

# The Plumb Line in the Church

A Sermon on Amos 7:1-9

by  
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## 1. Introduction

## 2. The Vision of Judgment through Locusts (vv. 1-3).

*a. The first curse of covenant disloyalty foretold (vv. 1-2a).*

i. The prophet begins this section by detailing first and foremost that his visions come from God Himself.

1. This becomes rather important simply because this is a time of the false prophet.

a. Many presume to speak for God during Amos's day, but they do not function as a true prophet.

b. They are more interested in keeping the status quo, which is keeping the people in positions in power happy with them.

2. Before I began this series through the Minor Prophets, I gave a two-part introduction on the role of a biblical prophet that you can go back and listen to.

a. For our purposes though today, I want you to understand that this isn't just a throw-away line from Amos. He is taking painstaking measure to ensure the people know his constant cry to the people is, "Thus saith the Lord."

b. This is what's so vital about the role and nature of preacher. Each week we get up with the sole purpose of telling you, "Thus saith the Lord."

ii. “Behold, He was forming a locust-storm when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold—the spring crop was after the king’s mowing.”

1. The first thing to notice here is that the Lord Himself is the One who raised these locusts up for this purpose.

a. They were raised from larvae and brought to maturity so that they would swarm in on the land and devour everything in sight.

b. A locust-swarm is not thousands or even millions of these things—but billions of them.

2. The timing of this event was even worse for Israel simply because of the locusts coming to devour at the time of the spring harvest.

a. There’s an incredible amount of debate on what the “king’s mowings” refers to here, but the point is that devastation comes before they can harvest.

b. If the springtime harvest is devoured, there would be nothing to harvest again until the fall, if they had anything at all, which means there is famine in the land.

*b. Amos pleads for mercy—God relents and shows them mercy (vv. 2b-3).*

i. Amos continues, “And it came about, when the locusts had finished eating the vegetation of the land, that I said, “Lord God, please pardon! How can Jacob stand, for he is small?”

1. Amos sees the end result of the locust swarm, which is God’s judgment on Israel for their disobedience, and it is too much for him to bear.

a. He is utterly undone at the sight before him and has no other reaction than to plead to the Sovereign Lord for sheer mercy.



a. *The second curse of covenant disloyalty foretold (v. 4).*

i. Once again, the prophet introduces his revelation of the vision of judgment through fire with a declaration of its origin:

1. “The Sovereign Yahweh showed me, and behold, the Sovereign Yahweh was calling to contend with them by fire, and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farmland.”
2. This is no mere message of a lowly shepherd from Tekoa; this is the very Word of God.

ii. The word “contend” here speaks to a formal declaration in the courtroom of God.

1. In essence, God is saying that a legal case must still be made against Israel because she has refused to repent.
  - a. In other words: the curses for disobedience to the covenant found in Deut. 28 must still come to pass.
  - b. They have broken the Law and so justice must be had.
2. The vehicle of judgment: *fire*.
  - a. It is a fire so blazingly hot and supernatural in its origin that it consumes the great deep and began to consume the farmland itself.
  - b. Again, what that fire would produce is the same as the locusts: famine, but its effect is worse than the first vision of judgment.

b. *Amos again pleads for mercy—God again relents and shows them mercy (vv. 5-6).*

i. The devastation of this drought would be all the more severe than the plague of locusts—and at this terrifying prospect of judgment to come, Amos does the only thing he can do: he cries out for the Sovereign Lord to stop.

1. Again, the prophet interrupts the vision of judgment in abject terror over what God has shown him.
2. The reason for this is that the prospect of this judgment moves him to such immediate grief that he cannot help but blurt the words out.
  - a. The amazing thing is that yet again, much like the first vision, the Lord relents.
  - b. In response to the prophet's exclamation, the Sovereign Lord hears his cry, and says, "This too shall not be."
- ii. The prophet cannot stomach the idea that the grace of God would be extinguished in Israel and this gives us some important things to consider.
  1. The first is that the prophet, though proclaiming some of the most vividly hopeless words of wrath against the apostate Israel, yearns for her to see mercy rather than wrath.
  2. The second is that the prayers of the righteous truly are effectual and move God, the Sovereign One, to action.

#### **4. The Vision of the Plumb Line (vv. 7-9).**

- a. *The reason judgment must still come is evident: when measured against the "plumb line," there is nothing salvageable (vv. 7-8a).*
  - i. Once again, the prophet introduces the vision from the Lord: Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand. The Lord said to me, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A plumb line."
    1. A plumb line is used to determine the straightness of a wall and whether or not the construction of the wall is sound.
    2. If the wall isn't plumb, it very simply means that it is crooked.

ii. Then continuing on in v. 8, the Lord said, “Behold I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel.”

1. Israel represents the wall, and the plumb line represents the perfect standard to measure their uprightness, which is the Law of God.
2. As we’ve seen time and again throughout the duration of the book of Amos, in every single way, the Northern Kingdom of Israel has forsaken the Law.
  - a. The Law stands as the true and perfect plumb line and the One who holds it is not subject to human error.
  - b. Rather than measuring themselves by the true and perfect standard of the Law, they decidedly rejected it at every turn and cobbled together a wall of their own making and revealed themselves to be the foolish builder—yet this is the pattern of Israel over and again.
  - c. I can think of no better illustration to show that the modern American church is equally out of line.
  - d. We have a greater obligation to the Word than all those who came before us because we have the full revelation given to us.

*b. Amos pleads for mercy no more—no more mercy shall be shown (vv. 8b-9).*

i. “I will not spare them any longer.”

1. Amos, seeing the standard of the Word measuring Israel falls utterly silent at this point.
  - a. He sees, fully and finally, that the wall is so skewed that it must come down.
  - b. He utters no prayer for the people, and God offers no more mercy.

2. The construction has been completed and it is time for testing. Israel has been tested and failed.
- ii. “The high places of Isaac will become deserted, and the sanctuaries of Israel will be in ruins. Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”
    1. This verse is very straightforward, so I don’t truthfully need to explain it to you. The result is destruction.
    2. Israel was revealed to have built foolishly in all her years of construction, even though they had a sufficient standard revealed to them in the Word of God.
    3. Yet much like God held the plumb line in the midst of Israel, I believe He is doing so within the midst of the church today, because we have a clear, sufficient, and authoritative Word given to us.

**5. Conclusion: Will You Be Found to Be the Wise Or the Foolish Builder?**