection with Isaac somehow justified their sin, just as multi generational Christian believers can assume that their pedigree justifies their apostasy.

Amos 7:17 Therefore thus says Yahweh: 'Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword- Imagine the nervous tone of voice in which Amos likely said those words, just as we imagine Joseph and Daniel summoning the courage to speak forth God's word. We likely know that feeling. To call a man's wife a prostitute was serious indeed. Presumably she would become such in order to placate the invaders, or because she simply needed to somehow get food in the desperate situation which was to come.

And your land shall be divided by line- Such division is characteristic of how God judges people (Lam. 4:16; Ez. 5:1 s.w.). Those who divide themselves within God's kingdom or people are thereby living out their own condemnation.

And you yourself shall die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land' - The Israelites considered Gentile lands "unclean", and yet they had made their own land unclean by their sins (Is. 24:5; Jer. 2:7). It was therefore appropriate that they be taken away to die in an unclean Gentile land. Clearly it was the hypocrisy of Israel in considering other lands "unclean" which was so obnoxious to God. And the people of God must ever struggle with the temptation to be no better in essence than those they claim to be separate from.

AMOS CHAPTER 8

Amos 8:1 Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit- "Summer" translates a Hebrew word very similar to that used for "end" in :2. These final visions in Amos may be in response to him being exiled from Israel as recorded in Am. 7. Israel had stated finally that they didn't want God's word, and so Amos now gives visions of the end, and yet concludes with the gracious hope of restoration.

Amos 8:2 He said, Amos, what do you see? I said, A basket of summer fruit- The apparently obvious question was to help Amos be clear in his own mind. We too at times have to be asked 'What is this?', because verbalizing the reply is helpful for our own understanding. The 'end fruit' (see on :1) was the fruit of Israel's behaviour. All our days and years are spent cultivating, and the fruit shall surely come. For Israel, the fruit they bore meant "the end" for them.

Then Yahweh said to me, The end has come on My people Israel. I will not again change My mind about them any more- Amos had successfully persuaded God to change His mind, but God says He will do so no more. And yet even then, there were changes in His plans, influenced always by His passionate desire to save at least some. The Divine statement here is proof enough that God *does* change His mind, as we see clearly in His altering of purpose regarding Israel's destruction (Num. 14:34) and that of Nineveh. He is only unchanging in His essential grace, in that the sons of Jacob are not consumed when they ought to be (Mal. 3:6).

Amos 8:3 *The songs of the temple will be wailings in that day, says the Lord Yahweh-* These visions seem particularly addressed to the ten tribes (:14), but most of Amos' words also have relevance to Judah; for he prophesied to both kingdoms (Am. 1:1). I have noted earlier that the idol shrines of the ten tribe kingdom were conscious imitations of the worship at the Jerusalem temple; so "the songs of the temple" could refer to the musical worship at the shrine in Samaria. A historical fulfilment would have been in how the songs of Zion, the temple mount, became laments in Judah's captivity (Ps. 137:3,4 s.w.). But the immediate context seems to concern wailing for the dead bodies in the temple / sanctuary.

The dead bodies will be many. In every place they will throw them out in silence- This "silence" is that spoken of in Am. 6:10 (see note there). The bodies would be thrown out and not buried. Perhaps the reference is to what happened when the literal sanctuary at Bethel collapsed during the Assyrian invasion and destroyed those who had taken refuge there; see on Am. 9:2.

Amos 8:4 *Hear this, you who desire to swallow up the needy-* The awful judgments of :3 were due to the abuse of the poor. We might have thought that the idolatry was the main reason, yet the sin which apparently angered God even more than that was the abuse of poor brethren. As they had swallowed up or devoured the needy (s.w. Am. 2:7), so they would be swallowed up by the invaders (s.w. Is. 42:14; Ez. 36:3). To care for "the needy" was a major theme of the Mosaic law (s.w. Ex. 23:6; Dt. 15:4,7,9,11 etc.). We have noted earlier in Amos that the poor were swallowed up for tiny amounts, such was the avarice of the wealthy.

And cause the poor of the land to fail- "Fail" is the same word as "sabbath" in the next verse. These "poor" were the ones left in the land by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:12; Jer. 39:10; 40:7) and it seems the Assyrians did likewise. There was no economic advantage in taking the dirt poor away into captivity. It was they who therefore remained in the land whilst she 'kept her sabbaths' (2 Chron. 36:21). The word play is making the point that it was the abused who were the ones who would also 'sabbath' in the land. It was this abused minority with whom God hoped to work and bring about a restored Kingdom.

Amos 8:5 *Saying, 'Oh when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath end, that we may market wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel large, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit-* We marvel that whilst God's people were involved in such major idolatry and abuse, they would bother to religiously keep the sabbath. But they did, and this is exactly the warning to the religious man and woman- that external observance of spiritual rites and even obedience to Divine commandments is no reflection of spirituality. It was the kind of apparently petty, hidden sin which clearly weighed heavier with God than the more evident sin of idolatry. For tweaking balances would have resulted in only relatively petty gain for the trader, otherwise it would have been noticeable and lacking in credibility. Likewise Paul begins his critique of the Corinthians by speaking of their divisiveness, and only later addresses their drunkenness at the breaking of bread, use of prostitutes, denial of the resurrection etc. Hosea lamented the use of the same "balances of deceit", and saw how

this was all part of an attempt to even deceive God (Hos. 11:12; 12:7 s.w.). Micah likewise (Mic. 6:11). This secret tweaking of balances was noticed by God and it was a consistent issue He had with Israel; it was "an abomination unto Yahweh" (Prov. 20:23), using the very word typically used for idol worship.

Amos 8:6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the sweepings along with the wheat? - As noted on :5, the deceit and abuse practiced was for very petty gain on each transaction. This is where greed leads. The poor were sold into slavery for "a pair of shoes", or sandals. "Pay me what you owe me" was the attitude (Mt. 18:28), and for petty amounts, the debtor was forced into slavery. And the Lord quotes this attitude as pertinent to us today if we do not forgive our brother from the heart. The chaff or left over grain of the wheat should have been left for the poor of the land; we recall Ruth gleaned such corn. But Israel swept it up and sold it to the poor. And remember that such attitudes are being cited as reason for "the end" finally coming upon Israel (:1,2).

Amos 8:7 Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob- This could mean that the judgment was coming because of Jacob / Israel's pride; or that He swore as the One whom Jacob / Israel were proud of. I have noted throughout Amos that the people were kidding themselves that they were Yahweh's people and He would preserve them in the coming day of Yahweh; perhaps it was exactly because of this that He was so insistent that He would never forget or pass by judgment of their sins.

Surely I will never forget any of their works- There is within us all the tendency to assume that the passage of time works a kind of atonement for our sins; we forget them, or the reality of them fades, and we can assume that this is so likewise with God. But He doesn't deal with sin like that. He doesn't suffer from memory loss or the diminishing of felt reality simply due to the passage of time. Israel forgot God's works, as the Psalmist laments, but God didn't forget theirs. This is why it's so critical to repent of our sins immediately, before the passing of time leaves us feeling that elapsed time has dealt with them, as if God operates some kind of statute of limitations. But He doesn't. We need to throw ourselves upon God's grace for past sins, and repent immediately when we sin. It is likewise important to realize that because God doesn't forget sin, in terms of memory, then we must the more urgently throw ourselves upon His grace and believe we are saved due to our status in Christ.

Amos 8:8 Won't the land tremble for this, and everyone mourn who dwells in it?- This is the earthquake mentioned in Am. 1:1 and Am. 9:5 (see notes there). The things in view are the apparently lesser, secret sins of the previous verses. We would expect an earthquake in response to idolatry, but an earthquake for tweaking balances and demanding what is legitimately owed to us (:6)... ? In secular terms, it seems a disproportionate response. But this is the major message in the minor prophets; that it is exactly those sins which are so major to God. And they are the very sins we are likely to commit.

Yes, it will rise up wholly like the River; and it will be stirred up and sink again, like the River of Egypt- The allusion is to how the Nile rises and falls, spreading debris on its flood plain. Because they had trusted in Egypt, they would rise and fall like Egypt. And in physical terms this would refer to the literal rising and falling of the land as a result of the prophesied earthquake.

Amos 8:9 It will happen in that day, says the Lord Yahweh, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the day time- Darkness is often associated in the OT with mourning. Am. 8:9,10 speaks of earthquake and darkness at noon because "I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day", i.e. a funeral.

The darkness at the cross was a sign of *Almighty God mourning for His Son*. The cross was the judgment of the Jewish world.

But the extinguishing of the noon day sun speaks of individuals and a society being cut off at the apparent zenith of their glory. The destruction of Israel was to be relatively sudden; they were to be cut down in the midst of the revived prosperity which had been brought about by Jeroboam II. There is every indication in Amos that their judgment would be unexpected by them. And so shall it be in the last day.

Amos 8:10 *I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will make you wear sackcloth on all your bodies, and baldness on every head. I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day-* The way Israel kept the Mosaic feasts and sung David's temple songs in their idol shrines, mixing idolatry with the trappings of Yahweh worship, was so upsetting to God. The mourning in view is very bitter and intense, and looks forward to the mourning of the rejected in the last day. Then, too late, the rejected Jews will mourn for the crucified, only Son of God. They will then mourn for Him in repentance (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7), but too late. They will see Him when resurrected to judgment and hail Him (Mt. 23:39; 26:64) but not be accepted by Him. See on Mt. 16:28.

Amos 8:11 *Behold, the days come, says the Lord Yahweh, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh-* Amos had been exiled from Israel because they didn't want to hear Yahweh's word from him (Am. 7:12). But they would desperately want to hear it later, just as Zedekiah earnestly sought to hear the word from Yahweh but too late. A literal famine had already been sent in the land, and this was to provide Israel with warning that just as they had gone around the land seeking for food and water in the time of Ahab's famine, so they would spiritually. If we don't accept God's word now, and love it, then we shall desire to do so in the time of condemnation, but all too late. Now is the time to hear and apply ourselves to His word.

Amos 8:12 *They will wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will run back and forth to seek the word of Yahweh, and will not find it-* This desperate seeking of God's word is commentary upon the way that Amos had been forbidden to speak God's word in the ten tribe kingdom (Am. 7:12). The day would come, as for all who reject God's word, when they would desperately seek that which they had no time for or rejected. "Sea to sea" may refer to the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, for the reference here is specifically to the ten tribe kingdom. North to east may refer to the location of their shrines. To seek and not find spirituality and salvation is going to be why the rejected bang their teeth as a result of their condemnation. It's the foolish girls earnestly seeking to fill their lamps with oil, but all too late.

Amos 8:13 *In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint for thirst-* The thirst is defined in :11 as a thirst for God's word. Now, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled (Mt. 5:6). The process of condemnation will not be met with indifference by those condemned; they will seek desperately to be righteous and to be accepted, but it will be too late. Life is the time to seek and serve the Lord. This is particularly directed by Amos at young men and women; the intellectual and physical energy of youth is intended to be directed to God's word. And if it is not, then it may be too late at the last day.

Amos 8:14 *Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, 'As your god, Dan, lives'-* The golden calf is described as Israel's sin (Dt. 9:21). "The sin of Samaria" / the ten tribe kingdom

therefore refers to the golden calf at Bethel, rather than to the sin *in* Samaria. Yahweh is the only living God; that truth is repeated so often in Scripture. To claim that any idol is alive is to reject the one and only living God.

And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives;' they will fall, and never rise up again- "The way" can be an idiom to mean a system of worship, just as Christianity was at times called "the way", i.e. the only, one and true way. Beersheba was in Judah, but it is repeatedly mentioned as being the place of sin for the ten tribes; and the references to Isaac in Amos (see on Am. 7:9,16) are because he had built an altar there, which had been taken over as an idol shrine. The particular sin at Beersheba for the ten tribes was perhaps in that they considered they could just hop over the border and sin secretly. The whole mentality of hopping off for secret sin was and is so abhorrent to God. I noted on Hos. 4:15 that Judah were condemned for having this same mentality.

AMOS CHAPTER 9

Amos 9:1 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said, Strike the tops of the pillars, that the thresholds may shake; and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will kill the last of them with the sword- The altar at Bethel had been the subject of other prophecies of destruction (1 Kings 13:2-4). I have suggested on Am. 7:12 that Amos may have stood near the altar, or the entrance to it in Bethel, and condemned it and its worshippers. It could be that now Amos is literally commanded to smash it. But the command seems to be associated with the total destruction unto death of the people who worshipped there, and may therefore be the Divine command to the Assyrian invaders, presided over by the Lord standing beside the altar. "The altar" is put for the sanctuary around it, which would collapse upon the heads of the worshippers. It recalls the destruction of the pagan Philistine temple by Samson in his death. Perhaps the Assyrian soldiers literally fulfilled this; the Israelites believed that the horns of that altar would provide salvation for them (see on Am. 3:14; 6:13). They would have fled for refuge there in the final Assyrian onslaught; only to be crushed beneath the falling masonry as the sanctuary was brought down upon them. Their wrong beliefs therefore led them to literal destruction.

There shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape- But even here, God did remember mercy. A remnant did escape. As noted often on Hosea, God speaks in anger, quite legitimately, but His saving grace comes to dominate still. However, the reference may specifically be to the sanctuary built around the altar, which was to collapse upon the worshippers beneath it and kill them all.

Amos 9:2 Though they dig into Sheol, there My hand will take them; and though they climb up to the sky, I will bring them down from there- This alludes to Ps. 139 which has already stated this and was likely one of the temple songs they sung. They knew the words and perhaps sung them, but overlooked their personal relevance. I suggested on :1 that the Israelites fled into the Bethel sanctuary for safety and deliverance from the final Assyrian onslaught, and those who did perished there beneath the falling masonry, perhaps triggered by the earthquake of :5 and Am. 8:8. It would seem that they dug bunkers there for safety; but it was but digging their own graves, digging into *sheol*. Perhaps they literally sung the temple songs as they cowered there; but their bodies were extricated and thrown out of the collapsed masonry in silence (Am. 8:3).

Amos 9:3 Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out from there- As some would seek to hide in the sanctuary at Bethel, others in the northern Kingdom would flee to the top of Carmel. This was a known Baal shrine (1 Kings 18:19,20). God searched and found them there at the hands of the Assyrian soldiers, and as explained on :5, through the earthquake that shook the land at the time of the final Assyrian invasion.

And though they be hidden from My sight in the bottom of the sea- The allusions to Ps. 139 make it clear that we can never be hidden from God's sight. But here we have an example of the Bible speaking from the perspective of men. This was how Israel would feel; that like Jonah, they could somehow flee from Yahweh's presence and be outside responsibility to Him. But it is impossible to flee His presence.

There I will command the serpent, and it will bite them- The idea is similar to that of Am. 5:19 (see note there). Whatever their place of escape and human strength, God saw it and controlled small animals which could destroy them. "The serpent" could refer to some aspect of the Assyrian or Babylonian invaders (s.w. Is. 14:29; Jer. 8:17; 46:22).

Amos 9:4 Though they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it will kill them- It's unclear the extent to which this happened. Large numbers of the ten tribe kingdom and of Judah were not killed in captivity, but instead prospered. As often noted in Hosea, God speaks at times in great and legitimate anger, as He did to Moses regarding His intended total destruction of Israel; and yet He relents and does not do according to the fierceness of His anger. This is all of His grace.

The parallel is with hiding on Carmel in the caves on the west side of the mountain (:3)- but still being discovered and judged. The idea may be that even going into Gentile lands didn't mean that they were outside of God's presence- a lesson Jonah had to learn. But again, in this judgment there is hope; for the comfort was that even in captivity, the presence of God could be with them, despite their lack of any temple and the opportunity to keep much of the old covenant. The cherubim moved from the Jerusalem temple to Babylon in Ezekiel's visions, in visual representation of this truth.

I will set My eyes on them for evil, and not for good- This could imply that right up until the captivity, all through the idolatry and wickedness of the generations before it, God as it were focused His eyes upon doing them good. He really wanted to save them and to give them good in every way; this is the great blessing of being in covenant relationship with Him. He really wishes us good and is determined to achieve this; but He will not force us to accept it. His eyes may refer to the activity of the Angels.

Amos 9:5 For the Lord, Yahweh of Armies, is He who touches the land and it melts, and all who dwell in it will mourn- This earthquake is alluded to in Am. 8:8 and is stated as being two years in the future in Am. 1:1. Here it is spoken of as actually happening. The prophetic word is so certain of fulfilment that it can be spoken of in the present or even past tenses, even though the fulfilment is yet future. And yet as happened with Nineveh, in the gap between pronouncement and fulfilment, there is the possibility of repentance and a change to God's stated purpose (Jer. 18:7-9, and the example of Nineveh and Moses changing God's purpose of judgment about Israel). However it could be that the earthquake mentioned in Am. 1:1 was but a premonition of the final earthquake which would happen at the time of the Assyrian invasion; they were being given thereby a foretaste of judgment to come, in the hope they repented. I suggested on :2 that the idolaters ran into the Bethel sanctuary for

refuge, and it was destroyed by an earthquake as the Assyrians approached, killing the worshippers beneath the falling masonry. But that same earthquake affected the entire country; those who tried to hide in bunkers or mountains like Carmel (:3) were also destroyed or revealed by the same earthquake.

And it will rise up wholly like the River, and will sink again, like the River of Egypt- The allusion is to how the Nile rises and falls, spreading debris on its flood plain. Because they had trusted in Egypt, they would rise and fall like Egypt. And in physical terms this would refer to the literal rising and falling of the land as a result of the prophesied earthquake.

Amos 9:6 It is He who builds His chambers in the heavens, and has founded His vault on the earth; He who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth; Yahweh is His name- God is in total, active control of nature. He hasn't wound it up on clockwork and left it ticking. He is involved intensely and consciously; see on Mt. 6:26. He can equally therefore bring about cataclysm. The literal earthquake described in :2 and :5 would involve flooding, and the flooding of the earth / land / *eretz* of Israel also spoke of how the invading armies are likened to rivers and gushing waters, called for by God and therefore irresistible. We have just noted how the Israelites thought they could hide in caves and bunkers on and beneath mount Carmel (:3); God's vaults and chambers are infinitely larger than any human defence. The man who thinks his cattle or cash will be his defence is made to learn that the cattle on a thousand hills are His. All though these verses we see that all human defence against God's judgment will be declared pathetically irrelevant. And we are to learn that now, and submit to His judgments, and be on His side wholeheartedly.

Amos 9:7 Are you not like the children of the Ethiopians to Me, you children of Israel?, says Yahweh. Haven't I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?- Other nations had been brought by God from one country to another. The reference to the Ethiopians would be in allusion to the idea that the Assyrian ruling dynasty came from Ethiopia. The idea was that the Israelites should not assume that because they had historically been brought from Egypt to Israel through the Red Sea [cp. baptism, 1 Cor. 10:1], therefore they were definitely of God and He was always on their side. He has moved pagan nations around His chessboard as well. The fact God has moved mightily with us in the past, not least through the waters of baptism / the Red Sea, is no guarantee that where we stand now is therefore spiritually pleasing to Him.

Amos 9:8 See, the eyes of the Lord Yahweh are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the surface of the earth; except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says Yahweh- God's eyes / Angels were now focused for evil upon them, see on :4. They would be destroyed from the *eretz* or land of Israel, but not utterly destroyed; in that a remnant were intended to repent and be restored. This was God's intention for the ten tribe kingdom as much as for Judah; for the context here largely refers to the ten tribes. But they never returned, nor was there any recorded stirring of repentance amongst them. So much potential was wasted.

Amos 9:9 For, see, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet not the least kernel will fall to the earth- Israel's moving to and from amongst the nations is to be likened to corn being "sifted in a sieve", and the context is in explaining how the repentance and restoration of a remnant was to be brought about; see on :8. The potential plan was that they would be moved around amongst the nations of the Assyrian empire in line with Assyrian policy for captives; they would be preserved and thereby brought to repentance. But this didn't happen, at least not on any

notable scale. The prophecy may have been rescheduled for fulfilment in the last days and over a far longer period. For Israelites have indeed been sifted amongst the nations for centuries now. It follows that the longer they move amongst the nations, the more the corn will be prepared for final ingathering. The longer they suffer, the nearer they are to repentance. Reflect too that “yet shall not the least grain fall to the earth”. The least kernel that will not fall to the earth would mean that this remnant would be preserved. Does this imply that there has always been a faithful remnant amongst Israel, throughout all their wanderings amongst the nations? Remember that the context here is largely concerning the ten tribes.

Amos 9:10 All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, 'Evil won't overtake us nor meet us' - They had been warned to prepare for this meeting with God in judgment, i.e. to repent (Am. 4:12). And as explained on Am. 3:3, the idea of meeting with God implied the entry of a new covenant with Him. But they were assured that in no way would they have any meeting with God in judgment; their self assurance and self righteousness led them to preclude any real possibility of condemnation by God. We need to be careful here. For we too can assume that the regular rhythm of our religion will somehow tide us through into eternity. But condemnation at the last day is a real possibility. We should be confident that by grace, if the Lord returns right now, I shall be saved and not condemned. That is the good news of the Gospel, and anything less than such confidence robs the 'gospel' of its good news. But we may throw it all away tomorrow or later in our lives, as so many have done. There is therefore always the longer term possibility of condemnation; that sense of the future we might miss, the weight of our own weakness and how it could indeed lead us to miss the path in future... must ever remain with us, and result in an appropriate humility and casting of ourselves upon God's grace and spiritual preservation.

Amos 9:11 After this- After the repentance of the remnant spoken of in :8-10. Israel didn't repent in Assyria. And so the planned restoration didn't happen. But God's prophetic word will still come true; the prophecy was rescheduled and reapplied. One of those reapplications was in the repentance of a remnant of Israelites after the Lord's crucifixion and resurrection in the first century AD, and in Acts 15 James quotes the LXX version of :11,12 in this regard. But he does so within a practical context- of arguing that Gentiles too should be baptized into Jesus and allowed full part in the church and people of God.

I will return- It was exiled Israel who were to return to the land. But God so identifies Himself with the downtrodden remnant that He speaks of Himself returning. The cherubim of glory had departed from Jerusalem and reappeared in Babylon, according to Ezekiel's visions; and Ez. 48 concludes with the comment that if the temple were rebuilt as commanded in Ez. 40-48, then again "Yahweh will be there" in Zion. But most of the exiles, especially from the ten tribes, didn't want to return; and so God's desire to live with people was to be reapplied to the Gentiles, as James makes clear by his quotation of this passage.

And I will rebuild- The word can mean to resurrect; the reapplication of this prophecy to the formation of a new house or family of God was to be through the resurrection of David's great descendant, Messiah Jesus.

The tent of David- Not the "house" of David. The allusion is to how David kept the ark of God in a tent and not in a house.

That has fallen down- This chapter began with a prophecy of the destruction of the sanctuary at Bethel built over the altar and golden calf, which would collapse and crush the apostate Israelite worshippers beneath it. This collapse and falling down was typical of what had happened to God's presence amongst His people.

I will rebuild- The same word used of establishing a covenant (Gen. 6:18; 9:9,11). There is hint here of a new, restored covenant between God and His people. This "new covenant" for the returned exiles spoken of in Jeremiah and Ezekiel is the same new covenant which we enter today through baptism into Jesus. This rebuilding was all of grace, for God in His wrath had just sworn that they would never again "arise" or 'rebuild' (Am. 8:14 s.w.). But here in Am. 9:11 the word is twice used of how God would resurrect / rebuild / make arise His people.

Its ruins- This is the word used of how Israel had "forsaken Your covenant, thrown down your altars" (1 Kings 19:10,14). What was in ruins was God's covenant relationship with Israel, epitomized by the Jerusalem temple and the sanctuary at Bethel, the house of God (see on :1) being physically ruined (Lam. 2:2,17; Ez. 16:39; 36:36 s.w.). Under the new covenant, the God who had once ruined / overthrown them would build them again in a new covenant relationship (Jer. 31:28,40; Ez. 36:36 s.w.).

And I will restore it as in the days of old- The covenant relationship could be rebuilt, and could have happened at Israel's return from exile, had they rebuilt the temple according to the laws in Ez. 40-48. But they didn't, and so James explains that this prophecy has been reapplied to the building of a new house of God's people, which includes Gentiles, in line with the prophetic hope that the restoration from exile would also bring blessing upon the Gentiles, who would identify themselves with the returning exiles and become God's people. That didn't happen at the time, and as Ezra and Nehemiah record, the returned exiles intermarried with Gentiles rather than being the light of the Gentile world. And so in Acts 15:15-17 James quotes this as meaning that because the house / people of David have been rebuilt, therefore it is now acceptable to help the Gentiles "seek after the Lord" Jesus. James perceived that firstly the Gospel must go to the house of David, the Jews, and once they had responded, then it would go to the Gentiles. Perhaps the Lord had the same principle in mind when He had His preachers to not [then] preach to Gentiles but instead [at that stage] concentrate on preaching to the house of Israel (Mt. 10:5). Yet the primary fulfillment of Amos 9 is clearly in the last days- then, after Israel have been sifted in the sieve of persecution amongst the Gentiles in the latter day holocaust, the tabernacle of David will again be 'rebuilt', the Gentiles will turn to the Lord, and then the Kingdom situation of :13-15 will come about. Surely what we are being told is that there must be a repeat of what happened in the first century. What happened then, in the repentance of a minority in Israel, the spread of the Gospel to the world and then the Lord's 'coming' in AD70... this must all be repeated on a far greater scale. Thus some in Israel must repent in the last days, after the pattern of the 1st century. This will bring about the great latter day gathering in of the Gentiles at the establishment of the Kingdom, when the whole Gentile world will seek to come up to Zion (Is. 2:3; 19:23; 11:10; 51:4,5; 60:3,11; 66:20; Zech. 8:21).

Amos 9:12 That the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord- As explained on :11, the initial possibility was that the returned exiles would have brought with them the Gentiles, who would come with them to "seek the Lord". But they didn't return, for the most part; and mixed with the Gentiles rather than encouraging them to "seek the Lord", as Ezra and Nehemiah describe. And so the prophecy was reapplied, and partially fulfilled in Gentiles seeking the Lord Jesus and being baptized into the new covenant. "The remnant" of natural Israel was to mix with all the Gentiles who called the Name on themselves by baptism into it. And so from this, James concludes that Gentiles should be baptized and accepted on an equal footing with ethnic Jews in the newly rebuilt house of David / kingdom of God, under the new covenant.

And all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who makes these things known from of old- Acts 15:17 uses these words to encourage us to preach to the Gentiles “upon whom my name is [Amos says ‘has already been’] called”. The Name is called upon us by baptism; yet in prospect, in potential, the Name has already been called upon the whole world. But it is for us to go and convert them. This explains why Paul is spoken of as having been a convert before he actually was. James' usage of this passage is an example of how the New Testament quotes several passages evidently prophetic of the future Kingdom as having their fulfillment in the preaching of the Gospel today. Am. 9:11,12 had its fulfillment in the work of preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 15:13-18; 26:16-18).

Amos 9:13 *See, the days come, says Yahweh, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the one treading grapes him who sows seed-* The idea is that the harvests would take so long to reap, that it would already be sowing time whilst the harvest was still ongoing. This idea is alluded to in Jn. 4. The experience of preaching is in itself a foretaste of the future world-wide Kingdom. The harvest is both at the end of the age, according to the parables of Mt. 13, but also is ongoing right now (Jn. 4:36) as we gather in the harvest of converts. The Lord in Jn. 4:35,36 took this figure far further, by saying that the harvest is such that the interval between sowing and harvesting is in some sense collapsed for those who engage in preaching. The reaper was already collecting his wages; the harvest was already there, even though it was four months away (Jn. 4:35). This clearly alludes to the promises that in the Messianic Kingdom there would also be no interval between sowing and harvest, so abundant would be the harvest (Lev. 26:5; Am. 9:13). And hence, we are impelled to spread the foretaste of the Kingdom world-wide by our witness right now.

And sweet wine will drip from the mountains, and flow from the hills- Vines were grown on terraces, and the grapes were seen as dripping wine directly from themselves.

Amos 9:14 *I will bring My people Israel back from captivity, and they will rebuild the ruined cities, and inhabit them; and they will plant vineyards, and drink wine from them. They shall also make gardens, and eat their fruit-* Tragically, Israel and Judah didn't want to return from the lands of their captivity; many remained there, and those of Judah who did return were motivated by the hope of personal benefit, as Haggai and Malachi make clear, and soon descended into self-righteousness. So much Divine potential was wasted; the temple complex of Ez. 40-48 was a commandment to be obeyed, but the returned exiles didn't obey it. As Haggai and Malachi record, they were smitten with drought and famine, rather than eating the fruit of their gardens. The Divine plan was therefore rescheduled and reapplied, as explained on :11. Our lives too waste so much potential; it must be so tragic for God, although He must therefore be the more pleased with we weak ones who at least say "Yes" to His plans rather than ignore them.

Amos 9:15 *I will plant them in their land, and they will no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them-* As explained on :11,12, this entire prophecy could have come true at the restoration; but it didn't, and so was reapplied to the coming of the Gentiles to believe in the Lord Jesus under the new covenant. It is questionable therefore whether these verses are to be read as requiring a literal returning of Jews to "their land". It certainly can't apply to the return of Jewish people to Israel in the 20th century, because the descriptions of the latter day tribulation require Israel's plucking up and brief latter day exile, when passages like Dt. 28:68 shall have to be fulfilled.

Says Yahweh your God- It is grace itself for Yahweh to still call Himself their God, when the context is of an Israel who had refused His word and multiple opportunities to repent. Always God remembers His longer term plan, which is of salvation.