

**Who Are You Going to Believe?
A Prophet Just Has to Prophecy what He Heard from God
Amos 3**

Scripture quotations are taken from the following translations:

ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB),
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973,
1975, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission. www.Lockman.org**

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996, 2019 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com> All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

The Good News Translation Bible (GNB) text used in this product is being used by permission. Copyright © American Bible Society, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible: International Standard Version® Release 2.0. (ISV) Copyright © 1996–2011 by the ISV Foundation. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INTERNATIONALLY

Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV), Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission. All rights reserved

**Scripture taken from the New King James Version (NKJV).
Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.**

Amos 3:1–8

“Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt: “You only have I known among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your wrongdoing.” Do two people walk together unless they have agreed to meet? Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something? Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no device in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will the people not tremble? If a disaster occurs in a city, has the LORD not brought it about? Certainly the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret plan To His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can do anything but prophesy?” (NASB 2020)

Do we believe everything God says?

Are you crazy Ken, we believe Him, everything He has promised to us we believe. We believe His word and follow His word. Got it. But do we really take it as seriously as we should?

Let's review some of His promises.

Promises

Jesus promises:

- I am your strength (Exodus 15:2, Psalms 46:1, John 16:5 – 15, 16:33)
- I will never leave you (John 14:16, 17:22 – 24, Hebrew 13:5 – 6)
- I have plans for you to prosper (Jeremiah 29:11, John 15:1-8, 17:15 – 19)
- I hear your prayers (Proverbs 15:29, John 14:14, 16:23)
- I will fight for you (Exodus 14:14, John 15:12 – 15, 16:33)
- I will give you peace (John 14:27, 16:33)
- I will always love you (John 14:1 – 4, John 15:9)
- I will empower you and you will exceed the things I did (John 14:12 – 14)

He also promised and told us that:

- It won't be easy to follow Me (John 16:33)
- I am the only way to heaven (John 14:6)
- We must keep His commandments (John 14:15)
- To prove you love Him, keep His commandments (John 14:21)
- If you love me, you will follow my word (John 14:23) and I will answer your prayers (John 15:7)
- You can do nothing without me (John 15:5)
- The world will hate you and persecute you (John 15:18)
- This isn't home (John 17:16)
- To help you grow, I will discipline you (Proverbs 3:12, Hebrews 12:4 – 6, Revelation 3:19)
- You will be tested (James 1:2 – 4, 12)

I am going to stop there. We like to remember the promises that are what I call the positive promises. The ones that without having them, we would wallow in our own self-pity.

Then there are those promises that sound good but good for someone else, not me.

And of course, there are those which we prefer not to remember, like the promise of persecution, discipline, and testing. Yet they are all promises of what following Him opens us up to.

Amos is saying a few things that will be hard to hear, like the need to be obedient.

We too are called to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ which, as He clearly stated, means we must follow His commandments and His word.

John 14:15

“If you love me, you will obey my commandments.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Luke 6:46

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don't do what I tell you?” (NET 2nd ed.)

When asked “what was the most important command...”

Mark 12:29–31

“Jesus answered, “The most important is: ‘Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (NET 2nd ed.)

How are we doing so far? Praise the Lord for Romans 8:26 “Likewise **the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses**. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (NKJV)

No matter what, at the moment when we come to our senses, repent and turn towards Christ, He saves us. That is a free gift obtainable by, agreeing with Him that we are sinners, believing He died on the cross for that sin and then rose again, and He is now the Lord of our life. He does not leave us though where He found us, because He wants us to be like Him. He has plans for you and me.

To be saved, there is nothing we must do, there are no preconditions, you don't clean up your act first, you simply agree (repent), believe and give up and let Him run the show.

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

Until He comes back for us or calls us home, we are to be His ambassadors.

Matthew 28:18–20

“Then Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”” (NET 2nd ed.)

I am still learning how to do all of this. That is called sanctification, the process of becoming more and more like Him. A process that we will take all of our life to draw closer but will not be achieved until we are glorified.

Three Tenses of Salvation

1. Past – We have been saved from the penalty of sin (Ephesians 2:8). Justification.
2. Present – We are being saved from the power of sin (1 Corinthians 1:18). Sanctification.
3. Future – We shall be saved from the presence of sin (1 John 3:2 – 3). Glorification.

Amos has only just begun to tell the people of Israel some things that they are finding hard to hear. “Many Israelites would have questioned this word of divine judgment against them, for many thought that their election as God's special chosen people (Deut. 7:6–7) and God's powerful grace in delivering them from Egypt (Exodus 14–15) implied that God would never destroy them (3:1–2). Amos indicates that God makes no absolute promises to sinful people but will require much from those who have received his blessings. Therefore, God's plan is to punish sinful Israel, if there is no repentance.” (Burge and Hill 2012, 836)

God, in His word, made it clear to His people, He promised them the benefits they would receive if they were obedient to Him. He also promised that if they were not obedient, what He would do to bring His people back to Himself. Moses called these blessings and curses.

Deuteronomy 11:26–28

“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.” (ESV)

We have the benefit of being able to study the scriptures and learn exactly what happens when God's promises are taken for granted and His warnings are ignored.

For us today, Paul provided the following warning. It was a topic the prophets talked about and was just as true then as it is today.

Galatians 6:7–8

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” (ESV)

It's really simple. If you go through life offending brothers and sisters in Christ for your own gain, there will be a time it all rolls back onto you, like at the Bema seat of Christ; probably sooner. If you step on others on your way to the top in the business world, one day you will find that you also make a really good footstool too.

Sowing and reaping is not karma, that is not even a Biblical idea or concept. “In its classic sense, karma is the law of cause and effect, where actions (intentional and nonintentional) of body, speech, and mind cause future results: virtuous actions result in happiness, and nonvirtuous actions result in suffering. The principle of karma assumes immortality of the soul and an eternal cycle of existence (samsara) within a monistic worldview (advaita). Karmic merit (or demerit) is accumulated over many lifetimes—karma in past lifetimes has consequences in this life, while actions in this life have consequences in future lives, into which the conscious soul (in Hinduism) is reborn.” (Kemp 2018, 290)

Christians are quick to embrace an idea that our sins will find us out and that we will reap destruction if we sow into the flesh; that a person will reap some kind of negative consequences for living an immoral life. “Sure, I believe in karma. It's the principle of sowing and reaping,” they may say. This is not what karma is. Karma is a spiritual principle rooted in the Eastern concept of reincarnation, wherein a person accumulates negative moral debt in their lives that they have to pay off in a future incarnation. (Bancarz and Peck 2018, Kindle Location 5567)

What this refers to is more about the choices we make in life and how to get to the endpoint desired. For example, I want to hear well done good and faithful servant from Jesus. The manner and way I live today is with that goal in mind. There are no short cuts to holiness, there are no shortcuts to learning His word, there are no shortcuts to becoming like Him. We must learn new habits, tactics, manners and behaviors with that goal in mind.

When I competed in track and field, everything I did was with the goal of glorifying God by winning. To achieve that, there were things I had to do.

Don't get confused with this, there are spiritual giftings which provide enablements for us to do things He has called us to do, like teaching. If I want to glorify Him by teaching His word well, I must make it a habit to study His word and make that primary. If I want to experience the joy of having friends, I must be friendly myself. If Jesus is first, I must live that way.

Sowing and reaping happens now. You sow a lifestyle of thuggery; you may wind up having multiple lifechanging opportunities to meet others who live the same way. The same goes with a lifestyle of holiness, you tend to want others around you who are going the same way.

If you want wheat, then plant wheat. You don't sow holiness by reading or watching porn. You don't sow a spiritual walk by pandering to the flesh. You don't become a teacher of God's word by never cracking the Bible or spending time with Him in prayer. “We are not the helpless victims of our nature, temperament and environment. On the contrary, what we become depends largely on how we behave; our character is shaped by our conduct.” (Stott 1986, 169)

Amos is going to be explaining that to the folks in Bethel who are there to hear what he has to say.

Amos 3:1–8

“Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt: “You only have I known among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your wrongdoing.” Do two people walk together unless they have agreed to meet? Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something? Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no device in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will the people not tremble? If a disaster occurs in a city, has the LORD not brought it about? Certainly the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret plan To His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can do anything but prophesy?” (NASB 2020)

The next three chapters all begin the same way, with the command to “Hear this word.”

This is not a mandate merely to listen; it carries a strong expectation of a response. This word (haddābār hazzeh) must be understood, internalized, and acted upon, because Yahweh has spoken. (Caroll R. 2020, 207)

The command is to hear because it is YAHWEH who is speaking and Amos, who has been in the divine council, announces what he has heard. YAHWEH has spoken against you.

As Amos begins, what it is the Lord has to say is not just limited to the northern kingdom, but this is addressed to all the tribes of Israel. He makes this clear.

Amos 3:1b

“...the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt:” (NASB 2020)

Yes, Judah is also in the mix here. Judgement has already been announced earlier and unless they repent, what will be said about the northern kingdom will also apply to them.

The word of the Lord is addressed to all the family of Israel, which God had brought up out of Egypt, that is to say, to all the twelve tribes of the covenant nation, although in what follows it is the ten tribes of Israel alone who are primarily threatened with the destruction of the kingdom, to indicate at the very outset that Judah might anticipate a similar fate if it did not turn to its God with sincerity. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 174)

Amos 3:2

““You only have I known among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your wrongdoing.”” (NASB 2020)

Amos makes it clear why this word against all of the 12 tribes is being made. YAHWEH kicks off reminding His people that He knows only them. They have more information and knowledge than the surrounding nations have. Because of that, they will be held accountable for what they do know and how they have disregarded that.

That relationship which they willingly entered demands accountability.

Jesus talked about this same idea to His disciples. In fact, Peter asked for clarification and was told, yes, this is for believers.

This is about the sowing and reaping we discussed, where the rubber meets the road. Here in the west, we have all been given much and as a result, accountability for what we know is more severe if we choose not to take action on what we know. “The servant who works for God’s people is to look for

Messiah. Those who know he is returning but uncaringly flaunt his will are subject to rejection. Those who know but do not do his will are subject to discipline.

Those who act out of ignorance are subject to less discipline. Jesus notes that the blessed servant is the one who looks expectantly for him and serves him faithfully.” (Bock 1996, 1186)

There it is, that faithful follower concept again. It never goes away. There is no such thing as fire insurance without any clauses providing for simple duties to be conducted by the beneficiary of the policy.

Luke 12:47–48

“And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn’t prepared and doesn’t carry out those instructions, will be severely punished. But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.” (NLT)

Israel received much, and much was expected. We have received even more. Guess what the expectation is?

James 2:14–20

“What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.” You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless?” (NLT)

As faithful followers of Jesus Christ, as we meditate on and fully realize what He has achieved for us on the cross, it drives us to want to “do” because of what He “did.” It does not save us, but it does wind up being evidence of a life change.

Jesus died for each of us and then He rose from the dead with victory over death. How can I not serve Him with everything I am.

The issue for us is simple “...the more one knows, the more responsible one becomes, so that more will be asked of one when evaluated. Contextually, this remark is directed at the disciples, since they know more about Jesus than anyone else. They bear the most responsibility of anyone that Jesus addresses, and they need to be faithful as a result. The teaching closes with a warning and a recognition that there are degrees of faithfulness as well as degrees of responsibility.” (Bock 1996, 1185-1186)

Just as we find ourselves now confronted with accountability for what we know, Israel, all the tribes, are accountable. This cannot be undone. The nations don’t have a clue, because Israel has failed in the task given them at Mount Sinai, to point the world to YAHWEH. God chose a single family to represent Him to the world and they were provided knowledge about Him by being given the Torah as well as prophets and Nazirites as we learned earlier.

God intends to hold them to a higher level of accountability because of Genesis 12 and all that took place to get them into the promised land.

Genesis 12:1–4

“Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but the one

who treats you lightly I must curse, so that all the families of the earth may receive blessing through you.” So Abram left, just as the LORD had told him to do, and Lot went with him. (Now Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran.)” (NET 2nd ed.)

The nation Israel occupied a unique relationship to God. God had given to them His commandments. And the reason He would judge Israel so severely is because they had broken so many of His commandments. You see, light creates responsibility. An enlightened nation has a greater responsibility than a nation which is in darkness. (McGee 1997, 694)

God now will ask a series of questions; the first set will have an obvious “no” answer. The second set will have an obvious “yes” answer.

The answers are obvious and beg the real question which is, then why aren't you following YAHWEH? The purpose behind this is to validate Amos as a prophet to Israel. He isn't a professional prophet but a layman. Who cares, he has been called of God and given all the tools to do the job. This includes thick skin.

Amos 3:3–5

“Do two people walk together unless they have agreed to meet? Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something? Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no device in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?” (NASB 2020)

The very first rhetorical questions speaks directly to the heart of God and His desire to be involved in a close loving relationship with His own. We see this desire in the Garden of Eden reflected in post fall activity. God walks over to be with Adam and Eve. He knows what has happened.

Genesis 3:8

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (ESV) Adam and Eve hid because they were no longer in agreement with God, they had rebelled, but that did not end the desire of our creator to have a relationship with us and for us to walk with Him.

Genesis 5:22

“Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters.” (ESV)

And one day, Enoch walked home with God.

His desire for His people is for them to walk with Him and to do so in agreement. The agreeing burden is on our side of the equation.

Deuteronomy 5:32–33

“You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.” (ESV)

This does not change with Jesus either, John tells us that.

1 John 1:5–7

“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (ESV)

As believers we are to be in agreement with Him about what we are without Him, that is the beginning of relationship with Him and then we begin to walk in the light. Why? We agreed to meet on His terms and stopped seeking our own terms.

Matthew 7:13–14

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (NRSV)

Some of the places He wants to walk with us require faith.

Matthew 14:29

“He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus.” (NRSV)

How cool is that Peter is out walking with Jesus on the water. We tend to think about Peter but think of this from Jesus’ perspective.

God not only declares that man should walk with Him, but He desires that man would walk with Him. That is, our walking with God is not only for our benefit but for His enjoyment. (Courson 2006, 789)

As we come to know more about Him, we fall more in love with Him and naturally want to spend more time with Him. I love the fact that when working in the yard, I can talk to Him. When sitting in my office, I can talk to Him. While driving, I can talk to Him. He wants to hang out with us.

We read earlier that Enoch walked with God. Imagine, 300 years of walking with the Lord everyday and enjoying His presence every day. After so much time together one day, it was time for Enoch to walk home, but the Lord said, why not stay at my place? That took faith, but for Enoch it was simply the next step.

One day, very soon, those of us who are walking with Jesus “...shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51b–52, ESV)

We have agreed with Him and relied on Him. As a result, we walk together with Him. This brings joy to us, but also to Him. How much does Jesus love you and me? “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2, ESV)

I can’t wait to meet Him in person, and He can’t wait to introduce you and me to His father and the rest of the family.

Hebrews 2:10–12

“For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”” (ESV)

Walking together is cool. But Israel was not into that idea, they had their own way of doing things.

One other thing, this also could be a left-handed way of validating his prophetic calling to those Amos is giving the really good news to.

He has already implied that he has been in the divine council and is telling them what God said. So now the questions, starting with the first one intended to remind his listeners of Eden, are all calculated to get

an answer of “no, of course not.” At least through the end of verse 5. Then he will flip the questions from no to yes. This is all pointing to his statement of validation in verse 7 and 8.

Again, the intent is just the same as earlier when he had his listeners agreeing with him about the judgement pending on all the surrounding baddies. After the initial shock from having him switch to talking about them, before they can even breathe, he validates his message as a prophet.

Now that we know that let’s back up and take another look at what Amos says.

Amos 3:1–8

“Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt: “You only have I known among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your wrongdoing.” Do two people walk together unless they have agreed to meet? Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something? Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no device in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will the people not tremble? If a disaster occurs in a city, has the LORD not brought it about? Certainly the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret plan To His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can do anything but prophesy?” (NASB 2020)

Tying his two purposes together, Amos concludes the broader unit by pressing the logical relationship between prophecy and judgment (3:7–8). If calamity is coming (and yes, it is), then surely a prophet will proclaim it (v. 7). If a prophet is prophesying, then it is the Lord who has spoken (v. 8b); if the Lord has indeed spoken, then the people ought to be afraid (v. 8a). Falling back on the metaphor of 1:2, the lion has roared; the response of the people ought to be fear. The Lord has spoken, and thus Amos must prophecy. (Fuhr and Yates 2016, 123-124)

Amos is saying, “Don’t blame me. I’m only the messenger.” As natural as it is for a man to fear when a lion roars, that is how natural it is for the prophet to prophesy when the Lord GOD has spoken. (Guzik 2000, Amos 3:7-8)

And with the validation completed, Amos returns to the job of prophesying against Israel. He will do this by setting up a scenario where heralds are sent to two pagan nations to be witnesses to just how bad Israel is as they violently oppress their own people.

Amos 3:9–15

“Proclaim on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt and say, “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and see the great panic within her and the oppressions in her midst. But they do not know how to do what is right,” declares the LORD, “these who store up violence and devastation in their citadels.” Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says: “An enemy, one surrounding the land, Will take down your fortifications from you, And your citadels will be looted.” This is what the LORD says: “Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion’s mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, So will the sons of Israel living in Samaria be snatched away— With the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch! “Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,” Declares the Lord GOD, the God of armies. “For on the day that I punish Israel’s offenses, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; The horns of the altar will be cut off, And will fall to the ground. “I will also strike the winter house together with the summer house; The houses of ivory will also perish, And the great houses will come to an end,” Declares the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

Yes, Amos is a called prophet of YAHWEH. In the King’s chapel, he tells them he has asked for witnesses to be called. “An amazing frankness and an impregnable self-confidence is displayed by the sheep breeder from Tekoa when he exhorts leading citizens of Samaria, not without irony, to dispatch delegations to Ashdod and Egypt. Such boldness comes to one who has been overpowered by Yahweh’s speaking (3:8). Even at that, however, he is ready to submit his judgment to international examination.

Owners of foreign “strongholds” are summoned because the “strongholds” of Samaria are to be evaluated (3:10b).” (Wolff 1977, 192)

These witnesses have been asked to observe two things looking down into Samaria. As judgement approaches, the panic that will come across the nation and how they are actually oppressing their own people, even as they panic.

Why? Why this display of terror and oppression? YAHWEH tells those who are observing, implying also that when Israel does fall and goes into exile, the surrounding nations will be trying to put the pieces together as to why they fell from power so quickly, what the reasons are. So he makes it clear as to why.

Amos 3:10

“But they do not know how to do what is right,” declares the LORD, “these who store up violence and devastation in their citadels.” (NASB 2020)

The emphasis is on know, all ideas of right having been lost. The reference is, of course, to the wealthy Samaritans.—These who treasure violence and oppression. (Harper 1905, 77)

The scenario constructed has foreign nations seated as observers in the hills surrounding the capital of Israel. They can see that a nation who has turned away from the Lord, panics. As promised. They also see that a nation that has turned away from the Lord indulges in the oppression of their brothers and sisters because they no longer even know what is right.

Remember, 200 years ago Jeroboam I kicked out the teachers. That same group of elites behind that action, are the very same oppressing their brothers and sisters and stored all their ill-gotten gains in guarded towers.

Deuteronomy 28:20

“The LORD will send against you curses, panic, and rebuke, in everything you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have abandoned Me.” (NASB 2020)

As we can see from Deuteronomy 28, panic was part of the package being purchased by the Northern Kingdom as they turned from YAHWEH.

So, they will experience what Amos relates is from YAHWEH.

But why invite those nations who were traditional oppressors of Israel? Because “they would certainly enjoy viewing the cruelty that characterized Israelite society. This invitation is biting, for it suggests that the Israelites shared the same immoral character with these hated pagans. (Chisholm, Jr. 2002, 387)

Amos 3:11

“Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says: “An enemy, one surrounding the land, Will take down your fortifications from you, And your citadels will be looted.” (NASB 2020)

The judgment will use a foreign power, but who it is is not important. It is from the Lord.

Rhetorically, this omission focuses the reader’s attention on Yahweh, the sovereign executor of judgment, not on the content or means of judgment. The point is further strengthened by the use of the longer epithet ’ādōnāy yhw (Lord Yahweh). This vague prediction would become a reality with the arrival of the Assyrian armies and the fall of Samaria in 722. (Caroll R. 2020, 235-236)

The fortifications will be torn down, the strongholds as well. Nothing can protect those who oppressed their own brothers and sisters in order to build those fortifications and strongholds. That is why there is an emphasis on them coming down.

What will be left of the forces meant to protect the people? YAHWEH continues with detail describing what happens to those who are left. The detail brings to mind a lamb torn to shreds with only a piece or two not yet eaten by a lion. The shepherd preventing the lion from totally eating everything leaving just a remnant.

Amos 3:12

“This is what the LORD says: “Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion’s mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, So will the sons of Israel living in Samaria be snatched away— With the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch!”” (NASB 2020)

The oppressors will discover what it feels like to be oppressed. Just like a shepherd trying to grab a piece or two from the lion to prove to his boss that the lamb was killed, not stolen; Israel will be reduced to those few pieces, a remnant.

Amos 3:13–15

““Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,” Declares the Lord GOD, the God of armies. “For on the day that I punish Israel’s offenses, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; The horns of the altar will be cut off, And will fall to the ground. I will also strike the winter house together with the summer house; The houses of ivory will also perish, And the great houses will come to an end,” Declares the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

Now YAHWEH will make this intensely personal to the people of Bethel, the priests (not Levites by the way) who were serving there, and the ruling elite who enjoy the privileges of ruling

Amos announces judgment that will take place at the same time as the fortresses and strongholds are destroyed. YAHWEH intends to eliminate all traces of idol worship in Bethel as well as all traces of the ruling elite. “Sovereign Yahweh Almighty (“the Lord GOD, the God of armies”), the Suzerain Warrior who led the most vast and powerful of all armies, urged the previously mentioned witnesses to hear His Word and to bear testimony “against the house of Jacob.” The reference to Jacob recalls the devious nature of this ancestor, whose character the present generation of Israelites mirrored. It also recalls God’s gracious promises to Jacob. The Israelites, as bad as they were, were God’s people, not just the people of King Jeroboam II.” (Constable 2003, Amos 3:13)

The name that we see here in verse 13 is the longest form of the name of God in the Old Testament. This God is the same one who used the might of armies to deal with Pharaoh to protect His people.

Here, He is still protecting His people, from themselves. He is punishing the rebels and will leave a remnant.

In Bethel, that nice pretty altar you have. That place that an accused could go to and grab the horns and beg for mercy. The horns will be broken off, for the ruling elites and the oppressors of Israel, there will be no mercy.

Israel’s sin was similarly so great that God Himself was going to cut off the means of claiming asylum. There would be no sanctuary from the enemy who was coming against them. (Sunukjian 1985, 1435)

God Himself is the one who will marshal His forces to destroy the worship center in Bethel. And what about the palaces of the oppressors? He will make a reference to a palace built by the chief of oppressors in Israel, Ahab.

1 Kings 21:1

“After this the following episode took place. Naboth the Jezreelite owned a vineyard in Jezreel adjacent to the palace of King Ahab of Samaria.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Ahab built a winter palace in the south near Jezreel, 12 miles south of Nazareth to go along with his palace on the hilltop of Samaria.



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

1 Kings 22:39

“Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did, and the ivory house that he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?” (ESV)

Ahab built a house for himself in Samaria inlaid with ivory. Right at the top of a hill. But with the increase in riches, this became the norm for well appointed estate homes in the Israel of 750 BC.



(Bolen, Samaria aerial from north 2012, Used with Permission)

As we can clearly see from the aerial photography of the archaeological sites, there is not much left of the palaces of Ahab, or the estate mansion built by the ruling elite of the Northern Kingdom. The Lord declared they would fall to the ground. They did.

Amos was asked of the Lord to bring this rather unpopular message directly to Bethel and the King's chapel and place of worship. He was faithful to what God had called him to do, and he is not done yet. But even in this picture we still see a remnant and we see God calling His people the house of Jacob.

This would remind them that they are His covenant people and even in exile, He will continue to be with those who are faithful to Him.

Works Cited

- Bancarz, Steven, and Josh Peck. 2018. *The Second Coming of the New Age: The Hidden Dangers of Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America and Its Churches*. Kindle Edition. Crane, MO: Defender Publishing.
- Bock, Darrell L. 1996. *Luke: 9:51-24:53, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Bolen, Todd. 2012. "Samaria aerial from north." *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands Revised & Expanded, Volume 2, Samaria and the center*. Prod. Todd Bolen.
- Bolen, Todd. 2012. "Tel Jezreel aerial from west." *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands Revised & Expanded, Volume 2, Samaria and the center*. Prod. Todd Bolen.
- Burge, Gary M., and Andrew E. Hill, . 2012. *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Caroll R., M. Daniel. 2020. *The Book of Amos, New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament*. Edited by E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Chisholm, Jr., Robert B. 2002. *Handbook on the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Constable, Tom. 2003. *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*. Galaxie Software.
- Courson, Jon. 2006. *Jon Courson's Application Commentary: Volume Two: Psalms-Malachi*. Vol. 2. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Fuhr, Al, and Gary Yates. 2016. *The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.
- Guzik, David. 2000. *Amos, David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible*. Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.
- Harper, William Rainey. 1905. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, International Critical Commentary*. New York, NY: C. Scribner's Sons.
- Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. 1996. *Amos*. Vol. 10, in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, by Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, translated by James Martin. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Kemp, Hugh P. 2018. "Karma." In *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Religions*, edited by H. Wayne House. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group.
- McGee, J. Vernon. 1997. *Thru the Bible Commentary*. Electronic Edition. Vol. 3. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Stott, John R. W. 1986. *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way, The Bible Speaks Today*. Leicester: InterVarsity Press.
- Sunukjian, Donald R. 1985. *Amos*. Vol. 1, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- Wolff, Hans Walter. 1977. *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos, Hermeneia-a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Edited by S. Dean McBride. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.