

Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide

A Sermon on Amos 9:1-10

by
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1. Introduction

2. The Lord God of hosts sees all things (vv. 1-4).

a. God pronounces inescapable judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel (v. 1).

i. The chapter opens up with a depiction of God standing beside the altar to deliver His final oracle of judgment.

1. There is a rather large amount of debate regarding what altar is being referred to here.

a. Some believe the prophet is speaking of the altar at Bethel, simply due to Bethel being mentioned a number of times throughout the book of Amos.

b. Others believe he is speaking of the whole Kingdom of Israel here, and this is the view I take for a number of reasons.

2. The point of God standing beside the altar though is to express His dominion over it.

a. Though the people of Israel are perverting any sense of justice and true worship, God nonetheless stands as the Sovereign One who is faithful to His promise to judge.

b. The altar is the place where sacrifices are brought before the Lord to atone for sin—yet Israel has perverted it much like everything else.

- ii. Thus, the Lord says, “Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake, and break them on the heads of them all! Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword; they will not have a fugitive who will flee or a refugee who will escape.”
 - 1. The first description of this judgment is the destruction of the temple itself.
 - a. The word “capital” is slightly misleading because it is actually referring to the capital of a pillar, which is the top that sits flat and bears the weight of the temple roof.
 - b. Thus, the idea is that from the capital to the threshold, or the top to the bottom, everything will shake so violently the temple will come crashing down upon the heads of the people present.
 - 2. The second description of this judgment is the death of those who managed to avoid the collapse of the temple.
 - a. Notice the prophet says that those who escape judgment at the temple will be hunted down by the sword.
 - b. Likewise, those who seek sanctuary in another city or country will not escape the judgment to come.
- b. There will be no place of safety and refuge from God (vv. 2-4).
 - i. This short section shows the utter hopelessness of a people God has said He will judge.
 - 1. No matter what efforts they take to hide from God and avoid His wrath, He promises that He will find them. He will hunt them down. He will pursue them relentlessly and they will not escape.
 - 2. “I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.”

- a. The language of Amos in these last few verses is a reversal of David's in Psalm 139, where he asks, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?"
 - b. The point is simply that once God has set His eyes against them for evil and not for good, there is no safe place in all of heaven and earth where someone can hide.
- ii. God is completely sovereign in all things. He knows all things and sees all things—and thus, there is no place for us to hide from that reality.
- 1. If you're in Christ, this is an incredibly wonderful thing because, like David, you can rest in the fact that God is the Sovereign One.
 - 2. If you're not in Christ though, or if you profess to love Christ, yet you really love your sin, this is a terrifying thing, because you now know that no matter what you try to do to avoid God, you can't.

3. The Lord God of hosts controls all things (vv.5-6).

a. Yahweh has mastery as the Creator of all things (v. 5).

- i. Verse 5 depicts God coming to the earth in His physical form and His sheer power is magnificent and awe-inspiring.
 - 1. God is referred to as the Lord God of the heavenly armies, and this phrase is just a litany of words in the Hebrew that describe His complete sovereignty over all things, including human affairs.
 - a. He refers to Himself by the name He has revealed Himself by to the Israelites: Yahweh.
 - b. The then refers to Himself as Adonai, that is, Master, or Lord. It means He's the King, and more than this, He is the King of Kings.

- c. Thirdly, He describes Himself as the One who controls all the armies of the earth and heaven itself.
 - 2. This is particularly why the prophet launches into terrifying depictions of God's judgment when He comes in person to judge Israel here.
 - a. Notice, He touches the earth, and it melts, and as a result of this act of judgment, all who dwell in the land mourn.
 - b. It's further described as the ebb and flow of a river; the point is that God is all-powerful.
- ii. God is in full control of all creation, and it bends to His will.
 - 1. The stark reality being shown to the Israelites is that when God comes to hunt them down, He means it when He says there is no safe place to hide.
 - 2. He tells them plainly enough here: at a mere touch, I can topple the mountain you seek to hide yourselves in.
- b. *Yahweh is the One who sits enthroned in the heavens (v.6).*
 - i. V. 6 now depicts God in His dwelling place, far above the earth.
 - 1. The language simply describes all of Creation as a palace in which the upper room and its chambers in Heaven are reserved for God.
 - a. The point of this section is to simply show that God sits enthroned in Heaven itself, and thus, all of Creation is beneath Him.
 - b. The logical conclusion in knowing that all of heaven and earth is under the authority of God is much the same as vv. 1-4.

2. God sits in the heavens and does all that pleases Him because there is no greater authority in all of Creation that He must submit Himself to.
 - a. There is a reason the psalmist says that God literally laughs at the schemes of the wicked.
 - b. It is as simple as this: God is God, and there is none like Him, and there is no one who can stand against Him or conceal themselves from Him.
- ii. Yahweh is His name (v. 6b).
 1. He is the One in control—not you and I. He is the One in charge of all things—not you and I.
 - a. He is the One who controls all human affairs from start to finish; kingdoms rise and fall at His beck and call, and all of it is done to accomplish His purposes.
 - b. Thus, the reality being shown to the Israelites is not merely that God knows and sees all things—it is that God is the all-powerful, everlasting One.
 2. Again, for those of you in Christ, this is a beautiful reality.
 - a. For you, knowing that God is the completely sovereign One is a thing of great comfort because you know without a shadow of a doubt that despite how bad things can be, God is in control.
 - b. Most importantly though, you know that God will triumph over sin, death, and Satan, and that at the end of all days, He will welcome you into His Kingdom because He has dealt with your sin through Christ.

3. For those of you who are not in Christ though, this is a terrifying reality.
 - a. None of those promises belong to you if you are not in Christ. In fact, the only promise that belongs to you is much the same as Israel.
 - b. While you may believe that you are in full control, even now the Lord is directing your steps towards judgment.

4. The Lord God of hosts reveals all things (vv.7-10).

a. Not all who are descended from Israel are of Israel (vv. 7-8).

- i. The first thing we need to understand about this section is that God very plainly speaks to the fact that not all those who claim to be His children are in fact, His children (v.7).

1. He asks the Israelites under judgment, “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel? Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?”
 - a. This would have been an utterly shocking statement to make to Israel simply because God has uniquely covenanted with them and called them His people.
 - b. The point God is making to them though is that just as God has cared for the people of Israel, He has cared for the Ethiopians, the Philistines, and the Arameans.
2. They believed though that as God’s chosen nation, God’s judgment would always be to their benefit rather than their detriment.

- a. The apostle Paul picks up on this same theme in Romans 9-11 to speak of those who rejected Christ as their Messiah, where we hear those words that are often repeated, “Not all those who are Israel are of Israel.”
 - b. The point Paul makes throughout this entire section is to demonstrate that the promises of God have not failed—but that simply being born into the nation of Israel does not guarantee that they are God’s chosen people.
- ii. “Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,’ declares the Lord.”
- 1. This apostate Israel believed God had His sights on them in a special way—and here they were vindicated for that belief.
 - a. God looks upon them as a sinful, rebellious people and promises them once again that judgment is coming.
 - b. God is once again proving faithful to His Word and covenant.
 - 2. Nevertheless, God also gives a small glimmer of hope: I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob.
 - a. When God refers to the house of Jacob here, He is not merely referring to the Northern Kingdom, but all twelve tribes of Israel.
 - b. Yet not all of the people who were born into the twelve tribes of Israel would prove to be His children.

- c. In our passage today, we have two vastly different groups of people present.
 - b. *God will separate His people from the reprobate for the judgment (vv. 9-10).*
 - i. “For behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Israel among the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground. All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’”
 - 1. While we do not know who or what the command is referring to, we do understand the result of the command.
 - a. God promises to take the nation of Israel and shake it in a sieve among the nations, and not one kernel would fall to the ground.
 - b. In essence, the result is much the same with what Christ says will happen in the Last Days, where the wheat shall be separated from the chaff.
 - 2. Here then is a statement that indicts the wicked but gives hope for the righteous who plead upon God’s mercy.
 - a. For the righteous, they will be revealed for who they truly are and will be swept up in the grace and mercy of their Lord.
 - b. For the wicked, they will be revealed for who they truly are and will be swept up in judgment.
 - ii. It is important to know this is a promise of both immediate and eternal judgment bound up within this statement.
 - 1. We know that the Assyrians will be the ones to come in and topple the lofty northern kingdom of Israel.

2. Yet behind this reality lay a deeper, more terrifying reality: the apostates of Israel will not come to enter into His rest.
 - a. We've seen this all throughout the book at this point, but no more clearly when the prophet Amos has referred to the Day of the Lord, which will be picked up once more in vv. 11-15.
 - b. They anticipated this day would be favorable for them; they believed Lord would return and it would be a great thing of joy and celebration—and they believed this promise was for them because it was for the nation of Israel.
 - c. Yet as we've seen today, these people who were born into the nation of Israel were not of Israel, not in any true sense.
 - d. Thus, when the day comes to separate the wheat from the chaff, or those who were born into the nation of Israel, but were not of Israel, the task would be rather simple for God.

5. Conclusion