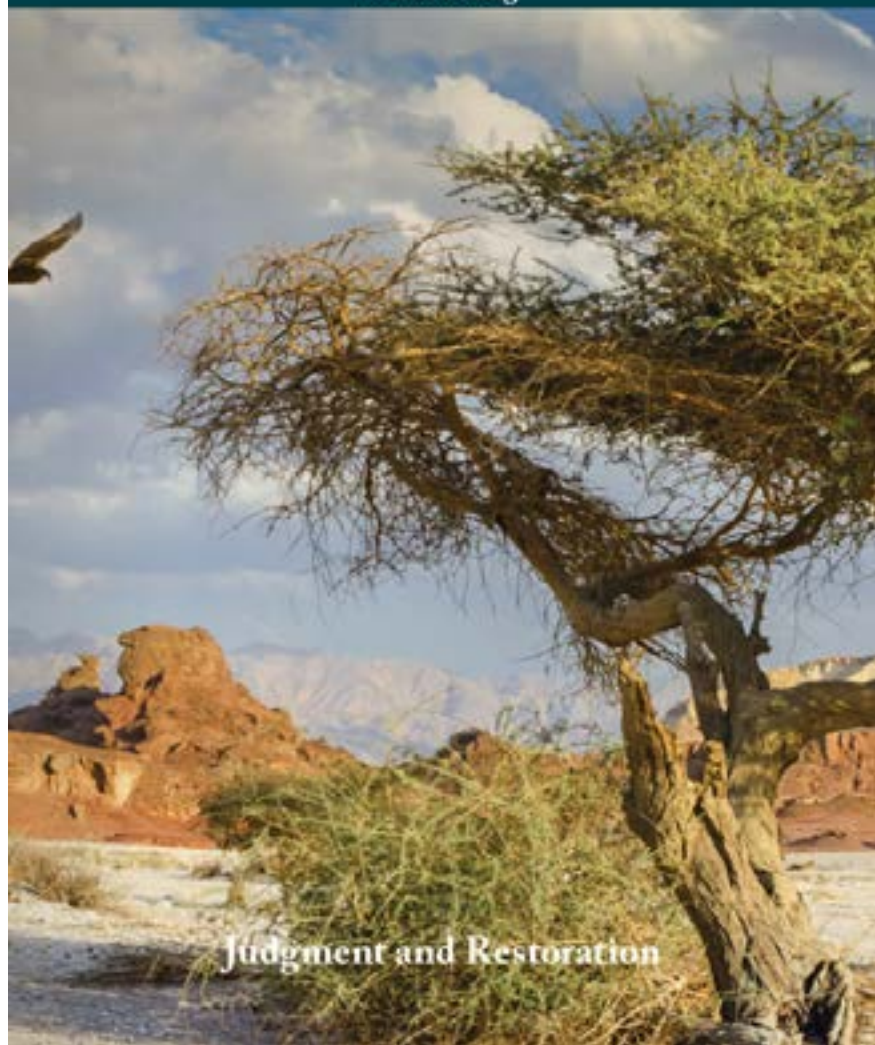


Amos

Explained & Applied 30

Ger de Koning



Judgment and Restoration

The Book of Amos

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Ger de Koning

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of General Format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Book of Amos

Introduction

The book of Amos is the third in a row of the twelve minor prophets whose books in the Dutch Bibles are at the end of the Old Testament. In the nine chapters of this book, the mighty voice of God to His people is heard through the mouth of Amos. Amos exposes the sin of the people. With razor-sharp precision and without fear of opposition he wields the sword of the Spirit. The knife goes to the bone.

Amos will appeal to us in a special way. We will be impressed by an encounter with someone to whom, at first sight, nothing is impressive about him. He has a meaningless lineage, an insignificant profession and no special theological training. But, as so often, appearances are deceiving. If we connect to this impression of meaninglessness his powerful, fearless action, his unaffected language, devoid of any woolliness, his standing for the rights of God and his love for God's people, we see in Amos a man after God's heart.

Amos is not only a preacher of judgment, but also speaks God's words about the future He has for His people once they have converted to Him.

We are invited to listen to the message of this man of God. Let us pray that we are touched and affected by what he speaks with authority in the name of God.

Amos and Hosea

Amos is a contemporary of Hosea. They both prophesy in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, king of Israel (Hos 1:1; Amos 1:1). They both speak mainly in and to the ten tribal realm.

Hosea emphasizes the love of God. Through the judgments he announces, this love can be seen again and again. Amos represents the majesty and uncompromising righteousness of God towards sinners. God has His special purpose with every instrument. There is never a useless repetition with

Him. Amos says more to and about the heathen nations that surround Israel than Hosea.

Amos appears in Bethel, the center of idolatry, a few years before Hosea begins to testify against the apostasy of the ten tribes. His appearance can be placed around the year 760 BC. His voice shouts over the market square of Bethel and he uses robust, unambiguous language. He is straightforward.

When he speaks in Bethel, there may also be representatives of the surrounding nations in his audience. That can be deduced from his messages in Amos 1, in which he addresses those surrounding nations.

Origin and preaching

Amos must have come to Bethel quite often because of the trade. After all, he is a shepherd, a herdsman (Amos 1:2; 7:14). He is a bit more than a shepherd, but not a manager of a large company. He is an ordinary boy, someone from the countryside, without any attitude. Not a career hunter. His origins are not something he can be proud of either. He cannot point to an ancestry that is spoken about with respect in Israel (Amos 7:14).

There is no reason to suppose that Amos has given up his profession to become a 'full-time' prophet in the work of the LORD. It does not seem that he is 'theologically educated'. Still, he does not leave spiritual work to "qualified people", people who have made their profession of spiritual work, as happens in Christianity. Amos does not suffer from the passivity that often encourages such a situation. You sometimes hear it: 'They have studied for it, they are paid for it, they are allowed to do it.'

When Amos is in Bethel, he cannot stay silent about God. Woolly, meaningless language is foreign to him. That kind of language always does well in politics and in many cases in the pulpit, but not in the service of God. Maybe he is someone with whom you can hear in his accent that he comes from the countryside. In his voice you do not hear the affected city language, but that does not bother him. He brings God's message, artlessly, straight from his God-motivated heart.

Amos is among the minor prophets most socially moved. Perhaps he answers most to what we imagine of a prophet. Because then we think of

someone who raises his voice against all social wrongs. Amos denounces the beds of ivory, the eating of lamb, the prodigious riches, the crimes against humanity committed by all peoples without exception. He also denounces atrocities, the disgusting fashions, and the exploitation of the poor, without sparing religion.

It is precisely in the latter that the heart of his protest lies, rather than in the social. The social has to do with relationships between people. That too is important. But the social wrongs against which Amos is raging are the result of the wrong relationship people have with God, and against that he raises his voice.

Origin and time of his prophecy

He is not a resident of the ten tribes realm, but comes from Tekoa. This town is located in Judah, about sixteen kilometers southwest of Jerusalem and twelve kilometers from Bethlehem. Rehoboam has transformed this city into a fortified city (2Chr 11:6).

It is exceptional that God allows a prophet to come from Judah to prophesy against Israel. It has happened once before. We read about it in 1 Kings 13. In the history described there, a man of God comes from Judah and prophesies against the altar in Bethel. Despite the fact that Amos was sent to the ten tribes, occasionally he also has a word for Judah (Amos 2:4) or involves them in it (Amos 3:1; 6:1).

The appearance of this southerner must have been strange and noticed. The fact that he is a 'foreigner' must have given an extra accent to his preaching. What is certain is that it gave extra enmity (Amos 7:10-12).

It seems that he prophesied only for a short time. The time indication 'two years before the earthquake' (Amos 1:1) suggests this. Amos is such a messenger who appears on stage for a moment, preaches powerfully and then disappears again. He leaves the working out of his message to his Sender.

When exactly this earthquake referred to above took place is not told. That it was a terrible event is shown by the fact that Zechariah refers to it two centuries later (Zec 14:5).

Burden carrier

The Hebrew word for Amos is *amas* and means 'carry' or 'burden'. This word is also found in the name Amasiah (2Chr 17:16), which means 'the

LORD carries'. Amos is someone who carries a burden. His prophecy shows that he carries as a burden on his heart the people to whom he addresses. This is also understandable when we consider that the message must come to God's people, that they must seek the LORD to live (Amos 5:1,6). If such a message has become necessary, how deplorable it must be with that people and how far away from Him and dead they are.

But the same word comes to us: "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead" (Eph 5:14). Among God's people, many have been depleted. They no longer have an eye for the time in which they live. No time to come to reflection, to come to themselves. Although we have to work less and less hours a week, we still have less time to be busy with God and His things. Our ancestors worked sixty hours a week, but still found the time to occupy themselves with God's Word. They knew that Word and lived from it.

Judgment and intercession

Amos does not have as fiery a style as Hosea. Nor does his prophecy extend as far into the future as that of Hosea. He mainly confines himself to what will come over Israel and the nations in the near future, although one can also think of days far in the future. He does, however, speak if possible even more decisively against evil than the other prophets. With Hosea we see more the agony, worked by the Holy Spirit, of a man who cannot endure the evil in the people he loves. With Amos we see more the calmness of God's own judgment.

But besides being a preacher of judgment, he is also a pleader with God for his people (Amos 7:2,5). Because of his plea God does not judge 'Jacob' (Amos 7:3,6). Amos does not like the judgment coming like Jonah. He intercedes. We can never be a good witness against evil if we do not also pray for those to whom we may or must pass God's Word. Amos is not a doom preacher. He preaches to warn, because he loves God's people. In this he is a type of the Lord Jesus.

Characteristics of the time in which Amos performs

Amos lives and preaches in a time of great prosperity. There is peace. The ten tribes realm and the two tribes realm are not at war with each other and there is no threat from surrounding nations. Trade flourishes. Religious ceremonies and obligations are fulfilled.

But all this abundance goes hand in hand with a decline in morality and religion that undermines the foundations of society. The people have lost the instructions given by God and religion has degenerated into a meaningless, hollow form. Amos appears in the midst of this decline and raises his voice.

He is a man of the countryside. This enables him to make regular use of examples from nature and rural life. Because of his outdoor life he has also remained free from the influence of life in the city with all its luxury and proud displays. Because of this he is now able to see more clearly the corruption of city life than the wealthy ones who live within the city walls. The latter are completely seized by their heartless greed and see no evil in anything.

His separation from evil allows him to denounce evil. Seen in this way he is reminiscent of John the baptist, who, like Amos is also a man of the wilderness, of the outdoors, who denounces evil within the city to the court of Herod. It costs him his head (Mt 3:1-4; 11:7-11,18; 14:1-12).

Amos in the New Testament

Amos is mentioned several times in the New Testament. The first quotation is in Acts 7:42-43. There Stephen quotes some verses from Amos 5 in his speech (Amos 5:25-27). He does this to prove that the people have surrendered themselves to idolatry from their earliest beginnings. He also points to the judgment of the exile to Babel.

Stephen references Amos because of the crisis in which the Jews find themselves at that time. It is their last chance to accept the Lord Jesus, Who was ready to come (Acts 7:56). Unfortunately, they did not seize this last chance.

But after the judgment, there is a blessing in the realm of peace for both the Jew and the Gentile. That is what the second quote refers to. This is done by James in Acts 15 (Acts 15:16-17). He quotes a few verses from Amos 9 (Amos 9:11-12) to make it clear that the Gentiles should not be forced to be circumcised, but that they have been accepted as sons by God, independent of the Jews. In the realm of peace, the nations will be blessed, not by joining Israel, but by seeking the LORD, the God of Israel. This will

happen when the church is raptured and Israel is again accepted by God as His people.

So we see that on two major occasions in the history of the Christian church, in Acts 7 and Acts 15, the Spirit has made use of what Amos has written, who occupies a somewhat inconspicuous place in the Bible.

A practical application of this is that the Holy Spirit can bring to our attention, in difficult moments, a portion of Scripture that we may have read a long time ago, in order to support us.

Division of the book

1. Judgment on the nations, Judah and Israel (Amos 1-2).
2. The prophetic message exposing the condition of the people (Amos 3-6).
3. Five visions (Amos 7-9:6).
4. The final restoration of Israel (Amos 9:7-15).

Amos 1

Introduction

We see in this chapter that God judges the nations that surround Judah and Israel. He does so because of their hostile attitude toward His people and also because of their cruel nature, which is essentially opposite to feelings of humanity. Not only Israel, but all nations fall under the supreme authority of God, for He is the God of the whole earth and of all nations (Rom 3:29).

The downfall of the nations mentioned by Amos is God's work. He addresses Syria in the northeast, the Philistines in the west, Tyre in the north, Edom in the south, and Ammon and Moab in the east.

The means by which the judgments come is not mentioned. However, the reason for the judgment is indicated – each time introduced by the word “for” – so that the consciences can be addressed. All fall under the same judgment.

Amos 1:1 | The Words Amos Has Envisioned

1 The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Amos not only heard the words of God, but also “envisioned” them. By this he indicates that they are not his own words, but words he received from God. To ‘envision words’ means as much as words received through prophetic revelation. He not only hears the words, but he also sees their content and meaning. The Word of God lives for him. It is not just dead letters, but what God says unfolds before his mind into a scene. Thus John wants to see on Patmos the voice that speaks to him (Rev 1:12).

Amos has seen what he hears. This certainly applies to the visions he speaks about in Amos 7. He has seen them literally. But it applies equally to everything he hears from the LORD to pass on. That is how involved he

is in his message. Being so involved is the power of everyone who passes on the Word. He who speaks and sees for himself what he is talking about, speaks with great commitment. Such a preaching makes the greatest impression on the hearers. When the speaker himself experiences the power of the Word, no listener can ignore it. He can reject it, ridicule it, take a hostile attitude, but never make it powerless.

What Amos has seen and is presenting to the people must bring the people to repentance. He warns against the judgment that God must execute if the people do not listen and do not repent. Amos does not come from Tekoa for nothing. There is a lookout and warning post there (Jer 6:1; 2Chr 11:5-6; 20:20). He is familiar with taking a position from where he can observe the surroundings and warn of imminent danger. With his spiritual eyes he sees how the people are doing and to what danger they are exposing themselves.

The Word gains even more strength as the person of the speaker has less that impresses people who 'see what is before their eyes'. This is also the case with Amos. He introduces himself to his humble origins. He is just a shepherd. But God takes him away from his flocks and his work, just as He took David from behind the sheep and Elisa from the plow (Psa 78:70-71; 1Kgs 19:19-21). He calls himself "a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs" (Amos 7:14).

God does not hesitate to use a simple shepherd. He even prefers him. As long as his heart is pure and dedicated to His service. God can use an oxgoad (Jdg 3:31) and a sling and a stone (1Sam 17:50). It is not about who man is or what he has, but about Who He is and what He has.

Amos is an example of God calling whom He wills. Any posturing to serve on the grounds of education, descent, or status is condemned by this. Of the disciples of the Lord Jesus who preach with irresistible force after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, bystanders notice "that they were uneducated and untrained men" (Acts 4:13).

The tearing between the ten tribes realm and the two tribes realm is for Amos no excuse to limit himself to his 'home kingdom', Judah. As mentioned in the introduction, the time in which Amos lives is a time of great prosperity. It is the time of Jeroboam II, king of Israel from 793-753 BC,

and Uzziah, or Azariah, king of Judah from 790-740 BC. But there is also a shameful rape of justice and oppression of the poor. That is why Amos speaks of the great opulence and luxury of the rich, their arrogance, pride, self-assertion and the oppression of the poor.

Prosperity has the great danger that there is no place for God anymore. Dependency on Him is no longer necessary. After all, there is no lack of anything. There the voice of Amos sounds in the midst of all the pleasure: 'Where is God in all this? You have pushed Him to the edge of your existence. In a little while He will be lifted over the edge and completely removed from your existence!'

Beneath the surface is moral destruction caused by a formal, false religion. In this state, the people do not think of any kind of coming disaster. God warns His people first by the words spoken by Amos, then by the act of the earthquake. This comes shortly after the words of Amos, while those words are still sounding as it were.

The earthquake is not just a local vibration, but affects a large area and makes many people flee. The mention of the earthquake is not meant to indicate the time of his action, but to point out the connection between the earthquake and his service. Amos is the prophet of the earthquake (Amos 8:8; 9:5). Zechariah refers in his book to this earthquake in connection with the coming of Christ to the world to judge it (Zec 14:5).

Judgment is the great burden of the prophecy of Amos. The judgments that Amos announces are not in the distant future, but in the near future. They are fulfilled for the most part, they are history. This is also how we look at what happens in our days when it comes to disasters and wars. They are not the end, but indicate the character of what will happen in the end time judgments, to a greater and more serious extent (cf. Mt 24:6,8).

Amos 1:2 | The LORD Roars

*2 He said,
"The LORD roars from Zion
And from Jerusalem He utters His voice;
And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn,
And the summit of Carmel dries up."*

Amos begins where Joel ends. The last words of Joel are about the roaring of the LORD like the roaring of a lion (Joel 3:16). Joel speaks in Judah and his statement is probably not known in Israel. Because of the use Amos makes of it, this statement is now also known in Israel. It also connects these two prophets. By connecting quotations in this way, God makes the different testimonies into one testimony.

The LORD speaks from Zion, the central place of worship and government. He does not do this to comfort and lead, but to charge and condemn. In doing so, He speaks not only to strangers, but also and above all to His people. Amos refers here, although he performs in Israel, to Zion as the dwelling place of the LORD.

The roaring of the lion is heard in the thunder in the air. In Joel the roaring precedes the realm of peace. It is directed there as a threat to the enemies, while it is followed by giving shelter to His people. Here the same roaring of the LORD is directed not only against the enemies of his people, but also against his own people, because they behave hostile against Him. It is therefore not followed by giving shelter, but by statements of judgment (cf. Jer 25:30-33). The roaring is only a threat and not yet a tearing. Thus the LORD presents Himself at the very beginning of this prophecy.

The judgment announced by Amos affects not only the people, but also the land. That the “pasture grounds mourn” indicates that grass and flowers will lose their splendor and beauty (Hos 4:3; Joel 1:10). “The summit of Carmel” is known for its abundant afforestation that provides shade.

God comes to judge. He takes away the fertile rain. Great drought is the result. The pastures in Galilee will dry up, as well as the wooded area of Carmel. Because of the judgments of God, the peaceful work of the shepherd will stop, because there is no more grass for the herds (Jer 25:36-38). And those who set out to seek shelter from the blazing sun will seek it in vain in Carmel.

Amos 1:3-5 | Judgment on Damascus and Syria

*3 Thus says the LORD,
“For three transgressions of Damascus and for four
I will not revoke its [punishment],*

Because they threshed Gilead with [implements] of sharp iron.

4 "So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael

And it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad.

5 "I will also break the [gate] bar of Damascus,

And cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven,

And him who holds the scepter, from Beth-eden;

So the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir,"

Says the LORD.

After Amos has introduced himself (verse 1) and his Sender (verse 2), he begins with the announcement of the judgments. First the "wicked neighbors" of Israel (Jer 12:14) are dealt with, and then Judah and Israel. The nations are judged because they have pursued their own interests while being used by God to discipline His people (Isa 10:5-19). The recurring saying "thus saith the LORD", indicates that what is said has its origin in Him.

The recurrence with every people without exception of the expression "for three transgressions ... and for four , I will not revoke its [punishment]" is a Hebrew way of saying that it is a common or frequent transgression. It indicates that the measure is full and overflowing (Pro 30:15-31; 6:16; Job 5:19; Ecc 11:2). Because of this there is no change in judgment.

In accordance with this way of saying, the prophet does not list all offenses either. By way of example he describes one crime. That one crime is typical of the many crimes that have been committed. Although one crime is sufficient for the judgment of God, it shows God's patience. God only carries out judgment when the measure is full and overflowing. Further delay would make Him implausible in His statements about the judgment of sin.

The Spirit of God begins with the greatest and at the same time most foreign enemy, Syria. Damascus as capital represents the entire population of Syria. The following enemies are all connected with God's people in a certain way: the Philistines by living in their territory, Tyrus by alliance and Edom, Ammon and Moab by kinship.

The cruel way in which the Syrians treated the Israelites who live on the east side of the Jordan, including Gilead, will not be forgiven. This was

done by Hazael who conquered this area and killed the prisoners and made them “like the dust at threshing” (2Kgs 13:7; 10:32-33).

The judgment, of which fire is an image, is brought over Syria by the LORD Himself, He sends the fire. This “sending of fire” always comes back with the next nations, except with the last nation, Israel. It affects in the first place “the house of Hazael”.

It is not for nothing that Hazael is called by name. He reigns over Syria from ca. 841 till 806 BC. When Elisha is in Damascus at Ben-hadad’s request, he meets Hazael. At that meeting Elisha is impressed by the evil that Hazael will do to Israel. He says the same to Hazael (2Kgs 8:7-15). But Hazael and his successors were not distracted from their intention by this prophecy. In spite of the contact with the prophets of God’s people, they have treated Israel cruelly. Because of this they are all the more guilty that they have laid hands on God’s people.

Any defense, “bar”, against this judgment of God will turn out to be in vain. The bar is the crossbeam that is slid before the gate in order to close it. If the LORD breaks the bar, it means that He grants free access to the enemy. In a wider application it means the removal of all the strength and security on which they rely.

This judgment on Syria was executed in 732 BC by the king of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser (2Kgs 16:9). The verdict comes on the whole people, not just on “him who holds the scepter”, who are its leaders and other high-ranking persons who have incited a criminal act. The whole people are responsible. They have supported their leaders.

Aven means ‘idols or nullity’ – that is Damascus in the eyes of God – and represents idolatry. Beth-eden means ‘house of lust, house of pleasure’ – that is Damascus in the eyes of man – and represents carnal pleasures. Practitioners of both kinds of evil will be exterminated.

It is not possible to say with certainty where Kir has been located. It is suspected to have been in Armenia or Georgia near the Caucasus. Amos will mean the place where the Syrian people originally come from (Amos 9:7) and from where they made their conquests. That is where the Syrians will be exiled. We can compare this with the threat that the LORD pronounces

on His own people when He says that He will bring them back to Egypt in case of unfaithfulness, that is to say, will bring them back into slavery.

Amos 1:6-8 | Judgment on the Philistines

6 *Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of Gaza and for four
 I will not revoke its [punishment],
 Because they deported an entire population
 To deliver [it] up to Edom.
 7 "So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza
 And it will consume her citadels.
 8 "I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,
 And him who holds the scepter, from Ashkelon;
 I will even unleash My power upon Ekron,
 And the remnant of the Philistines will perish,"
 Says the Lord GOD.*

The Philistines are border enemies. They occupy the coastal plain in the southwest of Israel. Also with them, transgression upon transgression is found against the people of God. They are judged because they are guilty of human trafficking. Although we find no clue about this in Scripture, it is obvious that the Philistines captured people during several raids in Israel and sold them to the Edomites.

Amos talks about the fact that God's people are "deported" as "an entire population", thus underlining the enormous scale of this crime. The intrusion into Israel and the deportation of the inhabitants can be found in 2 Chronicles 21 after which the treatise to Edom may have taken place (2Chr 21:16-17). Also the prophet Joel speaks about selling inhabitants of Israel (Joel 3:4-6). In this treatise, we see a picture of the false, carnal religion, represented in the Philistines, surrendering man to the power of the flesh, represented in Edom.

God will judge this practice of the Philistines, which is represented by the sending of fire. Of the Philistines, even the remnant will be exterminated, so that nothing will remain of this people (Eze 25:15-17).

Of the five cities in which the Philistines live, four are mentioned. As a possible reason for not mentioning Gath, it has been suggested that this city has not restored itself from the destruction that King Uzziah brought upon it (2Chr 26:6). Also in later lists of the Philistine cities Gath does not occur (Jer 25:20; Zep 2:4; Zec 9:5-6).

Amos 1:9-10 | Judgment on Tyre

*9 Thus says the LORD,
"For three transgressions of Tyre and for four
I will not revoke its [punishment],
Because they delivered up an entire population to Edom
And did not remember [the] covenant of brotherhood.
10 "So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre
And it will consume her citadels."*

Tyre, which stands for the whole of Phoenicia, has committed the same sin as the Philistines. They too have sold Israelite prisoners. Because of their sin, they also broke the covenant. In the time of David and Solomon there was a covenant between Israel and Tyre (1Kgs 5:12). Other Scriptures show the friendly relationship that existed between Israel and Tyre for a longer period of time (2Sam 5:11; 1Chr 14:1; 2Chr 2:11-16). The evil done to covenant brethren is worse than the evil done by an enemy. It is treason. You do not expect a friend to harm you.

Amos does not mention that Tyre invaded Israel; the 'deportation' of verse 6 is missing here. Possibly Tyrus acted as a 'middleman', who probably bought from Syria or others and resold to Edom. Tyre is known to have traded in people (Eze 27:13).

As far as we know Israel has never waged war with Tyre. Nevertheless, Tyre has traded treacherously and as a trading city it has wanted to enrich itself even by trading in people who on top of that belong to the people of God. God will therefore also execute His judgment on that people. All his wealth will perish. The merchants are all princes who live in luxury houses, palaces. Of all this splendor, nothing will remain.

For us Christians, the judgment of Tyre is the serious warning that God's judgment is on those who treacherously break up the fraternal fellowship.

This breaking takes place when a Christian pursues his own interests and not those of the Lord. We see it, for example, in the life of a Christian who is full of commitment to his career, so that there is no more time for personal contact with God.

In such a situation, the Christian virtues slowly but surely disappear. Such a person may still want to be called a Christian in name, attend Christian meetings and even take part in the Lord's Supper, but the Christian values are 'sold'. God sees through that. He does not let Himself be deceived and judges those who do such things (1Cor 11:27-31).

Amos 1:11-12 | Judgment on Edom

*11 Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of Edom and for four
 I will not revoke its [punishment],
 Because he pursued his brother with the sword,
 While he stifled his compassion;
 His anger also tore continually,
 And he maintained his fury forever.
 12 "So I will send fire upon Teman
 And it will consume the citadels of Bozrah."*

Edom is another name for Esau (Gen 36:1), Jacob's twin brother. With Edom it is not so much about certain deeds. It is more about his attitude and mind toward God's people. These are put forward and he is indicted for them.

Edom has always been hostile towards the people of God. Thus, Edom met the people of Israel on his journey to the promised land with the sword (Num 20:18-21). He has an insatiable, irreconcilable, and deadly hatred against Israel. Every feeling of "compassion" toward Israel, even the ordinary human, has been "stifled" by Edom. He does not want to give it any space. Compassion is unknown to him.

He is not only selfish, but also full of hatred against what is of God. He is armored against everything he thinks is weak. In his judgment he is rock hard. He makes short work of anything that threatens him. His whole attitude radiates a tearing anger. Destroying is the only thing he can think

of. There is no coming to repentance. He cherishes his fury and thus maintains it forever.

For Job in his misery, God is Someone of Whom he says: "His anger has torn me" (Job 16:9). Job experiences God as Someone Who hates Him, Whose anger rages destructively against him. That is not God, but that is how Job experiences Him. Edom is like that. He cherishes "his anger" as if it were something dear to him. He does not want to lose it.

Edom is a picture of the flesh, the own 'I'. Man without God lives in the flesh and hates everything that belongs to God. It will not always be expressed in the same brutal way as with Edom towards Israel. But the mind set on the flesh is always hostile toward God (Rom 8:7). Edom is man without God.

But the flesh is also present in the believer. And in him the flesh thinks of nothing but hostility against God. Only he is told not to devise the things of the flesh. This is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13). Man is inseparably connected with the flesh. There is, as it were, a blood tie, such as between Jacob and Esau or Israel and Edom. This goes beyond a covenant relationship, such as between Tyre and Israel. For the Christian who has new life, God in Christ has "condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3). He may already see this in faith and live accordingly.

In the future God will judge Edom because of his irreconcilability. The prophet Obadiah devotes a great deal of prophecy to how and why this judgment will take place (Oba 1:1-20; Eze 25:11-14). Because of the crimes committed and the criminal attitude, the cities of Teman and Bozrah are exterminated. Teman is one of the largest cities of Edom; Bozrah is a strong fortress city in the north of Edom. These cities represent the whole country of Edom.

If we have a picture of the sinful flesh in Edom, we can see these cities as a picture of the way the flesh expresses itself. Teman is a city that in the Bible is connected with wisdom (Jer 49:7; Oba 1:8-9). We can see Teman as the wisdom of the flesh, a wisdom of the natural man, who thinks he can control everything. But God will "send fire upon Teman" which means for us: He will "destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside" (1Cor 1:19).

As has been said, Bozrah is a fortified city, a stronghold that is difficult to conquer. According to some scholars, it is the capital of Edom. Connected to Teman, the wisdom, we can see in Bozrah strongholds of our own thoughts and reflections that raise up against God. But the fire that God send upon Teman has the consequence that it also “consumes the citadels of Bozrah”. Through the wisdom of God in Christ, the wisdom of the world and the pride of the heart is judged. Those who have acknowledged this can say with Paul: “For the weapons of our warfare are ... divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. [We are] destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and [we are] taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2Cor 10:4-5).

Amos 1:13-15 | Judgment on Ammon

13 *Thus says the LORD,
“For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon and for four
I will not revoke its [punishment],
Because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead
In order to enlarge their borders.
14 “So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah
And it will consume her citadels
Amid war cries on the day of battle,
And a storm on the day of tempest.
15 “Their king will go into exile,
He and his princes together,” says the LORD.*

Ammon’s heinous crime defies description. “He is the father of today’s Ammonites” (Gen 19:38). He himself was born of an incest relationship between Lot and his youngest daughter (Gen 19:36). His offspring born out of this ungodly relationship is without any natural feeling.

Someone must be weaned from any natural feeling to treat a pregnant woman like this. Any respect for God-given life is lacking. The mother’s womb is cut in and both the bearer of the new life and the new life itself is murdered. And that only for the sake of expansion of one’s own area. No action is taken to defend oneself, but only out of greed of robbery. Murder is carried out in cold blood.

This unimaginable atrocity of Ammon is unfortunately not a rarity. He is also mentioned of the Syrians (2Kgs 8:12). We do not have to look down pityingly on this behavior as if it were only practiced by primitive peoples in ancient times. The parallel with the 'modern' 21st century in which we live is quickly drawn. Unwanted pregnancy? Abortion. Surely you do not let your career – we can call it in modern terms, an individual enlarging his/her estate – go up in smoke because of 'an accident'? This murder in the womb is concealed with fine words and even with legislation. As a result, the sting is taken out of conscience. At least that is how they mean it. The fact that many people continue to walk with a great sense of guilt is not talked about.

God will judge these actions. Ammon will perish in a devastating war. A crushing war disaster, with a deafening noise, will erupt over their territory with the sound and power of a hurricane. It seems as if God is pouring out all His wrath over such behavior. That is how horrible to Him is what Ammon has done. So horrible to Him is what is happening in abortion clinics today.

The king and his princes, all those in charge, go into exile. The political leaders who support these unholy practices with legislation will not be able to drag the country further down the road of destruction.

Amos 2

Introduction

Not only the nations around Judah and Israel are judged by God. After God first pronounces the judgment on Moab, He also pronounces the judgment on Judah and Israel. It is a disgrace for God's people to be aligned with the nations. But when Judah and Israel have descended to the level of the heathens, they also receive from God the same treatment as the heathens. Only that has greater consequences for them than for the other nations because God's people have a much greater responsibility (Amos 3:2).

Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel also prophesy about the nations around Israel, but only after they have first prophesied about Israel. Amos reverses that order with a purpose. The nations are punished for violating the laws of nature, conscience, and natural feelings. Israel is punished for its greater sin of going against the revealed will of God.

Amos 2:1-3 | Judgment on Moab

*1 Thus says the LORD,
"For three transgressions of Moab and for four
I will not revoke its [punishment],
Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.
2 "So I will send fire upon Moab
And it will consume the citadels of Kerioth;
And Moab will die amid tumult,
With war cries and the sound of a trumpet.
3 "I will also cut off the judge from her midst
And slay all her princes with him," says the LORD.*

After Ammon, his brother Moab appears before God's judgment seat. Moab was born out of Lot's incest relationship with his eldest daughter. He "is the father of Moab to this day" (Gen 19:36-37). He is sentenced for the horrible act of corpse burning or cremation.

Since all previous nations are judged because of some offense against Israel, the judgment of Amos on Moab is, according to some interpreters, based on an event mentioned in 2 Kings 3 (2Kgs 3:26-27). The “firstborn son” mentioned there is the eldest son of the king of Edom, the heir and probably co-king. It concerns the burning of a living son, an evil that is even more serious than the burning of bones.

In what Amos says, we do have a clue as to what God thinks about cremation. God punishes any violation of His established orders. The God-fearing King Josiah also burns bones, but he exercises the judgment of God (2Kgs 23:16; 1Kgs 13:2). The judgment of the dead belongs to God alone.

The judgment of Moab will be exercised by “the sons of the east” (Eze 25:10). All announced judgments will be carried out by Nebuchadnezzar, who conquers and deports all the nations addressed by Amos (Jeremiah 47-49; Ezekiel 25-28; cf. Zep 2:9; Dan 11:41).

Ammon lacks respect for life in its earliest existence (Amos 1:13). The application to today is abortion. The brother nation Moab lacks respect for death. The application to today is also not difficult. There is no respect for death anymore. From the burning of a dead person it is a small step to euthanizing a dying person.

Euthanasia, like abortion, is transferred from crime to beneficence. Thus, proponents of euthanasia do not speak of ‘committing’ euthanasia, but of ‘granting’ euthanasia. Cremation and euthanasia – euthanasia means ‘soft death’ or ‘good death’ – violate the rights of God. Man believes that he has the right to self-determination over both life and death. God will judge this thinking and acting of man, in which there is no place for His revealed will.

As with the judgment of the crimes of the Ammonites, the judgment of the Moabites is accompanied by much tumult and confusion. It is as if those who are used by God to this judgment will carry out this judgment with the greatest pleasure. All the leaders, “the judge ... and all her princes”, under whose responsibility these atrocities were committed, receive a separate treatment in the judgment. They will be wiped out from the midst of Moab.

Amos 2:4-5 | Judgment on Judah

*4 Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of Judah and for four
 I will not revoke its [punishment],
 Because they rejected the law of the LORD
 And have not kept His statutes;
 Their lies also have led them astray,
 Those after which their fathers walked.
 5 "So I will send fire upon Judah
 And it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem."*

We are still listening in the marketplace in Bethel where Amos addresses his flaming words to the nations that surround Judah and Israel. In everything Amos has said so far, we have seen the Israelite hearers nod approvingly. Of course, all those heathen nations, as well as the brother peoples who have behaved like the heathens, will finally receive their righteous punishment for what they have done to Israel.

But what do we hear now? He is now addressing Judah! Amos does not walk away, he has not finished his preaching, he continues. Judah undergoes the same judgment as the nations around them. With God there is no distinction, no respect of persons, neither when it comes to sin nor when it comes to righteousness (cf. Jer 9:25-26).

Let us listen to what he has to say to them. He says to them that "they rejected the law of the LORD". Through this act they have torn themselves away from God and thus from the Source of all blessing. It is impossible to say that you believe in God and at the same time reject that in which He makes His will known. He who rejects His law, His Word, is unable to maintain His statutes. The confession that one believes in God may be there, but the practice is that one is seduced by gods of lies.

When the Word of truth is rejected, lies take its place. Rejection of the Word takes place everywhere today where it is interpreted according to one's own judgment, in a way that does not require us to give up anything that can satisfy our lusts. There is reasoning along the lines of: 'God wants you to be happy; enjoy everything there is to enjoy; if you are happy, God is happy too.' This is how the gods of lies work. They know exactly what

the professors of God's Name, like. Through the centuries they have developed a formula for success, a recipe that can be adapted to the needs of a certain generation.

The fathers, the previous generations, have gone after it as well. The addition "those after which their fathers walked" serves to emphasize how deep the sin of idolatry is in the blood of the people. "Their lies" are the gods of lies. This is true in two ways: first, they lie themselves and second, they are the product of people's lying spirits.

There is nothing new under the sun, even though the appearance of these lie-gods changes all the time. As far as that is concerned, the devil, who uses these lie-gods, is like a chameleon. He takes on the color of the environment in which he finds himself. He exercises his evil influence in a way that suits the spiritual climate in which man finds himself.

Every nation is judged according to the light it has. God punishes the people according to their attitude towards people, His people. He punishes His people according to their attitude towards Himself, their God. The judgment of Amos on Judah is fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC and burned her citadels and the house of God (2Chr 36:19). Joel did prophesy in favor of Jerusalem, but the city will also be judged for its many sins. This judgment will not escape her, however great the future glory may be.

Amos 2:6 | Judgment on Israel

*6 Thus says the LORD,
"For three transgressions of Israel and for four
I will not revoke its [punishment],
Because they sell the righteous for money
And the needy for a pair of sandals.*

Maybe Israel started to be suspicious when Amos was talking about Judah. The accusing finger of the prophet is coming more and more in their direction. They nodded violently when they heard him speak about the judgment on the nations around them. They also nodded approvingly when they heard him speak about the judgment on their brother and southern neighbor Judah. They may have openly expressed their joy at the judg-

ment that will affect the nations and have a secret joy when they think of the judgment that will come over Judah. But if the accusing finger of the prophet is now pointed directly at them, their joy is over.

The majority of those present in the market square of Bethel will have been Israelites. They will be the last and most extensively confronted with their own situation. Now they themselves are the object of God's judgment. The accusation of Judah has been formulated in terms of violating principles of what God has said in the law. Israel's transgressions are clearly stated. Judah despises the law; in Israel there is a total lack of fear of God.

1. Israel's crimes are described in verses 6-8.
2. In verses 9-11 the prophet refers to God's actions in favor of them in the past.
3. In verses 12-16, Amos concludes his speech with a vivid description of the punishment they will receive for their behavior.

Israel's sins are measured widest. It is not enough to describe a single sin as a model for all sins, as it were, and in which the other sins are represented. There appear to be four transgressions: greed, trampling of the poor, an unnatural form of fornication, and idolatrous pleasures.

What they do with righteous people, they will also do with the Righteous One. The Lord Jesus is sold by Judas. He is also the Poor One. The righteous is he who has the law at his side, so righteous in a legal sense. Because of corrupt justice and his poverty, the righteous is nevertheless declared guilty for the benefit of those who have money and respect.

In selling, we can imagine that a poor person has become a serf of someone from whom he has had to borrow money and with whom he is therefore in debt. He may have had to buy a pair of sandals, of which he was unable to pay the price, and therefore was enslaved (Lev 25:39; 2Kgs 4:1). In the case of 'selling' one can also think of handing over to the arbitrariness of the other party.

Amos 2:7 | Heartlessness and Sexual Misconduct

7 *“These who pant after the [very] dust of the earth on the head of the helpless
Also turn aside the way of the humble;*

*And a man and his father resort to the same girl
In order to profane My holy name.*

The oppressors are so heartless, their mind is so depraved, that they pant after the humiliation of the helpless. Their helplessness has already humiliated them, but there is no tenderness or compassion for their situation among these oppressors. Hard and selfish as they are, they find it a devilish pleasure to see how the helpless in their great sadness are humiliated even deeper and brought to despair. Of these rich, what has been said of Edom is true: they have stifled their compassion (Amos 1:11). And here it concerns to their own compatriots, fellow members of the people of God.

The expression “dust ... on the head” means that they are plunged into mourning or that the rich walk over them and push them into the dust. Dust on the head is a sign of sadness (2Sam 1:2; Job 2:12).

Helpless people are defenseless at the same time. Power is with those who have money. The helpless are at the mercy of the rich. They determine, according to their own unjust standards, what is right for the helpless and what is due to them. This means that they bend all the living conditions of the helpless in a way that is most advantageous to them.

Anyone who is somewhat familiar with the history of mankind will see this horrible way of acting resurfacing again and again. The least fortunate are manipulated, they act as if they were merchandise or chattel. Every human dignity, every right to a humane existence, is taken away from them. Once again, these are the actions of people who belong to God’s people in relation to people who also belong to that people.

If the heart is closed to God and His Word – although one still confesses something with the mouth – the heart also closes to the fellow believers (cf. 1Jn 3:17). The relationship with other members of God’s people is determined by what that relationship yields, either in material benefit or in the satisfaction of depraved feelings.

How much the natural feelings are suffocated is also shown by the second offense mentioned. A man and his father going to the same girl is reminiscent of “immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife” (1Cor 5:1). When the people of God reject God’s Word, they sink lower than the Gentiles. Going to the

same girl or harlot is even worse than going to another girl or harlot. The one is already a great sin, the other is an even greater sin.

In connection with this low sin, the LORD speaks through Amos that it is precisely this sin that is happening “to profane My holy name”. This expression also appears in Leviticus 22 as the conclusion of a long section that deals with personal and social purity (Lev 22:32). In that section, the sin of incest is specifically forbidden (Lev 18:6-18; 20:17-21). It does not specifically mention a prohibition for fellowship with a woman outside the family. However, the principle does apply here, of course, when it comes to the use of one and the same girl by both the father and the son.

This way of acting provides insight into the social conditions at that time. The purity and faithfulness that may be expected of a God-fearing father in his marriage are lacking. Both the father and the son consciously act in disobedience to God. With the persistence of disobedience all feelings of shame also disappear.

The quotation above from 1 Corinthians 5 makes clear that this kind of disobedience did not only occur in Israel. This shameless fornication also occurs in the Christian church. Where justice is being bent, there is also no right view anymore on marriage and sexuality and also in these things the brother is being wronged (1Thes 4:6).

Paul makes clear in the sequel of 1 Corinthians 5 what the duty of the church is towards members of the church who live in such and other sins. The church is given the task: “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (1Cor 5:13b). Whoever persists in sin must ultimately be removed from the church as a wicked person.

Amos 2:8 | The Rights of God and Man Trampled Underfoot

8 *“On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar,
And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.*

Garments are considered an object of value, not so much in the material sense, but more in the sense of use. For the owner, a garment is something with which he can cover himself at night as a protection against the cold. If someone has to borrow money, he can leave his garment as a pledge. In His care for the poor, God has included in His law that the person who has

taken the garment as a pledge must return it in the evening (Exo 22:26-27; Deu 24:10-13).

But the rich do not care about God's law. They can use that garment as a soft surface, on which they can lie comfortably. They do not care about their poor brother, who is now also suffering from cold, any more than they care about God. On the contrary, they are very devoted to all kinds of idols, to which the expression "every altar" seems to point. There is a multitude of altars (cf. Hos 10:1).

They believe they owe all their prosperity to the idols. Those idols are located in the temple in Bethel. They may have built other houses for these idols as well. There they get drunk on the wine they have bought with money obtained criminally. They have fined innocent people and came up with crimes for that. With the money thus obtained, they are now celebrating.

Amos 2:9 | What God Has Done for Them

*9 "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them,
Though his height [was] like the height of cedars
And he [was] strong as the oaks;
I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.*

To shame them, God points out His care for them, both past and present. Their actions towards God are in sharp contrast to what God has done for them. What an ingratitude! From what has He deserved this? It sounds like a disappointment: "Yet it was I." The memory of the past should bring them to repentance. God has paved the way for them to come to the place they now occupy.

"The Amorite" people are the original inhabitants of Canaan (Gen 15:18; Jos 24:18; Jdg 6:10). On their own, the people had never entered the land. Their unbelief had made them powerless. In their unbelief, they had felt like locusts to the inhabitants of Canaan who were like giants in their eyes (Num 13:22,32-33; Deu 1:28; 3:11).

But God had taken up their case. They have been witnesses to how He acted. He exterminated those strong giants for them, completely, from top to

bottom. The cedar is more often a picture of what is high, lofty and stable (Eze 31:3) and the oak of what is strong and hard and has a long lifetime.

“His fruit” is his offspring and “his root” are the ancestors of that people. God exterminated all those people with root and branch for them. But now that they have lived in the land for so many years, they have forgotten all His efforts. They have also been warned about this (Deu 8:11-20). But what do you expect when God’s people no longer listen to His Word, no longer take knowledge of it, and so ignore the warnings it contains? Misery and destruction cannot be avoided.

Amos 2:10 | God’s Goodness in Redemption and Guidance

*10 “It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt,
And I led you in the wilderness forty years
That you might take possession of the land of the Amorite.*

Once again the disappointment resounds. Have they forgotten how they were freed by God’s goodness from the hard slavery of Egypt? Have they also forgotten how He led them through that “great and terrible wilderness” (Deu 8:15) after their redemption, before they took possession of the land they were on their way to? If God had not redeemed them, they would still be in bondage; if God had not led them in the wilderness, they would have perished there.

Let us, too, never forget how we were redeemed from the world and from judgment. The Lord Jesus had to die for this. Let us also never forget how God has guided and cared for us throughout the world since our redemption. Great is His faithfulness. Too often we answer His faithfulness with unfaithfulness. Don’t we disappoint Him then, too?

Amos 2:11 | Prophets and Nazirites

*11 “Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets
And some of your young men to be Nazirites.
Is this not so, O sons of Israel?” declares the LORD.*

In the previous verses we have the testimony of all God’s blessings, given by Him to all the people, the twelve tribes. But God’s care for His people is also evidenced by the means He has given in the midst of His people to

make them return to Himself. There in the first place is the testimony of the “prophets”. They have spoken His words. Secondly, Amos points to the testimony of the “Nazirites”. They spoke through their lives. Prophets have proclaimed Who God is in their preaching, Nazirites have shown Who God is in their lives.

Prophets usually speak when the people have deviated from God. Then God lets them preach His Word to His people to call them to confess and return to Him. Before Amos, many prophets have spoken to the whole people, the twelve tribes (Heb 1:1a). For example, we can think of Moses and Samuel. But also in the midst of the ten tribes, who had no temple, altar, and priesthood, God did not leave Himself without witness. Especially Elijah and Elisha worked in the ten tribes. Also after that God sent messengers who came forth from themselves and spoke their language.

God gave a special testimony through the Nazirites. Although we do not read much about the Nazirites, given the quote here by Amos, they must have had an important place among the people. The word ‘Nazirite’ – in Hebrew Nazir – means ‘separated’ or ‘set apart’. This indicates the devotion to God that these persons put into practice.

In order to separate oneself and dedicate oneself to God, the Nazirite makes a special vow. We read about this in Numbers 6. Becoming a Nazirite is something someone does voluntarily. But if someone, “a man or a woman” (Num 6:2), wants to become a Nazirite, God ascribes conditions to this. These conditions are that such a person

1. must not use anything from the vine,
2. let the hair grow long and
3. must not touch a dead person (Num 6:3).

In their application to us, these terms and conditions can be ‘translated’ as follows. Someone who wants to dedicate himself to God,

1. voluntarily renounces earthly joys – wine is a picture of things that are not bad in themselves (Jdg 9:13),
2. takes a submissive place – of which the long hair of the woman is still the picture (1Cor 11:1-16), which still applies today – and

3. stays away from everything that is not in connection with the living God – that is the hallmark of death.

It is a great blessing of God if He raises up such people, including young people, who want to live devotional lives among His people. They are a spiritual blessing for the whole people. In earthly blessings also the heathen nations can rejoice. That is why Amos points to the spiritual blessing that these gifts of God to His people contain. This spiritual blessing precedes the earthly one, because the earthly blessing depends on their spiritual state. In order to bring them in harmony with God, He lets His prophets hear what He expects from His people. Through the prophets He sends, He maintains the connection with His people.

Although Numbers 6 states that someone becomes a Nazirite as a result of a voluntary decision to fulfill a vow, it is clear that such a vow is made from an inner prompting by the Spirit. Also, life as a Nazirite can only happen under the power and guidance of God's Spirit. Therefore, besides the prophets, the Nazirites can also be seen as a gift of God. In the Nazirite, the people can see their own calling to consecration to God, while at the same time seeing that the LORD also gives them the power to put it into practice.

Although being a Nazirite is not bound by age, Amos speaks here of "your young men". It is precisely young people that God wants to use to show in the midst of His people what a life of dedication means. In Christianity today, too, there is a great need for young Christians who voluntarily deny themselves things their peers are committed to, to dedicate themselves entirely to the cause of God. Let us ask God to work this in the hearts of many young people. An example of the blessing that such dedication gives can be read in Jeremiah 35 (Jer 35:1-19).

With His question "is this not so?" God emphasizes His giving of the prophets and the Nazirites. He urges His people to judge whether His comments are correct. Such questions serve to appeal to the conscience, to incite reflection and to bring insight into God's actions. Whoever agrees with them wholeheartedly returns to Him. God wants to involve people in His actions and, by thinking about them, bring them to the acknowledgment that there is no other way.

Amos 2:12 | Rebellion

12 *“But you made the Nazirites drink wine,
And you commanded the prophets saying, ‘You shall not prophesy!’*

What is the people’s answer to God’s care? You can imagine that the bad mood of the people manifests itself simply by not listening to those people and ignoring their message. But their evil state manifests itself in a more terrible way in the spirit of rebellion.

Instead of allowing themselves to be incited to a holy life by the examples of the Nazirites, the people want the Nazirites to drink wine in order to break their vow. Here, giving wine does not mean that they are offering wine, but that they are violently forcing the Nazirites to drink wine.

The prophets meet the same spirit of rebellion. God’s witnesses are unbearable to the people and they do everything they can to silence them. Amos has experienced this himself (Amos 7:12; cf. Isa 30:10; Jer 11:21; Mic 2:11).

And what are we experiencing today? What answer do we give to God’s care? Many ‘Nazirites’ are tempted to drink ‘wine’ again. Satan will do everything in his power to take in young people, so that they do not respond to the call of God, but listen to the voice of people. Christians who do not take it very seriously feel itchy when they see other Christians who want to live fully dedicated to the Lord.

Of course, there are some things to be criticized about the lives of committed Christians. They are not perfect people. But instead of being appealed to by what can be seen of devotion, dedicated Christians often try to do something in which it is not Christ but their own pleasures that are central.

If such Christians succumb to that pressure, their lives will no longer be a ‘condemnation’ for less or not-dedicated Christians. The sting is out. By the way, dedicated Christians will not want to condemn others who live less dedicated lives. It is a more or less automatic consequence, something that cannot be avoided.

The Lord Jesus above all, and following in His footsteps also Paul, have been completely devoted to God. The hatred experienced by the Lord and Paul was unavoidable. Anyone who wants to live dedicated, must count

on what Paul says to Timothy happening to him or her: “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2Tim 3:12).

What the Nazirite experiences will also be experienced by the faithful prophet. A clear, radical preaching of God’s Word is generally not appreciated in professing Christianity. As long as you leave the conscience out, you will be listened to. But if you point out evil, you will meet with rejection and they will try to make it impossible for you to speak.

Amos 2:13 | God’s Retribution

13 *“Behold, I am weighted down beneath you
As a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves.*

In response to the rebellious attitude and opposition of the people in answer to all His concerns, God has no choice but to react with His judgment. In the way Amos represents God’s judgment, we see a picture from the life of agriculture. It reflects Amos’ familiarity with this life. There may be an allusion in the use of this picture that the judgment will take place by means of an earthquake. In a broader sense, it can refer to the time when God brings in His harvest, where there is salvation for the believing remnant, while the wicked will be struck by the judgment.

The overcrowded, creaking wagon also shows that sin is a heavy burden, especially the sins mentioned above. No man remains standing under it, but will succumb to it and be torn asunder. For those who acknowledge this, salvation is present. He may know that the sheaves of his or her sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus and were judged in Him by God.

Amos 2:14-16 | No Escape Possible

14 *“Flight will perish from the swift,
And the stalwart will not strengthen his power,
Nor the mighty man save his life.*

15 *“He who grasps the bow will not stand [his ground],
The swift of foot will not escape,
Nor will he who rides the horse save his life.*

16 *“Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day,” declares the LORD.*

The judgment of God presented in verse 13 is inescapable. Everyone will try to flee, but in vain. All individual abilities will not avail. When we think of an earthquake, we see that speed, strength, and courage are useless. No matter how fast a person can run, he will not be able to reach a place of refuge. The ground splits open beneath him. No matter how strong someone is, all his strength and effort offer no solution. He sees himself confronted with forces of nature where the strength of man is totally negligible. No matter how brave someone is, he will lose out against God's judgment. This enemy cannot be fought with human courage.

The arrows of the archer are ridiculous in the face of a power that is mercilessly approaching and cannot be kept at bay. Even those who can use a horse will be overtaken by death. The hero who thinks he can flee throws away everything he has relied on, but what hinders him in the face of judgment in his flight. Naked means without outer garment and without weapons. In this way he, once so brave, well dressed and well-armed, tries to escape this danger. The whole stage breathes a complete desperation of people who, before this judgment takes place, still boast so much about their qualities.

Amos 3

Introduction

Amos 1-2 shows that there can be no distinction between Israel and the nations when it comes to the measure of God's holiness. But in Amos 3 we see that Israel does undergo a separate judgment. The reason for this is that in the midst of all the nations, Israel has been given a special place by God. It is His people of property. That is why there is a special judgment for the people that the LORD has chosen for Himself. This is what verses 1-2 are about. The announcement of judgment the LORD has dedicated to the prophets (verses 3-8). The content of the judgment is that the enemy will invade the land, kill its inhabitants, destroy the altars of Bethel, and make a mess of the capital (verses 9-15).

We can learn from this. Just as Israel held the position of God's testimony, so Christianity does now. If we hold that position, it is necessary that we give a testimony of Who God is and that this happens in accordance with Who God really is. A false testimony gives a false image of Him. Unfortunately, the history of Christianity has shown that it has not done any better than Israel. God will therefore have to judge professing Christianity. The description of that judgment can be found in Revelation 17-18.

Amos 3:1 | Call to Hear

1 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:

The call "hear this word" is also heard in Amos 4 and Amos 5 (Amos 4:1; 5:1). These are words that call for all work to be stopped in order to listen attentively to "this word". The fact that it is a word "which the LORD has spoken against you" emphasizes the importance of listening. None other than the LORD speaks and it concerns none other than themselves, the "sons of Israel". These are all compelling reasons to focus your ears. Here the whole people are spoken to, Judah and the ten tribes, because refer-

ence is made to “the entire family” that the LORD led “out of the land of Egypt”.

With these words Amos also makes the connection with the origin of their people’s existence. Familiar as they are with their folk history, they know that Egypt is the land where they had to perform hard slave labor. They could never have freed themselves from this slavery. That they now live in Israel, they owe it to the liberating love and power of the LORD.

Amos 3:2 | You Only Have I Known

2 *“You only have I known among all the families of the earth;
Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”*

It is the exclusive privilege of Israel that the LORD knows them. To know them here is to know them in love and expresses a special intimacy. The LORD says the same of Jeremiah when He tells him how He knew him before the womb (Jer 1:5a). The word ‘knowing’ incorporates the thought of the sovereign acting of God, who chooses the object of His knowledge for His purpose and sets it apart. Knowing is not but a ‘knowledge of’ or ‘being familiar with’, but a knowledge of the deepest being of the people or of a human being as something that expresses fellowship. That God knows His people means that He has fellowship with them.

A people that have been given such a special place cannot but receive a special assessment. That special assessment is reflected in the serious “therefore”. Israel believes that because of its election and its special position it will not be treated like the surrounding peoples. But God will punish the people all the more for their sinful behavior precisely because of their close relationship with Him. No iniquity is overlooked: “All your iniquities.”

The measure of relationship is always the measure of responsibility. That is why this verse is so important for Christians. They are in a special relationship with God. The sins of God’s people are always more grievous to Him than the sins of other nations. Those other nations live in ignorance of Him, while He has made His people known with His will.

An example can help to clarify this difference in treatment. Imagine a group of boys doing something that is not allowed. A policeman just pass-

ing by, grabs one in the collar and gives him a big beating. Bystanders shout: 'They all did it!' 'I know', says the policeman, 'but this boy is my son'. You can be sure that the policeman will also have a serious talk with his son at home.

In Leviticus 4 it also becomes clear that it does matter who commits a sin. There it can be seen from the size of the sacrifice that has to be offered in case of sin. The sin of a prince, a prominent person among the people, is taken more severely than that of an ordinary member of the people. The Lord Jesus speaks in the same way (Lk 12:47-48; cf. Mt 11:20-24).

Amos 3:3 | An Appointment

| *3 Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?*

When you travel with someone else or start something, it is important that you have taken a good look at the expectations that each has of this going together. This is also true, for example, for a marriage and a business. If you travel together with people, it is possible that a party has unfounded or too high expectations. This going together can lead to many disappointments, so much so that sometimes a split up occurs.

Why is that? Because the basis of the 'negotiations' lies in people, in their ideas and opinions about going that way. Often people also agree by making concessions and compromises. The Samen op Weg-proces (Together on the Road-process) in the Netherlands is an example of this. It is the name of the process of the attempts to closer cooperation of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Netherlands since 1961. These churches were called the Samen op Weg (Together on the Road) churches. As of May 1, 2004 this resulted in the merger of the churches into the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

It is different when God is involved in a going or walking together. And that is what we are talking about here. Who wants to go on the road together with God, will not be able to make a deal with Him. Going on the road together with God is only possible if you made an appointment with Him. Meeting Him means going into His presence and adapting completely to His holiness. It is impossible to walk with God without being at

peace with Him. Walking with God, being with Him, can only be done by separating yourself from evil. Walking with God means listening to Him, obeying His Word.

Surely you do not go on the road with someone else, without having made an appointment with him. Otherwise you should not start. For Amos it is clear. He is has made an appointment with God, he completely agrees with Him. Amos and God are on the same wavelength. That is why Amos can be used by God as His prophet, as His mouth. Amos speaks the language of God and he speaks the language of the people. The language of God comes to the people in understandable words.

Amos will support the right and duty to prophesy in the following verses by means of examples taken from life. He does this because the announcement of the punishment for the iniquities arouses resistance. He is going to explain that God does not threaten with judgment if there is no reason for it, if He does not have a people before Himself that is ripe for that judgment. Therefore, the question of this verse also includes a call to repentance, a call to make an appointment with God. If not, He will have to be their adversary (Lev 26:23-24).

Amos 3:4 | Cause and Effect in the Forest

4 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]?

The question in verse 3 is the first of seven poignant questions asked sequentially in these verses. Amos takes us for the following questions

1. to the forest (verse 4),
2. to the field (verse 5) and
3. to the city (verse 6).

After the introductory question of verse 3, the following questions are meant to make us think about cause and effect. God wants to teach us and make it clear that nothing 'happens by chance'.

A lion does not roar just like that. His roar has a cause, a reason. Thus, what happens in our lives is not the result of blind forces, but of an estab-

lished plan of God in Whose hand our life rests. He leads our lives and controls all events.

Now someone may think: 'But God does not lead me if I choose a path of sin.' No, God indeed does not lead that, but He does lead the circumstances in a way that He wants to bring us back to Him. God is always above evil and sin. In the following verses Amos works this out.

Amos as a shepherd knows what the roaring of the lion means: it is a warning of approaching danger. This roaring of the lion refers to the mighty voice of God that He makes heard. The cause is the sin of His people, which He must judge.

Yet God does not act without first warning His people. That is why He raises His mighty voice through His prophets to whom He has revealed what He is going to do (verse 7). In His judgment of His people, the LORD presents Himself as a lion and a young lion (cf. Hos 5:14). A *young* lion can refer to a lesser or partial judgment.

Amos 3:5 | Cause and Effect in the Field

*5 Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it?
Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?*

In verse 4 the fact is expressed that the LORD already has the people in His power as prey. He does not tear yet, but roars. He warns as it were. In the first question of verse 5 we see that Israel itself is to blame for this situation. Just as a bird shoots at a bait and is then caught in the trap, so someone shoots in ruin because sin pulls him into it. The bait is sin.

The people have brought destruction upon themselves by not walking with God but rather, choosing the way of sin. The meaning is: Can destruction strike a person when sin does not draw him into it? No one is ruined without looking for it himself.

The first question in this verse is about the behavior of the bird. The second question is about the working of the trap. Both parts of the verse are about the sin of Israel, but approach it from a different point of view. The trap represents the judgment of God. He makes those who sin His prisoners.

The trap symbolizes the means available to God which are effective in their use. They will reach their goal because Israel has gone the way of sin.

But a warning precedes the judgment. We see it in the following verse.

Amos 3:6 | Cause and Effect in the City

6 If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble?

If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?

Every previous question starts with the effect, for example: the bird is caught: then comes the cause: because of bait. That order is now reversed. We now first have the cause: the blowing of the trumpet; then the effect: the trembling or frightening of the inhabitants of the city. The sound of the trumpet from the city wall warns the city that intruders are approaching (Eze 33:1-3).

The trumpet represents the voice of the prophets. It is not listened to (Jer 6:17), because the people are gazing at their prosperity. They go on as if there were no danger and no warning. Every disaster that strikes a human being or a community of people, a city, is meant by God as a punishment. The word 'discipline' has a negative sound for some people. But it has to do with education. Its meaning is 'pulling'. God disciplines to educate His people and to draw them to Himself. Also, discipline does not always have to be 'corrective', as a result of sins committed. It can also be 'preventive', to prevent us from sinning.

Another mistake we can make when we are disciplined is that we remain sticking to the means God uses to discipline. That is the case if we start giving our own explanations for example for illness, an accident, unemployment, children going their own way, while we do not think about the fact that God makes these things happen to us. We must learn not to look at second causes, the instruments, because there is nothing that happens outside of Him. No sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father (Mt 10:29). How much less can a disaster occur in a city without Him.

The foregoing is not meant to be a cheap solution for dramatic and shocking events or even crimes that have happened to someone. There are acts that can be done to someone, that can ruin someone's life. In such cases, one can only hope and pray that the victim may eventually come to en-

trust himself completely to God. He was there when that terrible thing happened.

He did not intervene, that is true, but that does not mean he wanted this terrible thing or even agreed with it. He cried with him or her. Whoever can get to the point of looking at God beyond this personal catastrophe and its cause, will experience His consolation and alleviation of pain on the way to healing.

The thought of sin, as if God would work it, is completely misplaced. That is also not what Amos says. It is always, and certainly here, necessary to see the context of the verses in which it is written. Then it becomes clear that God is not the Processor, the Author of sin. Evil has a punitive character here. It is a disaster, such as an invasion by hostile forces, the sword, famine, or plague, as the necessary consequence of sin (Isa 45:7).

Amos 3:7 | The LORD Reveals His Secret

*7 Surely the LORD GOD does nothing
Unless He reveals His secret counsel
To His servants the prophets.*

It is a tremendous privilege that God tells us what He plans to do. This privilege is the part of the ‘friends’ of the Lord Jesus, His disciples (Jn 15:15). God has revealed to all Christians through His Spirit what He has prepared for those who love Him (1Cor 2:10-16). And Peter writes in his second letter about upcoming events and concludes his letter with: “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard” (2Pet 3:17a).

Why then is it that so many people are not aware of God’s purposes? Because they do not meet the conditions attached to them. Are we ‘friends’ of the Lord Jesus, followers, disciples, of Him? Do we really love God and let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit? For the things of God are only understood by spiritually minded Christians. Do we read in God’s Word to know what is in it? God has told us everything, but we must take note of it. And are we prepared to do what He says?

The latter is what Amos is talking about. He speaks about “His servants”. A servant is someone who is in the service of a boss and from whom is

expected to carry out the orders of his boss. God can reveal His counsel to such people. To them He can reveal the things He is going to do. If we take God's announcements to heart about what He is going to do, we can go a certain way. Everything He has to say, He has revealed to us in His Word.

We read in the Old Testament how He confided in servants like Noah, Abraham, Joseph and many others about the judgments that were to come. In the New Testament we read how the Lord Jesus told His disciples about future events (Lk 21:20-24). And don't we have "the prophetic word" (2Pet 1:19) like the whole book of Revelation? What do we do with all these confidential messages from our Lord?

Amos 3:8 | There Must Be a Reaction

8 A lion has roared! Who will not fear?

The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

Amos does not apply the examples of cause and effect only to his hearers. He himself also does something with them. His speaking is the consequence of the speaking of the LORD. He has to speak because as a prophet he is in a direct connection with Him. What Amos has said and will say, seems to the hearers not at all a word of God. The people can say in rejection: 'How can this man speak like this, where does he get the guts from?' And Amos says: 'I cannot do otherwise, because the LORD has spoken.'

No lion roars without prey, no bird is caught without bait, and no prophet speaks without hearing a word from the LORD. And when the LORD speaks, he cannot remain silent. Amos proves with the examples quoted that he must speak, because the LORD has spoken to him. He who criticizes Amos, criticizes the LORD.

The LORD has made His warning voice heard with great power in all kinds of events. Many have remained deaf to it. The prophets are God's voice to the conscience of the people. They want to point again to God's warnings, so that the people will come to repentance. Whoever is aware of what God is going to do, cannot but speak about it (Acts 4:20; Jer 20:9; 1Cor 9:16). If we are convinced of the truth of God's Word and the seriousness of the judgment it announces about those who disobey God, it will encourage us

to testify of the Lord Jesus: "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2Cor 5:11a).

We are not allowed to pass on anything but what God has told us. A willful explanation of what He has said is not permitted. If He has not spoken, every statement of any man, no matter how learned, is worth as little as that of another. Its value is nil, not to speak of a harmful effect. Only the Word of God keeps its value forever and proves its validity in all times and situations. Whoever has realized this, wants to pass on this Word to others.

Amos 3:9 | Proclaim

9 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 tumults within her and [the] oppressions in her midst.

After justifying his service as a prophet, Amos now unreservedly announces the verdict that must come over the ten tribes. The command of the LORD to the prophets is: "Proclaim." They must call Asdod and Egypt to witness the violence and atrocities taking place in the citadels of Samaria. For this they must sit on the mountains of Samaria and see what is going on there. From what they have seen, they have to testify again to Israel.

By this action of the LORD the excess of the sins of Israel is presented in a shameful manner (cf. 2Sam 1:20). What a humiliation it is for the people of God when they have to be judged by heathens. Sometimes the world has a more correct judgment of evil by the people of God than the Christian himself. The Philistines, represented in the city of Asdod, are the people closest to them. Egypt is the known great empire.

What God has revealed must be preached, near and far. By making them witnesses to the sins of Samaria, the enemies must understand that God rightly uses them to discipline His people. Ashdod and Egypt are called to bear witness to Israel's iniquity, which is expressed here in disturbance and oppression. There is general (social) injustice, and the mighty people abuse their position to oppress others. The whole social life is disrupted (Ecc 4:1).

By the way, the fact that God uses them to discipline His people should not lead the people around them to think that they themselves are better. To

put it in New Testament language, they will have to realize that it is “time for judgment to begin with the household of God”. Then it will affect them and what will be the outcome for them? (1Pet 4:17).

Amos 3:10 | Why the Judgment Comes

10 But they do not know how to do what is right,” declares the LORD, “these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels.”

“They do not know how to do what is right” means that doing right is totally strange to them. It is a road they have never taken, they have no knowledge of it at all. What they know and do is the opposite: they accumulate injustice and violence in their citadels.

How expressive is the language of Amos here. Their houses are like warehouses, filled with all kinds of prosperity goods. But by hoarding up these goods they are also hoarding up their social sins, because they owe their stock to violence and oppression. If you look at these piled up goods, you can see their accumulated sins. Their moral sentences are so twisted, that they no longer distinguish between good and evil. Doing injustice has become their nature.

Opposing the oppression of the poor and socially weak by the rich and powerful is an element that Amos keeps coming back to (Amos 2:6; 4:1; 5:7,10,12,15; 6:3,12; 8:5).

Amos 3:11 | The Enemy Does Its Work

*11 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD,
“An enemy, even one surrounding the land,
Will pull down your strength from you
And your citadels will be looted.”*

They will be delighted to see their ever larger piles of goods. But the pleasure in it will disappear. Their luxury homes will be plundered by the enemy. That is the result if God looks at our goods differently than we do. He sees any increase in their possessions as an increase in their sins, because of the unlawful way in which they obtained them.

His judgment of their sins is seen by Amos and what he sees, he passes on. The enemy will invade and take the land from all sides. He will encircle the cities (cf. Lk 19:43) and humiliate the arrogant people by tearing down their “strength”, which are the walls and towers, and destroying their “citadels”, which are their luxurious dwellings. It is most obvious to think of the enemy as Assyria, who in 722 BC will take away the population of the ten tribes empire in the scattering.

Amos 3:12 | Only a Remnant Is Saved

12 Thus says the LORD,

“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 dwelling in Samaria be snatched away—

With [the] corner of a bed and [the] cover of a couch!

Of the people who live in such wealth and tranquility, hardly anything will remain, comparatively nothing. Only a remnant will be saved (Amos 4:11; 5:15; 9:8), a miserable little heap, not even a shadow of the former abundance. Yet there is a remnant, as God will always provide for a remnant according to His gracious choice (Rom 11:5). Later we meet an Anna, from the tribe of Asher (Lk 2:36-38). She does not have a winter or summer house (Amos 3:15), but is in God’s house day and night.

This remnant will be characterized by a balanced walk to the honor of God, of which the “a couple of legs” speak, and a listening to Him, of which we may think at “a piece of an ear”. Also in the present time, that of Christianity, in which the decay increases hand over hand and on which God’s judgment has been announced, there is a remnant. It consists of all those who do not resign themselves to the general decline in Christianity as a result of the increasing abandonment of the Word of God.

In Revelation 2-3 the decline in Christianity is presented in the seven epistles to the seven churches. All those who do not go along with the evil mentioned in the letter in question are called ‘overcomers’. They form the remnant in the midst of the whole. Their characteristics are: they walk in allegiance to the Lord and to His Word and they have an ear to hear.

This remnant contrasts sharply with the people on their beds and couches. These are the people of whom Peter says: “They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you” (2Pet 2:13). They bathe themselves in opulence and laziness and surround themselves with everything that can satisfy their carnal pleasures.

Amos 3:13 | An Interruption

13 *“Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,”
Declares the Lord GOD, the God of hosts.*

For a moment the announcement of judgment is interrupted. For a moment a pause to let what has been said sink in. That rest is used to make a serious appeal to the people. May the people hear! The Speaker is indicated in a grand and impressive way. The words “hear and testify” come from none other than “the Lord LORD, the God of hosts”. He introduces himself here as their “Lord”, *Adonai*, their Commander. He is the “LORD”, *Yahweh*, Who has brought Himself into a covenant with them. He stands at the head of all heavenly and earthly army forces, He is “the God of hosts”.

To whom this “hear” is addressed, is not said. One possibility is that it is addressed again to the heathens of verse 9. They have seen what Samaria does. They have also heard the punishment that God announces about it. Now they have to warn the house of Jacob. “Testify” is the solemn assurance of what has been said and warning that what has been said will come.

Amos 3:14 | Judgment on the False Religion

14 *“For on the day that I punish Israel’s transgressions,
I will also punish the altars of Bethel;
The horns of the altar will be cut off
And they will fall to the ground.*

The judgment on the altars of Bethel recalls the word of the man of God from Judah in the days of Jeroboam I (1Kgs 13:1-5). The word spoken at that time will be performed by Josiah one hundred years after Amos (2Kgs 23:15-16).

The horns are an important part of the altar (Exo 27:2; 30:2). They symbolize the power of the altar. If the horns are cut off, the altar is destroyed and powerless in its workings. They are no longer there to hold on to in order to possibly escape judgment (1Kgs 1:50; cf. Exo 21:12-14).

This judgment on the altars is in fact the judgment on all idolatry that takes place in Bethel. Because this sin of idolatry is the basis for the other sins, Amos, in between the judgments about wealth and oppression, pronounces this judgment about the false religion. In fact, every sinful behavior a member of the people exhibits stems from a sinful service to God. It is also possible to see the horns of the altar as a symbol of everything to which a person thinks he can take refuge in the (false) certainty that it is all right there.

Amos 3:15 | Houses Are Destroyed

*15 "I will also smite 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.*

When 'the house of God' – that is the meaning of the name 'Bethel' – perishes, there can no longer be a right to exist for any house. Bethel no longer honors his name. God has been replaced by idols. The judgment of Bethel was announced in the previous verse. As prosperity is pursued, God disappears from sight. The luxury in which the people bathe is an annoyance to the peasant Amos. Several times he bursts out against it with a justified indignation (Amos 3:12,15; 5:11; 6:1,4-6).

The prosperity of the time of Amos can easily be translated to the time in which we, Christians of the twenty-first century, live. The economy is running at full speed. Everyone, we are told, is increasingly prosperous. As long as this is repeated often enough and becomes palpably true, the enormous danger looms up that we, too, will allow ourselves to be carried away by what someone once called the 'belief in progress'.

Are the 'winter house' and the 'summer house' mentioned by Amos not close to us even in a literal sense? After all, many Christians own two houses. One in the Netherlands for the summer, one in Spain to spend the

winter there. To have only one copy of something is not always enough anymore. Two cars, twice a year on vacation, two smart phones and so on. We have to have everything double, because often we have two incomes. And if that does not quite work out, we take out a personal loan. Well, you do not want to lag behind. The money is within reach. One signature and the matter is settled. We profess to be Christians, but don't we live in the meantime as calculating and egocentric as the people around us? Where in all this is the dependence on God?

This word also applies with all its force to us if we only have one house and one car and if we only go on vacation once a year. We can decorate our house in such a way that it can serve as a place in which we think we can survive in all possible situations. We are prepared for anything and have covered ourselves against all possible calamities. And that one vacation must and will come. We need it and we are entitled to it. And our one car has the place of an 'altar of Bethel'. What sacrifices are made to idol car! And clean up, guys; be careful not to scratch or dent it. It is our status symbol.

Do we know who also has a winter house? King Jehoiakim, the wicked son of the God-fearing King Josiah. What is he doing there? Cutting the Word of God to pieces (Jer 36:16-26). We should think about how much we have already 'cut away' from the Word of God with all our luxury. And Ahab, the most wicked king of Israel, has an ivory house (1Kgs 22:39).

All that wealth will be taken away by judgment and ultimately disappear. The judgment that Amos announces about these houses may have been carried out by the earthquake we read about at the beginning of his prophecy. In any case, it will have happened at the conquest of Samaria by Shalmaneser (2Kgs 17:5-7).

The application to our time we see on the housing market. People with towering mortgages are totally grounded. Mandatory housing sales result from people in great financial distress.

Amos 4

Introduction

With astonishing irony Amos speaks to the wives of the leaders in Israel. He calls them “cows of Bashan”. They are one of the causes of the oppression of the poor. The judgment will strike them.

A people that feasts at the expense of others also push religion their own way. Amos denounces the religion that is practiced by the Israelites according to their own preferences in the places they have chosen themselves.

After denouncing both social and religious life, Amos points to events in Israel’s history in which God’s discipling hand has been visible. These disciplines are intended by God to bring them to repentance, but they have not been listened to. Therefore, He calls them to prepare to meet Him.

Amos 4:1 | Cows!

*1 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria,
Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,
Who say to your husbands, “Bring now, that we may drink!”*

The prophet now addresses the ten tribes he compares to the cows of Bashan. From the female verbal forms it appears that Amos has the female or effeminate inhabitants of Samaria in mind (cf. verse 3). He speaks to them in particular, because they are the models of people who live in laziness and self-satisfaction.

In his words he uses the picture of grazing cows on the rich meadows on the other side of the Jordan. The cows of Bashan are known for being an excellent herd, well fed by grazing in the grassy meadows of the high plains of Bashan (Deu 32:14; Eze 39:18).

Amos uses these cows as an application to Israel because of both the prosperity of Israel and the beastly character that the Israelites display. And just as cows live for only one thing, that is to eat and become fat, and therefore want everything for themselves, so do these women. They focus

exclusively on caring for their bodies. As far as that is concerned, a clear parallel can be drawn with the 'body culture' of our time, in which it is mainly about how I look or how the other person looks.

It is not a compliment for a woman to be compared to a cow. It is the women of Samaria's new elite whose men made it into the welfare state of Israel. In name they are subject to their husbands and call them 'lord'. In reality, the men are obedient servants who have to fulfill all their whims and pleasures. They command: "Bring now!" The high costs of maintaining such a woman can only be met by further exacerbating the poor and needy of the people.

Amos denounces all this. He does here what his fellow prophet Isaiah did. Isaiah also rages against the women who have the same characteristics as those to whom Amos addresses (Isa 3:16-26; 32:9).

In what Amos says here to the women of Samaria, we see the world in miniature, constantly protesting to his leaders for more material goods and where selfishness is growing. And the greater the selfishness, the more insensitive we become to the needs of others. We will even exploit those others to satisfy our selfish desires. To do this, we will finally go over corpses. All sympathy is gone, the fulfilment of one's own desires is central. That is how cows live, that is how the women of Samaria live.

They will be shocked, the ladies! They sit and lie happily together, all tastefully and stylishly dressed according to the latest fashions, adorned with the most beautiful jewelry and richly painted with the refined products of the cosmetics industry. The room is filled with perfume. They all think they see the jealous glances of the other, because everyone thinks they look just as charming or more challenging than the other.

With an affected voice they tell each other their embellished stories. With their stories they try to outdo each other and exaggerate them firmly to that end. It gives you a dry throat. The hostess is told by her guests whether that husband of hers can bring in another drink. Where is that guy?

Suddenly the voice of the prophet bangs against those women: "Cows of Basan!" Amazed they stop their conversation. How dare that hillbilly! Without being presented, ill-mannered, illiterate – you can hear that in his

dialect – and extremely insulting he disturbs their pleasurable togetherness. But listen, he talks on:

Amos 4:2 | Judgment Comes

*2 The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness,
 “Behold, the days are coming upon you
 When they will take you away with meat hooks,
 And the last of you with fish hooks.*

Amos is not a man who, at the sight of all this injustice, suddenly loses his patience and uncontrollably expresses his disapproval of the abuses in unmistakable words. No, he stands there on behalf of “the Lord LORD” Who “has sworn by His holiness”. That should underline the seriousness and irrevocability of his words. He has been sent by Him to speak these words. The whole action, the whole behavior of these women cannot exist in the light of the holiness of God. He can never tolerate iniquity. He is the Holy One. This means that He is absolutely and perfectly separated from sin, in whatever form.

If the LORD in Psalm 89 swears by His holiness that He will never lie to David (Psa 89:35), that is the guarantee that He will not lie. For if He did lie, it would violate His holiness. Here God swears by His holiness that He will let judgment come. If He would allow sin to continue with impunity, it would also violate His holiness. That He swears by His holiness is an extra guarantee that He will do what He says (cf. Heb 6:16-17).

The metaphor Amos uses to indicate how this judgment will be executed can also be found in other places (Isa 37:29; Jer 16:16; Eze 29:4; Hab 1:15). Just as a fish is suddenly torn from the water, its element, by the angler, so these women will be torn from their abundance and orgies. Judgment will be total as well as sudden. Should the impression be created that only a few would remain, then that impression will turn out to be vain.

With “the last of you” it may also be meant that with the women addressed, their descendants will also fall prey to the judgment. This will be done by the Assyrians who will make them prey.

Amos 4:3 | The Judgment Is Irrevocable

*3 "You will go out [through] breaches [in the walls],
Each one straight before her,
And you will be cast to Harmon," declares the LORD.*

Through the breaches in the walls behind which they feel safe, they will be carried away into the scattering. The breaches will be so numerous that they will not have to search for them. Everyone will find one right in front of them. Every woman who is taken away has nothing more to look for than the terrible fate she faces. Just as they think only of themselves in wealth, so they will think only of themselves when judgment strikes them and care for no one else.

The certainty of the judgment is confirmed once more by the words "declares the LORD". If He has said it, who will be able to stop it or change it? Where Harmon lies is not known. It has been thought that it should be Hermon. Then that indicates the direction in which the Israelites will be taken away, that is to the north, in the direction of Assyria. The reason why Hermon is so especially called is because it is located in Bashan. These women, these 'cows of Bashan', will go in the direction of the mountains of Bashan!

Amos 4:4 | The Mockery of the Prophet

*4 "Enter Bethel and transgress;
In Gilgal multiply transgression!
Bring your sacrifices every morning,
Your tithes every three days.*

In addition to satisfying their desires, they also have their own self-willed religion. Bethel and Gilgal are places with a rich history of blessing. In Bethel God appeared to Jacob and there Jacob buried his idols (Gen 35:2-4). In Gilgal the people were circumcised when they entered the land (Jos 5:2-9). But of the blessing only the memory is left. In practice, these cities have become cities where idolatry reigns supreme.

It is therefore mockery that the prophet invites them to come to these places with their sacrifices. In his voice the mockery can be heard that is also

heard with Elijah on the Carmel (1Kgs 18:27). The thought that God would accept their sacrifice can be thrown far from us (Amos 5:5). Amos speaks in an exaggerated sense: 'If you were to bring your sacrifices every morning and your tithes every three days, it would only add to your sins.'

With the word "transgress" the thought of 'rebellion' is connected. They thought, blinded as they were, that by regular sacrifices they would remain in connection with the LORD. But Bethel is not the place God has said He wants to be served there (cf. Jer 48:13). That is Jerusalem. That is where He is to be found and not in the places of their own choice, although they still have such an old tradition.

Someone has said: Each generation of readers of the book Amos is obliged to examine his own religion in the light of this word. Not where we think we can serve the Lord, with or without an appeal to the fathers of earlier or later times, but where the Lord is served according to His Word, that is where He wants to meet us. Name and tradition do not guarantee divine approval.

Amos 4:5 | So You Love It

*5 "Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened,
And proclaim freewill offerings, make them known.
For so you love [to do], you sons of Israel,"
Declares the Lord GOD.*

Amos further mocks their religion. Are they so eager to sacrifice? Then let them not take it too seriously with the precepts. Feel free to make a sacrifice of praise in which leaven is incorporated. Did God say that there should be no leaven in the sacrifice of praise (Lev 7:12; 2:11)? Well, that is a dated precept. Now it is all about how you feel about it. Let yourself go. If you love it, God loves it too. Just get crazy for Him.

It is a picture of many services in Christianity today, where it only matters if you feel good about it, but not whether it is pleasing to God? There is also no question about the place where the Lord Jesus wants to meet His own. The question is whether I like it somewhere, whether the services appeal to me. The human being is central and becomes the norm for the service. Accessible, attractive to people in the world. The gospel rock band

in the church, dancing, and a few more ‘spirit expressions’ like crying, falling and even barking in spirit, add some speaking in tongues and the crowds enter the church. Let’s sacrifice, let’s tell ourselves that we can offer this to God because He loves it that way.

But what do I hear? What does Amos say on behalf of the “Lord LORD”? “For so you love [to do], you sons of Israel.” Here we see that Amos talks completely to the taste of the people. That is why he even calls on them to sacrifice “from that which is leavened” against God’s prohibition. They disregard God’s commandments, don’t they? We must remember that in the Bible, leaven always represents sin as something that affects everything it comes into contact with, just as leaven affects the whole dough and leavens (1Cor 5:6-8).

For us, leaven in the sacrifice of praise means thinking and saying things about the Lord Jesus that dishonor Him. For example, thinking that He could sin although that was and is impossible. There are more wrong and even slanderous things said of Him in Christianity.

In addition to the call to bring offerings of thanks, Amos also urges free will offerings. But it is precisely a call to do so that detracts from the character of voluntariness. An appeal creates a moral compulsion or it can even become a legal commandment. It is important for these people that everyone knows how good they are at bringing ‘voluntary’ sacrifices to the LORD. What is given must be widely made known (cf. Mt 6:2; Lk 18:12).

It is what we can compare today with having (voluntary) collections, where you are obliged, for the neighbors, to give something. And if others do not see how much you give, then fortunately what is given will be published.

What Amos wants to impress upon them is that with their lips they say they please the LORD, but that in reality they serve themselves with this way of serving God. It is serving God as it suits you best. In this way sin is multiplied.

Amos 4:6 | Yet You Have Not Returned to Me

*6 “But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities
And lack of bread in all your places,
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.*

With this verse Amos begins to recount a series of events from the past, emphasizing that in these events God's intervention can be seen for their benefit. No matter how terrible those disasters may have been, they were intended by a loving God to warn Israel that they are going the wrong way, a way that will eventually lead them to the judgment.

Each time an event is introduced with the word "I". It indicates that God has brought this suffering upon them, with the intention of bringing His people closer to Him again (cf. Heb 12:6). Every event should appeal to the conscience of the people. But the conscience is often lulled back to sleep by seeking a natural cause for the disasters, as if God had nothing to do with them and His voice could not be heard in them. Surely He does not bring this on man? That is why we read five times as a refrain after each disaster: "Yet you have not returned to Me" (verses 6,8,9,10,11).

Other prophets have also had to testify accordingly (Isa 9:13; Jer 5:3; Hos 7:10). Also in the book of Revelation we find that after God's judgments there is no repentance after all (Rev 9:20; 16:9,11). What patience speaks from this. He also has that patience with us.

There is a climax in the disasters, which are not linked to a certain period of time, but have come over the people in the course of Israel's history. The first series of chastening concerns the land (verses 6-9); then the inhabitants are affected by disease and war (verse 10); finally there is the judgment that also affected Sodom and Gomorrah, wiping these cities from the face of the earth (verse 11).

It is not clear from the text when the event of verse 6 took place. However, it is thought that Amos refers to the seven years of drought from the days of Elisha (2Kgs 8:1). The expression "cleanness of teeth" means that due to lack of food, their teeth do not get dirty.

Amos 4:7 | Distinction in Judgment

7 *"Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you
While [there were] still three months until harvest.
Then I would send rain on one city
And on another city I would not send rain;
One part would be rained on,*

| *While the part not rained on would dry up.*

The rain of which the LORD speaks is the late rain that falls in February and March. This is important for a good growth of the corn. Drought is a punishment announced by God in case of disobedience (Deu 28:23; Lev 26:19).

If we read this verse, we might think that God is acting randomly. This incongruity should be quickly banned from our minds. God never acts arbitrarily. His way of acting always has a purpose of blessing in mind.

We cannot always 'checkout' God (Job 37:12-18). We may try to understand His way of acting, if only we do not forget our place in front of the Almighty. We must keep in mind that we are little, tiny creatures. Let us not be so audacious as to think that God is obligated to account to us for His actions (Rom 9:14-21).

The distinction in judgment must also emphasize that He works this. He has made it rain on one city and He has withheld the rain on the other city. This distinction is also there in the handing out of blessing. This distinction, both in judgment and in blessing, is a big problem for us people. If we could really follow God in all His actions, we would be equal to God. We can find peace in the problem if we accept in faith that His thoughts and ways are higher than ours (Isa 55:8-9).

Amos 4:8 | He Who Is Thirsty ...

| *8 "So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water,
But would not be satisfied;
Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD.*

It seems that on most of the cities no rain has fallen. Those cities have to go to a more distant city to get water. They "staggered" towards it, which reflects the difficult passage of those who are thirsty. That they are not satiated may be because they get nothing from the city where it did rain, sparingly as it is on its own supply.

Abundance makes people selfish and harsh, but so does scarcity. In both cases, man who has strayed from God expresses the lowest that is present

in him. Those who live with God, like Paul, can learn to deal with abundance and lack (Phil 4:11-12).

It is also possible that the city they go to wants to give some water, but there is not nearly enough for everyone's needs. In any case, those in need place their hope in something other than God, because they do not return to Him.

From a spiritual point of view, Christians are allowed to be a 'city' where the thirsty can go. They can be that if they themselves have gone to the Lord Jesus as 'thirsty' and been given a drink by Him. Whoever has drunk of the 'water of life' He gives (Rev 22:17), has received the Holy Spirit. And such a person can then pass water on to others, that is to say, bring to others that Source of living water (Jn 7:37-39).

Amos 4:9 | Judgment on the Fruit of the Land

*9 "I smote you with scorching [wind] and mildew;
And the caterpillar was devouring
Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees;
Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD.*

Scorching [wind] or blasting is a fungus that affects the rye. Mildew is a fungus that affects various types of grain. The three main trees of Israel – the vine, the fig tree and the olive tree – are devoured by the caterpillar. Botanical diseases and caterpillar, everything is at God's disposal and He can use them to reach the conscience of His people.

If the farmer looked over his fields and let the desolate sight of them sink in, and then looked up to seek His God, God would have reached His goal. Unfortunately, the chorus here too reads: "Yet you have not returned to Me."

Amos 4:10 | Plague and War

*10 "I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt;
I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses,
And I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils;
Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD.*

In Leviticus 26 the plague and the sword are also mentioned in one verse (Lev 26:25). There it sounds still as a warning. God threatens the people with these plagues if they continue to resist Him in spite of earlier punishments (Lev 26:23-24). The plague comes from Him. The sword also comes from Him, although by the hand of the enemy. The “sword” probably refers to a period of war with Syria (2Kgs 13:3).

God acts with His people as He did with Egypt. This proves how deep the people have sunk (Deu 7:15; 28:60). The plague that God has sent into Egypt is the cattle plague (Exo 9:3). Then He separated Egypt from His people (Exo 8:22), but now the plagues over His people follow one another, to strike their conscience.

The capture of their horses means the deprivation of military strength. The stench comes from the corpses of those killed by the plague and in the war, whereby we can think of both people and horses. The losses were suffered in the war against the Syrians (2Kgs 8:12; 13:3,7). The stench that has come into their noses is, as it were, the stench of their sins, to remind them of their sins and of the result of their sins.

Amos 4:11 | A Firebrand Snatched From a Blaze

*11 “I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze;
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.*

The reference to Sodom and Gomorrah is to indicate that the destruction is complete. Turning the people upside down refers to the destruction of the state after war has been waged on its territory (Joel 2:3). This destruction is referred to in several places (Isa 1:9; 13:19; Jer 50:40).

The destruction is complete, but is not definitive. Some will escape judgment. They are compared with “a firebrand snatched from a blaze”. The fire has taken hold of it, and if a power had not come from outside that tore the piece of wood out of the fire, it would have been completely consumed (cf. Zec 3:2). This is how it is with the people. The fact that they are still there is due to a God Who did not totally destroy them. Just as He saved Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah, He will also bring back a remnant of the people from the captivity of the Syrian (2Kgs 13:5; 17:27-28).

Amos 4:12 | Prepare to Meet God

*12 "Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel;
Because I will do this to you,
Prepare to meet your God, O Israel."*

Verses 6-11 deal with the punishments that God has brought upon the people in the past. This verse is about the actions of God in the near future. If all God's actions to bring them back on the right track have no result, only one thing remains: that they will come face to face with God Himself as Judge. To say it with James: "Behold, the Judge is standing right at the door" (Jam 5:9b). In verse 13 God's majesty is impressively represented.

The moment will come when God will ask them to account for their actions and then have to judge them. The call here is not to make the people repent, although that should never be ruled out. The die is cast. The people have sworn in all tones that they do not want to repent.

The prophet now calls on the people to prepare themselves to appear before God. Let them have their defense ready to respond to the questions God will ask about their behavior. Not that they will be able to save themselves by doing so. Therefore, let the people brace themselves to hear God's judgment and bow to its execution. While the people as a whole are being addressed, there may be a few in the people who repent at this thought and do not let it come to a confrontation with the Judge.

For us Christians, too, the call "prepare to meet your God" has an awesome meaning. For those who believe in Christ as their Savior, this encounter with God will not be an event to be faced with fear and trembling. Such a person may know God as his Father.

Nevertheless, there may be things present in our life as Christians that do not make the thought of an encounter with God an event he looks forward to. If that is so, let us confess sin and get rid of the wrong. Let us no longer maintain ourselves and honestly judge ourselves. If we do, we will not be condemned with the world (1Cor 11:31-32).

Amos 4:13 | The Majesty of God

13 For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind

*And declares to man what are His thoughts,
He who makes dawn into darkness
And treads on the high places of the earth,
The LORD God of hosts is His name.*

The LORD God of hosts is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is the origin of mighty, impressive mountains. What is man compared to this? God is also the origin of the uncatchable wind, which He can make swell into an all-destroying hurricane, which people cannot control.

That God, from Whose hand nature and the forces of nature originate and are maintained by Him, also occupies Himself with man. He knows man to the deepest of his being, He knows his considerations (Jer 11:20a; Psa 139:1-6). The expression 'His thoughts' does not refer to God, but to man.

God reveals to man what He knows about him. He does this through the prophets, among others through Amos. God will not only judge man according to his actions, but also according to the condition of his heart. When man has to appear before God in judgment, He makes "the dawn into darkness". Man in his prosperity without God thinks he lives in the light. The judgment of God will change that into darkness.

For Him nothing is too high, He surpasses everything. Everything will eventually be submitted to His feet, that is, to the feet of the Lord Jesus, He is God (Psa 8:6; Heb 2:8). Knowing that all things are in God's hand, that nothing escapes His control, may be a comfort for the believer. God controls both the wide universe and the life of the believer with all its joys and troubles.

Amos 5

Introduction

In a dirge, God expresses His sorrow, because His people are incorrigible and He has to remove them from the land. When the bond with Him is broken, death has entered. In spite of that, there is still several times the call to seek Him and to live. Amos presents to the people their iniquities and places them in the light of the majesty of the LORD.

The complete blindness of the people is shown by the fact that they long for the day of the LORD. By their erroneous thinking they believe that that day will be judgment on their enemies and a blessing for them. In expressive language Amos makes this fatal mistake clear to them.

Amos also deprives them of the illusion that the LORD will appreciate their religious feasts. In harsh terms, the LORD makes His disgust clear. The cause of their idolatry lies at the very beginning of their history. He takes them back there. Then He shows that they have not changed since that time. Finally, their incorrigible behavior leads to the fact that they will all be led into exile.

Amos 5:1 | A Dirge

| *1 Hear this word which I take up for you as a dirge, O house of Israel:*

For the third time the call sounds: "Hear this word." First, this call was addressed to all the people, when God sent His prophets to them (Amos 3:1). They did not listen to them. Then He called Filistea and Egypt to testify against the people. Then the call was addressed to Samaria, where there is an insatiable hunger for material prosperity (Amos 4:1). He is also directed against the abominable mixing of the service of the LORD with the service of the idols.

After these unsuccessful attempts to reach the hearts of the people through His word, God again makes His voice heard. Though still intended as a warning this time, the word now contains a dirge or a lamentation about the inevitable fall. God sings a lamentation through Amos. Jeremiah also

lets hear a lamentation, but he stands on the ruins of Jerusalem. Amos stands among a people bathed in opulence, while for them the air is clean. The word ‘dirge’ can also be translated as ‘corpse song’. It is a song about someone who has died (cf. 2Sam 1:17; 2Chr 35:25). The song is sung because the eye of the prophet sees the doom as already present and the popular existence of Israel has come to an end. Amos here is a real pessimist in the eyes of the fat people.

The “house of Israel” is the same as the house of Joseph (verse 6) and refers to the ten tribes.

Amos 5:2 | Fallen

*2 She has fallen, she will not rise again —
The virgin Israel.
She [lies] neglected on her land;
There is none to raise her up.*

The song is about the consequences of the Assyrian invasion, which will be deadly for Israel. Amos calls Israel “virgin” here, a much nicer name than “cows of Bashan” (Amos 4:1). God calls her here as such because He wanted her to be so, a virgin who would only be for Him, not tainted by her dealings with the surrounding peoples. But alas, she has fallen (cf. 2Sam 1:19,25). How that happened is written in the following verse.

With ‘virgin’ also the tragedy of an untimely death is depicted, something that happens in the blossom and beauty of life. The fact that she “has fallen ... on her land” indicates that it was done by an enemy who invaded her land and killed her there. That she died does not mean that it is over and done with. God is omnipotent and will give life again in this people (Rom 11:11-15).

She is incapable of raising herself and there is no one who can or would help her. Her situation is hopeless.

Amos 5:3 | Only a Remnant Is Left

*3 For thus says the Lord GOD,
“The city which goes forth a thousand [strong]*

*Will have a hundred left,
And the one which goes forth a hundred [strong]
Will have ten left to the house of Israel."*

In this verse the explanation for the dirge is given. When the king of Assyria invades Israel with his armies, the cities will defend themselves. They will even pull out their cities to push back the intruder. But their attempts will have a dramatic development. Their audacity will allow the enemy to reduce their ranks so much that "to the house of Israel" only a handful, a tenth, will be left.

Amos 5:4 | Seek Me That You May Live

*4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel,
"Seek Me that you may live.*

This word opposes the irony of Amos 4 (Amos 4:4). It is not about religion, but about *God*. The words "thus says the LORD to the house of Israel" sound here for the last time to Israel with an invitation to be saved. In verse 16 the judgment is announced. Three times the call to seek comes (verses 4,6,14). 'To seek' means to turn to God with confidence and boldness. The word "seek" is in the imperative. It is not about continuing the ordinary life, but finding and obtaining the true life.

Although in the Old Testament 'life' often means spiritual life, it does not seem to be the purpose here. Amos makes his call to seek God with the purpose that there will be a national restoration. After all, Israel is a fallen nation (verse 2). If they truly turn to the LORD with repentance for their deeds, there will be life for all their people. For only in God is life. Everything outside Him is dead. "He who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1Jn 5:12b). Similarly, the prodigal son was also dead because he lived outside of fellowship with his father (Lk 15:24,32; Rev 3:1b; Eph 2:1).

In order to live, man does not need religion, but a Savior. The cause of all misery is the wandering away from God. The blame always lies with man. God for His part has done everything and is doing everything to make man happy. But just as it has already happened in paradise, man is always so easily tempted to look at the attractive things around him. If he is car-

ried away by this, it will result in death (Jam 1:14). Israel experienced this first hand in its history. But just as the voice of God came to Adam with the question: "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9), the invitation comes to the people of Israel, and to every single person who has lost God: "Seek Me that you may live."

When it is said that you must seek something, it means that you have lost it. You can lose a lot of things of value, even attach a reward for the finder, but if you have lost God, you have lost everything. The reward for those who find God is: life (Pro 8:35).

Amos 5:5 | Another Warning

*5 "But do not resort to Bethel
And do not come to Gilgal,
Nor cross over to Beersheba;
For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity
And Bethel will come to trouble.*

Earlier Amos ironically called them to come to Bethel to sin (Amos 4:4). Now he abandons the irony and in bitter seriousness exhorts them not to go there. God is not really sought if He is not sought exclusively. He does not tolerate rivals.

According to their own experience, Amos' call to seek God is forcing an open door. After all, they are looking for God, aren't they? For that they go to Bethel, Gilgal and even all the way to Beersheba? We now know Bethel and Gilgal. Beersheba is known by the patriarchs. There we find Abraham (Gen 21:22-34) and also Isaac (Gen 26:24) and Jacob (Gen 46:1).

Imagine: God used to speak there with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then God must be present there in a special way. And look what they are willing to go through for it. Beersheba is situated all the way in the south of Judah. They even have to cross the border and then travel a long way. So going to Beersheba gets the character of a pilgrimage (cf. Amos 8:14).

In the judgment announcement only Gilgal and Bethel are mentioned. Beersheba is not mentioned because Israel, and not Judah, is the subject of preaching and judgment. Still God warns that they have to move away

from the places where His judgment will come (cf. Rev 18:4). He who seeks perishable gods will perish with them.

Amos 5:6 | Again: Seek and Live!

6 *“Seek the LORD that you may live,
Or He will break forth like a fire, O house of Joseph,
And it will consume with none to quench [it] for Bethel,*

It is unacceptable to think that you are seeking God and then be told that you are mistaken, that you are seeking wrong. It is to jump out of your skin that that farmer from Tekoa tells you that where you are, you cannot find the LORD because He is not there. Then you have fulfilled your religious obligations all these years for nothing so bravely. Surely that cannot be true, can it?

How difficult we too are, to be convinced that tradition has no guarantee whatsoever that we are ‘right’. The fact that the Lord used to work somewhere is no guarantee that we are in right place today.

The Lord Himself determines where He is and can be found. That is Jerusalem for Israel (Deu 12:5-12) and that is where the church comes together for us (Mt 18:20). The characteristics for the coming together of the church He indicates in His Word. He will consume a self-willed religion (Lev 10:1-5). “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29).

Everything can still go according to the rules, but if everything happens to become better ourselves, to feel good about it, then the Lord rejects it and nothing is left of it. His favor is not for sale with a fat cow. His favor cannot be obtained by performing religious acts like baptism and the Lord’s Supper or by giving money to charity.

All that matters is what our heart goes out to. Is that to Him or to ourselves? And we can camouflage this ‘ourselves’ very well. We do look for a place of worship, but it must be a pleasant place to be. The sermon should neither be too long nor too direct. Some bells and whistles to liven things up are most welcome. Nice also that tourist church. In the coolness of the evening, after a day of sunbathing on the beach, it’s nice to satisfy your spiritual feelings. We even are willing to drive half an hour for it! Whether

God is happy with it? What a question. Of course He is. We don't forget Him in our vacation, do we?

The question is not whether we forget Him or not, but whether He takes first place in all things. Too often He is the last item on our time budget. When we have time left and we have nothing else to do, we also visit a meeting during the week. And we give ourselves a pat on the back that we managed once again to visit a prayer meeting or Bible study of the church. That attitude, that mindset, is increasing hand over hand in our welfare society. We all become victims of it if we do not listen to the words of, among others, a prophet like Amos.

The "house of Joseph" is the ten tribes realm of Israel. Among the ten tribes, Ephraim, the son of Joseph, occupies the most important place. Hosea often speaks about Ephraim as an indication for the ten tribes realm.

The fire of which Amos speaks here is the fire of which he spoke earlier (Amos 1:4,7,10,12,14; 2:2). It represents the judgment of the imminent scattering. Once again, the people are confronted with the choice. If they seek the LORD, life will be their part with all the blessing and favor that goes with it; if they continue to practice their self-willed religion, the judgment will come on them with all the horror that comes with it. It is hard to imagine how spiritually blinded the people must be to choose the second option.

Amos 5:7 | Wormwood

7 [For] those who turn justice into wormwood
And cast righteousness down to the earth."

If God does not come first and He is not served as He wills, the neighbor will also not get what is due to him. He who does not recognize God's rights does not recognize the rights of his fellow man. He who does not seek God, seeks himself and the other will always be the victim of that.

Wormwood is a shrub or bush with an unpleasant smell and a very bitter taste. It serves as an indication of what is unpleasant and grievous, with the thought of death and destruction (Rev 8:11). Proper justice, that of God, is sweet. If justice is distorted, it is bitter. It is dangerous and deadly for society.

“Cast ... down to the earth” corresponds to our “trampling underfoot”. It is a stronger expression for ‘bending justice’. The justice is for them an unworthy and despised thing that is viewed with contempt.

Amos 5:8 | God’s Majesty

*8 He who made the Pleiades and Orion
And changes deep darkness into morning,
Who also darkens day [into] night,
Who calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the surface of the earth,
The LORD is His name.*

The connection between verse 7 and verse 8 is as follows. In verse 7 the actions of people are described. This is in stark contrast with Him to Whom they are accountable, namely the LORD the Almighty, as verse 8 describes Him. He is able to bring a sudden judgment about them.

From the twisted state of man, Amos’ gaze goes to the Almighty in His incorruptible majesty, who only needs to speak one word and man is no more. God’s actions are completely different from those of man. With Him everything runs via a fixed pattern. His actions are transparent and not crooked like those of man. You can rely on Him. Just look at nature and at His hand in history.

“The Pleiades” is a galaxy that consists of seven big stars and a large number of smaller ones. The Hebrew name for “Orion” means ‘strong’, ‘hero’, ‘giant’ and seems to indicate that it is a mighty constellation. Both names also occur in Job (Job 9:9; 38:31). In the ancient East these two constellations served to indicate the change of seasons.

God also took care of the alternation between day and night, a process that continues without anyone being able to stop it. This is also how it goes with the cycle of the rain, which is controlled by Him (Jer 14:22).

What happens in nature is an illustration of the judgmental action of the LORD and can be applied to our daily lives. He can change the deepest misery and sadness into joy and happiness. It can also change the bright day of prosperity into a night of woe and disaster. In “deep darkness” the

horrors of the night (Job 24:17), especially those of death itself (Job 3:5,10) and of spiritual misery (Isa 9:1), are recognized.

The Almighty can change the deep darkness into the light of a new morning, and the deepest misery into happiness and salvation. He can also darken the bright day of happiness into the dark night of misfortune. He is also able to summon the waters of the sea – like once the deluge – and pour them out over the earth and annihilate the wicked. The words of this verse refer to the judicial acts of the Almighty in the world’s space.

F.B. Meyer sees in this verse an exuberant invitation from God to seek Him. He makes the following beautiful application of this verse:

‘God made the Pleiades, which introduces spring and from which the word goes: Seek Him when life is full of wonderful perspectives and promises, in days of love and joy. But He also made the Orion, the harbinger of the storm. This speaks of autumn, where the message sounds: Be sure to seek Him when the sky is covered with clouds and He forces you to get in the boat and brave the storm.’

He also changes “deep darkness into morning”. That is, He changes the shadow of death into the light of the dawning day. He gives relief in hopeless matters or illnesses. When that happens, we may seek Him to thank Him for that. We may also seek Him when He darkens day into night. When the waters overflow us and all the works of man are destroyed, we may flee to the Name of the LORD Who is a strong tower.

Amos 5:9 | Nothing Can Withstand Him

*9 It is He who flashes forth [with] destruction upon the strong,
So that destruction comes upon the fortress.*

The judicial acts of the Almighty can not be defied by any strong man or fortress. No man, no matter how strong, or man’s work, no matter how powerful, can withstand the Divine Majesty. The fact that He “flashes forth”, shows the fastness and inimitability of the judgment He brings about to rebellious or defiant elements. By the judgment He clears the way for the handing out of blessings.

In the previous verse we have seen His sovereignty in creation. In this verse we see His sovereignty in the history of mankind in the overthrowing of the fortress, which is the military strength. Just as God allows the changes in nature to succeed each other in a cycle, so He does in a political or military sense.

Amos 5:10 | Standing up for Justice

*10 They hate him who reproves in the gate,
And they abhor him who speaks [with] integrity.*

The city gate is the place where justice takes place (cf. verse 15; Deu 21:19; Jos 20:4; Rth 4:1). If there is a judge there who cannot be bribed, they will hate him. Or if there are judges who bend the law, they will hate those who speak with integrity, reliable witnesses. That hatred and abhorrence are not only cherished in the heart, but are openly expressed. Those who today stand up for the right of unborn life, mutilated life – the mentally and/or physically disabled – the demented elderly, the vulnerable in society, can count on the hatred of the elite.

Respect for life in a form that does not contribute to the growth of prosperity, which is rather a hindrance to it, has (almost) disappeared out of society. Whoever raises his voice and points out how God wants it, whoever dares to say how matters really stand, does not make himself popular.

It is not just about a difference of opinion, but about a fundamental hatred of everything that comes from God. It is a hatred like Ahab has toward the prophet Micah (1Kgs 22:8). Micah tells Ahab how God thinks about the situation, but Ahab does not want to hear that. Ahab does not want to listen to God and therefore he hates anyone who reminds him of God.

Amos 5:11 | God's Righteous Retribution

*11 Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor
And exact a tribute of grain from them,
[Though] you have built houses of well-hewn stone,
Yet you will not live in them;
You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.*

It does not stop at hating people who handle the law correctly and raise their voices against injustice. They show in their own actions that they themselves also violate the law (Isa 29:21). The little one or the poor one is trampled by depriving him of his right. Even what serves him as a livelihood is extorted from him. When unscrupulous people take the law into their hands, the law is twisted and justice becomes injustice. The socially weak suffer from this.

But God will take their lawsuit upon Himself. As punishment for their injustice, He will take their goods from them. With this He will act according to what He has told them (Deu 28:30).

The “well-hewn stone” is the beautiful stone with which they build. They have bought these stones with money that they obtained through their bribery, scandals and extortion. In this way they want to show how much they rely on their own power and prosperity (Isa 9:9). But they will not dwell in it, they will not know peace in it. Nothing will remain of their pleasant vineyards, which symbolize the joys of life. Their joy will turn into mourning.

Amos 5:12 | I Know

*12 For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great,
[You] who distress the righteous [and] accept bribes
And turn aside the poor in the gate.*

God knows everything they have done wrong. The many transgressions and the many sins are indicated in their core. They are listed: oppression, bribery – with the money in your hand you have the right on your side – and bending the right to the detriment of the poor (Amos 2:7). The latter is diametrically opposed to what the law says (Exo 23:7; Deu 16:19). Amos points to several sins, not as if they were mere incidents. They are repeated sins. They have become a way of life.

As we sin more often, conscience will speak less and less. In the long run, sin is no longer sin, but an acquired right. We have then forgotten the original right. And if we have any idea that our actions cannot be allowed, we quickly forget much of what we have done. But God forgets nothing. For

Him the perfect standard of the right remains, inflexible. He knows every deviation from it and will repay it righteously.

There is one Righteous, the Lord Jesus, Who has always lived by that perfect standard. His perfect life aroused the hatred of people who were condemned by what He said and did. He handled justice perfectly and denounced injustice. As the perfect Small One, the Poor One, He was trampled. It was precisely because of His testimony of the truth that He was killed. And precisely therein lies the salvation for everyone who acknowledges that God knows everything and shows this by repentance for his deeds. "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

Amos 5:13 | The Prudent Person Keeps Silent

13 *Therefore at such a time the prudent person keeps silent, for it is an evil time.*

Amos does not answer the question of whether the prudent person would do well to keep silent. He observes the fact. The prudent person can keep silent because otherwise he will take the hatred of the rich on his neck. He can also keep silent because he sees that nobody is listening anyway and that only the language of money speaks. He can keep silent because an appeal to the governors will be to no avail, corrupt, bribed as they are, so that no justice will be done to him anyway. The flow of evil can be so great that it is pointless to turn against it. If it is a time of spiritual corruption, when all talking and admonishing does not help, "a time" to be "silent" (Ecc 3:7) has arrived.

Silence can also refer to the attitude that the prudent person adopts when seeing God's righteous punishment. He will not rebel against it, because he realizes that God allows His punishments to come because it is a time when evil reigns supreme. In that time the prudent person seeks refuge in the sanctuary. He does not protest, but trusts in God's intervention.

Possibly with this 'prudent person' is meant a *maskil*. The name *maskilim* means 'teachers'. This is a group of special men of God. They are men who in the end times will gain insight into the thoughts and ways of God in order to teach others (Dan 11:32b-33; 12:3,10).

Amos 5:14 | God Is With His People

*14 Seek good and not evil, that you may live;
And thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you,
Just as you have said!*

Again, in between the judgments, we hear from Amos an exhortation to seek God. Not that he thinks it is of much benefit, for soon after he goes on with his punishments, convinced as he is that Israel is incorrigible. Still, he cannot resist pointing out the escape route every time.

The “good” is all that is good. Something is only good if it is in connection with God. He is the personification of the ‘good’. “No one is good except God alone” (Mk 10:18). The exhortation to seek “not evil” does not only mean that one does not focus on evil, but also rejects or escapes it. If God perceives this in His people, they will live and not be given up to the judgment of death. They will then be able to count on the presence of “the LORD God of hosts” in their midst. He will bless His people nationally and individually and also defend them and fight for them (cf. Deu 31:8; Jdg 6:12). Then they will be able to say in truth that God is with them.

Now they do say that God is with them, but that is only so in their imagination. It is a lip confession. They think as God’s chosen people they can simply claim God for themselves, without wondering if God can be with them. God can only be with those who are with Him (2Chr 15:2).

Amos 5:15 | The Right Mind

*15 Hate evil, love good,
And establish justice in the gate!
Perhaps the LORD God of hosts
May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*

In verse 14 the emphasis is on the action, on what the people must do. In verse 15, the emphasis is on the mindset the people should have toward good and evil. What the people do with good and evil must come from the right mind. The forsaking of evil can also happen out of selfish motives. Hating evil therefore goes much further than just not doing it. For example, loving the good is on a higher plane than doing good. Doing good can also come from an impure source. Whoever does the good because he

loves the good, proves that he is acting in connection with the source of the good, that is God.

Loving the good is first and foremost shown in establishing justice. Those who speak justice can only do so impartially, without pursuing their own advantage, if they are in connection with God, Who acts without regard for the person. The exercise of justice may not be a matter of arbitrariness, but it must be established according to Divine norms. Then the quarrels and oppressions will come to an end and there will be room for harmony and peace.

The word “perhaps” used by Amos is not an expression of doubt about the grace of God. It is the “perhaps” of the truly broken heart and defeated spirit, of someone who realizes that he has forfeited every right to forgiveness. It indicates that the measure of Israel’s sins is full and no salvation can be hoped for if God would act according to His righteousness.

Joseph is mentioned to indicate that the LORD will be with them as He was with Joseph if they will seek the good.

Amos 5:16 | Lamentation

*16 Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts, the Lord,
“There is wailing in all the plazas,
And in all the streets they say, ‘Alas! Alas!’
They also call the farmer to mourning
And professional mourners to lamentation.*

Here again looms before Amos’ spirit the future judgment that fits the reality of the moment. His hope for a conversion of Israel is unfortunately only short-lived. All exhortations to come to terms with God are in vain. “Therefore” He must go through the land judging. As a result, the air will be filled with mourning.

The mourning complaint is heard in the crying out: “Alas! Alas!” (cf. Jer 22:18). It will not only be heard in the city in all the plazas and in all the streets, but also in the countryside. Those who know lamentations could be hired to sing lamentations. In Scripture we come across lamentation women (Jer 9:17), lamentation men (Ecc 12:5) and men and women who sing lamentations (2Chr 35:25). That is not to say that they were all ‘pro-

fessional lamentation singers'. They seem to be such people who can put a sad face on this occasion. They have no grief of their own, but they are only present to express the mourning of others.

Amos 5:17 | The LORD Will Pass Through the Midst

*17 "And in all the vineyards [there is] wailing,
Because I will pass through the midst of you," says the LORD.*

Even in the vineyards, a place of joy in the Bible, there is wailing. The causer of the lamentation is the LORD Himself, Who passes through their midst. It reminds us of what He did in the past, at the liberation of His people from Egypt. Then He went through the midst of Egypt (Exo 11:4). There came wailing out of the houses of the Egyptians for the death of all firstborn (Exo 12:29-30). He only passed by where the blood of the lamb was at the doorposts.

Here God goes through the midst of His own land to judge. This means that Israel has become equal to Egypt. Now, however, there is no blood of the lamb nor a sparing passing (Amos 7:8; 8:2), for Israel is no longer the people of the covenant. It is not 'if' I go through your midst, but "because" I go through your midst. It is not a human enemy that is destroying the land, no, the enemy is God Himself (cf. Joel 2:11).

Amos 5:18 | The Day of the LORD

*18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD,
For what purpose [will] the day of the LORD [be] to you?
It [will be] darkness and not light;*

The "alas" (cf. Amos 6:1) is the result of the LORD going through the midst of Israel. In spite of everything the LORD announces, the people continue to believe that nothing will happen to them. For they know only too well that the day of the LORD brings doom to the Gentiles, not to them. They believe that on that day the LORD will act in their favor by defeating their enemies on the one hand and establishing them forever as His people on the other hand. They regard their election as the guarantee of that favor.

Their longing for that day shows that they have a hardened conscience. For these people, says Amos, that coming day will be a day of darkness. It

does not occur to them that they are behaving like the Gentiles and therefore that day will be a day of judgment for them as well.

The “day of the LORD” refers to the period when the Lord Jesus will once again interfere directly with world affairs. That period begins when the church has been raptured. The events related to this day are described in the book of Revelation (Revelation 6-19). There we see how the judgments come about the godless world, the apostate Christianity and the unbelieving Israel. All are judged by the Man whom God has “appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). Then man’s day has come to its end, the period in which man has acted according to his own will and in rebellion against God.

They say they are longing for the day of the Lord, but how can man long for that day when he lives without taking God into account? Longing for that day is only possible if we walk in obedience and holiness with God.

We can also make an application to today. We can talk about the situation in Christianity and then say: ‘Fortunately the Lord will come soon and then He will make everything right.’ But if we ourselves have not distanced ourselves from general unfaithfulness, His coming will also mean judgment or embarrassment for us. The day of the Lord is a day we can only long for if our consciences are free and if we walk in obedience and holiness.

It is a vain and brutal illusion to long for the day of the Lord, while we consciously find ourselves in the midst of what is contrary to Scripture. This seems to be the sin that Israel is guilty of here. The expectation of the future cherished by the people has a carnal character. This shows that one does not know oneself and is blind to one’s own misconduct and also does not know God in His holy indignation at the fact that this misconduct is found among His people. In all this they believe that God is with them (verse 14).

Amos 5:19-20 | No Escape

*19 As when a man flees from a lion
And a bear meets him,
Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall*

And a snake bites him.

*20 [Will] not the day of the LORD [be] darkness instead of light,
Even gloom with no brightness in it?*

Amos vividly shows how there is no escaping judgment. He knows the pictures he uses from his life in the wilderness. When they think they are safe from the lion, the bear comes. They think they have escaped the bear and imagine themselves safe in a house. They sigh a sigh of relief and look for support against a wall, from which a snake emerges that bites them.

This contrasts sharply with their vision of the day of the LORD which they look forward to as a consolation and complete salvation. This false certainty will be their downfall. Nowhere they will be safe, judgment will overtake them. There is no hope, no ray of light, for those who do not repent.

Amos 5:21 | God Disgusts Fake

*21 "I hate, I reject your festivals,
Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.*

It is as if, between this verse and the previous one, we hear the reproachful question from Amos' contemporaries as to how he can make such terrible threats in their direction. Surely they are faithful sons of Israel who serve the LORD as meticulously as possible, aren't they? They make sacrifices, have meetings, sing their songs.

Amos unmasks their outward appearance. Israel is so blind to their sinful state that they continue to keep religious feasts and gatherings in the assumption that God will be very happy with them. They live in the false confidence of being God's chosen people, with whom it cannot go wrong, certainly not if they satisfy Him.

Many people have such an idea about God. They live for themselves, but sometimes they give God something in the form of a regular visit to church or meeting. After all, once a year at Christmas is also regular. Then He has nothing to grumble about.

God speaks here of "your festivals" and "your solemn assemblies". These are their festivals and solemn assemblies and not "the LORD's appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations" which He calls "My

appointed times" (Lev 23:2). This is also how we read in the days of the Lord Jesus on earth about "the Passover" as "the feast of the Jews" (Jn 6:4). The feasts celebrated by the people were conceived by Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes realm (1Kgs 12:33). Afraid that his subjects would go to Jerusalem to serve God, he set up fake feasts to be held at the golden calves in Bethel and Dan. It all looks a bit like the feasts of the LORD prescribed by law, but in reality they are idol feasts.

God hates all such religious fuss. To Him it is nothing more than a form service. He sees through their hypocrisy and abhors it (cf. Isa 1:11-15). His people, who come to Him with great words, behave toward Him as one "who blesses his friend with a loud voice early in the morning", but "it will be reckoned a curse to him" (Pro 27:14). What the LORD desires is "truth in the innermost being" (Psa 51:6).

"No delight" is literally "not like the smell" has to do with what they believe to be a "fragrant smell". God turns up His nose at it, He detests such feasts and assemblies.

Amos 5:22 | God Does Not Look at Their Offerings

22 *"Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept [them];
And I will not [even] look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.*

There are three offerings: burnt offerings, grain offerings and peace offerings. These are the three voluntary offerings described in Leviticus 1-3. But where are the sin offerings? It is remarkable that these are not mentioned. The people are not aware of their sinful state. How lovely it is to celebrate together. God loves it when His children have fun. Do you think He always wants to be reminded of all those negative things? No sadness. Laughing and being happy, that's what it's all about!

The peace offering of the fatlings is a meal offering, a community offering. Enjoying together all the good things God has given. We make songs that express our joy. And when you ask if God is also happy with it, that is asking for the known way. Of course He is. The service has to connect with our time. Well organized, smooth songs, powerful, especially short,

sermon, cheerful people. Clap your hands, stamp your feet. Express your feelings. Feel happy.

Isn't it up to Him to determine the form and content of the service? In practice, the roles are reversed. He gets more and more the role of Spectator instead of the Center about Whom everything revolves. The human being becomes more and more the center about whom everything revolves. God is not satisfied with that. He cannot do that, not for Himself and not for His people. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Rom 11:36). Where He is not the absolute Center, He cannot be. He turns away from such offerings, He does not want to see them.

For those who believe that God is satisfied with everything as long as it is sincerely done, this discovery is shocking. Certainly, the Father seeks worshippers, but He gives His conditions: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23-24). He wants to be worshiped in a spiritual way and in accordance with the way He has revealed Himself in His Word, which is the truth.

Amos 5:23 | God Does Not Listen to Their Expressions of Joy

23 *"Take away from Me the noise of your songs;
I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.*

Besides the sacrifices, there is also the music, which enlivens the festivals. Here too the homemade worship service in Bethel resembles the true worship service in Jerusalem (1Chr 16:40). It is all surrogate. Because it is purely about entertainment and the right mind of the heart is lacking, God does not want to hear it. Just as with the offerings, which we now bring in a spiritual sense, so it is also with the music. We find no indications for the use of musical instruments in the New Testament meetings of the church. The more man and his experience become central, the louder the call for their use will become.

In itself, the use of musical instruments in church meetings is the introduction of something from Judaism into Christianity. We can read in His Word, especially in the letter to the Galatians, that God does not tolerate any mixture between Christianity and Judaism.

But even if we would be free of Judaism and sing our songs beautifully in four voices and without musical accompaniment, the question remains whether our hearts are really focused on the Father and the Son.

Someone once said: 'On Sundays I am a Christian, but during the week I am a businessman.' All kinds of variations on this are conceivable. God is not keen on such an attitude. Then on Sunday you can say thanksgiving in beautiful sentences, but He does not hear it. To Him it is "noise", of which He says: 'Take away from My presence!'

Amos 5:24 | It Is About Justice and Righteousness

24 *"But let justice roll down like waters
And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

What God wants is justice and righteousness in dealing with one another as members of His people. Amos has already sharply denounced their wrongful actions and the trampling on righteousness. Their lives are imbued with it. They have wronged the law in wormwood and brought righteousness to the ground (verse 7). They are abundant in committing injustice. This has to change into a benevolent flow of justice and righteousness. Without this change, their entire outward worship has no value. Justice and righteousness must be allowed to run free, without anything to hold them back or set them aside.

Another view is that Amos here points to justice and righteousness that will strike Israel as a judgment of God because of the aforementioned things, and that nothing can stop this judgment. The judgment as an exercise of righteousness awaits Israel, and the world.

Amos 5:25 | No Sacrifices

25 *"Did you present Me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness
for forty years, O house of Israel?"*

The prophet asks the question to indicate that they did not. It is possible that just as they neglected circumcision in the wilderness (Jos 5:5), they also neglected to sacrifice. It is plausible that they may have sacrificed quite a bit, but a lot was lacking in worship (cf. Isa 43:23).

By the way, it is questionable whether this verse is exclusively a reproach. It may be that the LORD means to say that, just as in the land now, it was not primarily about their sacrifices in the wilderness, but about their hearts (cf. Jer 7:22-23). Also in the wilderness, the sacrifices were not the main thing, but the doing of righteousness.

Amos compares the well-organized sacrificial service of his contemporaries with the sacrificial service during the forty-year wilderness journey. At that time sacrifices were almost not brought. The fact that God also remembers that time as a period in which the people followed Him (Jer 2:2; Hos 2:14), stems solely from His love and grace. In spite of their persistent idolatry, He has also seen expressions of love for Him. He does not forget these expressions. There are no such expressions in Amos' days.

This verse can therefore also be seen as a ray of His grace that contrasts sharply with the situation in the midst of which Amos finds himself and which he denounces. Unrighteousness and violence prevail, the poor are oppressed, God's Name is dishonored and terrible idolatry is committed.

Amos 5:26 | Idolatry in the Wilderness

26 *You also carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves.*

When the LORD asks in the previous verse: "Did you present Me with sacrifices?", that question echoes God's exclusive right to sacrifice. He asks, as it were: 'Have you sacrificed only to Me and to no one else?' If God is not served completely and alone, He is not served at all. This principle is always valid. God never shares His honor with anyone or anything else. That is why it is hurtful to give honor to other gods together with a service to God.

The previous verse deals with Israel's behavior in the wilderness. Maybe there is a thought of grace connected to that verse, in this verse it is unthinkable. Amos points to sheer idolatry. That Israel committed idolatry in the wilderness is clear through the history with the golden calf (Exo 32:1-6).

The service with the golden calf in Bethel in Amos' time is only a renewal of the golden calf in the wilderness. The golden calf then and that in Bethel

under Jeroboam II shows the spiritual bond that exists between the condition of the people in the time of Amos and their original position when they were brought out of Egypt by the grace and power of the LORD.

It did not stop with the golden calf. After the punishment for sin with the golden calf, they did not stop serving the idols. Amos speaks about how they surrendered all their history to idolatry. Stephen quotes these verses from Amos in his speech to the Council to prove this (Acts 7:39-43). The people boasted of a service to God, but the power of the quote is that they did not sacrifice to God, but to the idols. The people have always served the idols. Their origin is connected with the idols. Abraham's family served the idols before God called Abraham (Jos 24:2). The people served them in Egypt (Jos 24:14) and also in the wilderness (Amos 5:25-27).

There is a clear reproach in this verse that Israel was guilty of idolatry early in its existence. Stubbornly, in ever new forms, they persisted in it.

In what Amos says here, there is another principle that contains an important lesson for us. The principle is that God, when He judges, always goes back to the first sin. The lesson is that it is important for an astray Christian to go back to the moment when he went outside of fellowship with God for the first time. The moment of the deviation must be sought and confessed. The root must be judged, not just the deed.

Amos 5:27 | Into Exile

27 Therefore, I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

In verse 25 we have a look back into the past, verse 26 places us in the practice of Amos' days, while in verse 27 we have the future for our attention. The people have filled the land with their appalling idolatry because their hearts are filled with it. God will purify His land of idolatry by removing its workers out of it. They have imported the pagan idols, God will export the idolaters. They will be taken away with their idols, even beyond the country of Syria, of which Damascus is the capital.

"Beyond Damascus", that is the road to Assyria. Stephen also says "beyond Babylon" (Acts 7:43) when he addresses the descendants of the re-

turnees from the Babylonian exile, the remnant of the two tribes. They will be scattered beyond Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Thus it will surely happen, for He Who says this is “the LORD”, the God of the covenant. Because of the breaking of His covenant by His people He has the right to act in this way with His people. His Name is “God of hosts”. He also has the power to fulfill His purpose, whereby all heavenly and earthly hosts are available to Him.

Amos 6

Introduction

In this chapter there is no bright spot, no ray of hope. Everything is dark colored by sin and judgment. There is also no call to seek the LORD, as in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, this black painting is ultimately still given by God to make the people realize the hopelessness of their situation and to wake them up to repentance.

It resembles the preaching that comes from the first verses of the Bible. At first there is darkness, everything seems hopeless. Then God speaks the words: "Let there be light!" (Gen 1:2-3). God is not yet doing that here, but at the end of this book.

Amos 6:1 | False Ease

*1 Woe to those who are at ease in Zion
And to those who [feel] secure in the mountain of Samaria,
The distinguished men of the foremost of nations,
To whom the house of Israel comes.*

Fearless, Amos denounces the false trust of the leaders of Israel. The core of his message is focused on the distinguished, the rich upper classes, the leading figures of the city and the kingdom. They bear a special responsibility. To them comes the house of Israel, the people, to handle legal disputes. From them the people expect help and advice.

But it has strong legs that can carry the wealth. It is difficult to be prominent, without being proud of it. They think they can measure the blessing of God by their wealth and high position. Instead of humble, it makes them proud and self-assured. Their ease is that of the rich fool about whom the Lord Jesus speaks in one of His parables (Lk 12:13-21).

Amos also speaks of Zion. It is as if he wants to prevent Samaria from rejecting his preaching by saying: 'Look at yourself, where you come from; just as if everything is so good there.' Amos reacts to this by what he says here. He also has an eye for that. In deviating from God there is no distinc-

tion between the leaders of the two realms. In this way we too can look for reasons to not accept the preaching of the Word that comes to us.

Israel is here called “the foremost of nations”. Israel is the most important nation among all nations. Compare Amalek who is called “the first of the nations” because he is the first heathen nation to be hostile to Israel (Num 24:20). Israel owes this place not to itself, but to God’s election (Deu 7:7-8a; Amos 3:2; Jer 2:3; Eze 19:5; 2Sam 7:23). But how unworthy they behaved, so that instead of the head they became the tail.

“Those who are at ease in Zion” indicates the state in which so many confessors among God’s people today find themselves. There is absolutely no working of conscience, no exercise of faith, no asking for the will of God. They have no ear for the special message. They are completely lacking in interest in a walk in truth. Those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria derive this feeling from their own efforts. They will have invested heavily in resources that have given them this feeling.

If it is up to them, the enemy will not get a foothold with them. By the way, who is talking about judgment? The sun is shining, there is not a cloud in the sky. They have heard of judgment, but they will not see the end of that so they do not care (verse 3). There are plenty of doomsayers. You should not get involved in that. But they will find that all measures and natural advantages do not protect against the judgment of God.

Amos 6:2 | The Lesson of Observation

*2 Go over to Calneh and look,
And go from there to Hamath the great,
Then go down to Gath of the Philistines.
Are they better than these kingdoms,
Or is their territory greater than yours?*

Amos invites them to take a tour through neighboring empires. Calneh is believed to be in the east, Hamath in the north and Gath in the south. Amos refers his peers to these places, which are somehow known to Israel. They are not superpowers like Egypt and the emerging Assyria, but cities comparable to those of Israel (cf. Isa 10:9).

Are “these kingdoms”, that is Judah and Israel, better than they are? Certainly, Israel compares favorably with those cities both in prosperity and size, they are “better” in the sense of “more prosperous” (cf. Nah 3:8). But what they will notice on their tour along those cities is that the former glory of those cities has disappeared. The corruption that – according to some interpreters – has characterized these places is the cause of this. What then awaits “these kingdoms”, which are so much more guilty than the mentioned cities?

For us, too, it is good to look around us and take to heart the lessons of what has happened to others. We can see that people who walk to the honor of God are blessed by Him and that people who deviate from Him reap the acid fruits of that. Sometimes this is not immediately clear, but this is the final result.

Amos 6:3 | The Judgment Is Still Far Away

*3 Do you put off the day of calamity,
And would you bring near the seat of violence?*

The “day of calamity” is the day of disaster and destruction. They do not want to think about that. They tell themselves that that day is far from coming (cf. Eze 12:22; Mt 24:48). It is the thought of ‘after us the deluge’. This attitude is in contrast to Amos 5, where people in audacity say they long for the day of the LORD (Amos 5:18). The cause of this is the wrong vision and because one is blind to the evil one is doing. Here Amos speaks of people who prefer not to think of judgment at all in order to continue sinning.

In neither case does one escape the judgment of God, Who does not allow Himself to be mocked. This judgment comes in verse 7. He who shakes off doom, draws the violence to himself. Then, after all, God’s rights do not apply, but the right of the strongest, the smartest, reigns. In this way they establish a seat for the violence and give it a permanent place of residence in their midst. Violence is their king to whom they submit.

Amos 6:4 | Recline, Sprawl and Swallow

4 Those who recline on beds of ivory

*And sprawl on their couches,
And eat lambs from the flock
And calves from the midst of the stall,*

The voice of Amos scourges over the elite of society. He describes a lifestyle related to the life attitude of the previous verse. You see it in front of you: indolent and self-satisfied by their prosperity they lie there on their showy beds. It is not a rest after work has been done. Lazily they hang around. Pure boredom radiates from them. Today we do talk about ‘hanging youngsters’ and by that we mean young people who have nothing to do and are hanging out at ‘hanging places’.

And woe to you when you come near such a group. They are always looking for a victim to enjoy themselves senselessly. They do not lack money. They all have smartphones. It allows them to keep each other up to date when there is something going on again. They are in the power of prosperity. Their mentality is based on it. This is the mentality of everyone who is in the power of prosperity, as is the mentality of the top layer of Samaria.

They are also in a kind of religious hurra mood. The judgments are for the heathens, the blessings for us. Therefore they make greedy and voracious use of it. Only the best is good enough. The tender lamb meat and the meat of the fattest calves glide down their throats. You hardly have to chew it, you suck it up. Also eating it must not take any effort. They live exclusively for the sake of bodily pleasure. Their god is the stomach, they bow down to what satisfies their needs.

Amos 6:5 | Expressions of Joy

*5 Who improvise to the sound of the harp,
[And] like David have composed songs for themselves,*

The music, which is used to liven up their meals, is reminiscent of David, but is used to brag. There is no thought in their minds that the music of David was for the glory of God. They use the instruments in the way they were conceived by Jubal (Gen 4:21) and whose spirit they possess. In this way they have returned to the principles that guide the world and that is to make life pleasant without God.

The name of David is connected with it in order to work according to their own insights under a cover of religiosity. David invented them to honor God with it; they invented them to entertain themselves. Nor are they the instruments of David. The old instruments cannot satisfy their longing for ever newer and ever more. If you are tired of the old, you want something new.

That is how it is today. Songs in which the glory of the Father and the Son is sung and in which the work of the Lord Jesus is represented, songs that are a joy to the heart of God, are considered old-fashioned. They are judged as melancholic and originating from a time in which that was possible, but which is now over. They do not meet the requirements of the time in which we live and in which it is all about the feeling I have with something. There have to be songs that appeal more to our feelings, that reflect more what I experience. And so the accent is shifted from what God longs for to what we desire.

Amos 6:6 | Wine, Oil and Ruin

*6 Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls
While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils,
Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.*

The tableware they use is meant to be used for drink offerings in the sanctuary. That sanctuary may be their own, but they say they serve the God of Israel there. The delicacies of the previous verse are washed away with large quantities of wine flowing down their throats. You can rightly say of them that they are “heroes in drinking wine” (Isa 5:22). They also use the holy anointing oil, which may only be used for the service of the LORD (Exo 30:22-33), to make themselves beautiful. The most excellent oil belongs to God (Exo 23:19a; Deu 18:4), but His rights are not taken into account at all.

It is a depiction of the way Christianity celebrates, for example around and during Christmas. One indulges in luxury and excess and dances to the atmospheric Christmas music of the band playing at Christmas dinner. At the same time, the Christmas Child, He Who became poor to make poor

sinners rich, has been replaced by Santa Claus with ever larger gifts. It resembles what Belsazar has done (Dan 5:1-4).

But who still grieves “over the ruin of Joseph”? We can think of the pit into which Joseph was thrown, while his brothers are settling down to eat (Gen 37:23-25a). They do not care about “the distress of his soul” and which they see (Gen 42:21).

While Israel sighs under the consequences of sin, its inhabitants surrender to carelessness, pleasure, and laziness. They use all the gifts God has given them for themselves. The pursuit of their own pleasure pushes the state of emergency of God’s people into the background. Israel is in distress, where the greatest distress is that the people do not see their distress. It laughs and dances towards its ruin.

The fact that the unity of the people has already perished does not bother them. They are also blind to the breaches, the fragmentation, that have arisen in the people because of their selfish behavior and as a result of which they will soon collapse. Only “a cord of three [strands] is not quickly torn apart” (Ecc 4:12). People living among themselves who are dependent on each other alone will not be able to develop a lasting bond. Only when God is involved as the third and binding ‘factor’ in the bond, will it be preserved from breaking.

Even today, many remain indifferent to the fact that the whole church has been crumbled into countless pieces. Even terms such as ‘the varicoloredness of God’, which would be seen in the division, are used to justify it. Pursuing our own convenience makes us insensitive to the decay in the church and the divisions that exist.

Amos 6:7 | It Is Over With the Fun

*7 Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles,
And the sprawlers’ banqueting will pass away.*

The behavior described in the previous verses will receive an appropriate punishment. Those who thought they were the first will be the first to go into Assyrian exile. Their whole party behavior and party laughter will quickly die. The feast is over. Misery takes its place. The cheering and the tumult will make way for wailing and crying. Instead of suppressing

others, they will now be suppressed themselves. Instead of lazily hanging around, they will have to use their powers to fulfill the desires of their enemies. That will be good for their fat, well-fed bellies and slothfulness.

If we follow the path of our desires, it will bring us, spiritually speaking, into the service of the enemy.

Amos 6:8 | The Lord GOD Swears

*8 The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of hosts has declared:
"I loathe the arrogance of Jacob,
And detest his citadels;
Therefore I will deliver up [the] city and all it contains."*

What God says is always true. What He promises, He will always make true. His Word is fixed. If He even commits Himself with an oath as a solemn affirmation of what He has said, the matter is beyond dispute. If a person swears an oath to another person, he swears "by one greater [than themselves], and with them an oath [given] as confirmation is an end of every dispute" (Heb 6:16). Since God "could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself" (Heb 6:13). The case is fixed. The convincing evidence of Israel's incorrigibility has been provided.

God here expresses His heart about Israel's behavior and pronounces His detestation about it. Arrogance or pride is the root of sin. It is the first sin in the universe, the sin of which the devil was guilty and by which he has been under the judgment of God ever since (1Tim 3:6; Isa 14:12-14). How awful it is when that sin is found among His people.

In their pride, they have abused God's land and God's blessings to ensure themselves a pleasant existence, without a trace of thankfulness to Him. In their palaces, their lush houses, the rich feast at the expense of the poor. The LORD can no longer connect with them and delivers Samaria up to judgment.

Amos 6:9 | No One Escapes

9 And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die.

All the luxuriance of their homes will not protect them. Nor will they be able to support each other. It could be the original residents here, or men who have fled from different sides to the house in question. Any trust, both in their environment and in their fellow human beings, will turn out to be vain. Death will take hold of them. There is no escape from God's judgment. It is a total judgment.

We can think of a prolonged siege of the city, which, even before the fall of the city, can cause a disease like the plague, which does its deadly work in the city.

Amos 6:10 | The Houses Cleared

10 Then one's uncle, or his undertaker, will lift him up to carry out [his] bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" And that one will say, "No one." Then he will answer, "Keep quiet. For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned."

We see a picture of total desolation and despair. There are so many dead (cf. Amos 8:3), that burial is a work of no avail, let alone a decent burial. Then the corpses must be burned. They cannot be left in the house. A house is to live in, it is not a grave. A family member takes care of that, or the corpse burner.

When a sound comes out of the house of someone who turns out to be still alive, it is a lonely person, someone who has been hiding to escape death. He must keep silent, afraid that if one talks further the name of the LORD will be mentioned. Behind this fear seems to be the pagan fear that mentioning the name of the LORD would draw the attention of God to him, to have him killed by the enemy after all. As if God would not have perfect knowledge of what is going on and someone could escape His attention.

A call to God in indescribable distress does not occur to them. That would also be useless, for the judgment is fixed. In addition, God has become to them what they have made of him: an idol that inspires fear.

Amos 6:11 | The Houses Destroyed

11 For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments.

The corpses may have been removed from the houses, the houses will not serve for new residence. Not only the residents, but also the houses will be given up to the judgment. This verse 11 seems to be in line with verse 8. The verdict is general and affects rich and poor. The rich live in large stone houses, the poor in small wooden hovels. Here, too, there is no difference in judgment.

It is also possible that “the great house” refers to Israel and “the small house” to Judah.

Amos 6:12 | Stupid Expectations

*12 Do horses run on rocks?
Or does one plow them with oxen?
Yet you have turned justice into poison
And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood,*

It is useless and unnatural to let horses run on a rock with all its protrusions. The horse will stumble every time and will not reach the end. It is just as useless and unnatural to plough a rock with oxen. The solid rock is not suitable for ploughing. Just as foolish it is to think that by a fool relying on their power they can avert the punishment while twisting all the law.

In these verses the foolishness is shown to expect anything other than destruction of their ways. It is the folly of assuming you can build a state on injustice. They have made the law a poisoning thing. It is the greatest foolishness to expect anything other than the bitterness of wormwood as “the fruit of righteousness”.

Amos 6:13 | Hollow Joy

*13 You who rejoice in Lodebar,
And say, “Have we not by our [own] strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?”*

They find their joy in the conquest of cities that are of no meaning. “Lodebar” means ‘a thing of nothing’. They boast of having done it in their own strength. “Karnaim” means ‘horns’ or ‘power’. Both places are located in Gilead, the usual area of conflict between Syria and Israel. These places may have been conquered in such a battle.

And this is what they boast of. In swaggering language they mention their victories, which they attribute to their own courage, strength and soldiers. For whom should they fear? But these places disappear with the emerging Assyrian empire that casts its shadow ahead.

Amos 6:14 | The LORD Himself Sends an Enemy

*14 "For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you,
O house of Israel," declares the LORD God of hosts,
"And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath
To the brook of the Arabah."*

Here we hear the announcement of the removal of Israel, the ten tribes, by the king of Assyria. Behind this enemy the LORD Himself is to be seen. He is sending the Assyrians, who will oppress Israel in all its length, from north to south. Proud as they are of their vast territory, that whole area of Hamath in the north up to the brook of the Arabah i.e. to the brook valley of the Plains in the south will be the area of their oppression. The brook of the Arabah is the current 'el ahsy' (Asha), the southern border river, which separates Moab from Edom (2Kgs 14:25).

Amos 7

Introduction

With this chapter begins a new section in the prophecy. So far Amos has passed on what he has *heard* from the LORD. Now he is going to speak about what the LORD has *shown* him. In this section, chapter 7:1-9:19, we have five visions: three in Amos 7, one in Amos 8 and one in Amos 9. In these visions we encounter three seasons: in the first vision we have spring, in the second the summer and in the fourth the autumn. This is how it has been with the people. It is now in the autumn of its history.

What Amos sees in the visions connects to Amos 3 (Amos 3:7 cf. Gen 18:17,23). In the visions 1, 2, 3 and 5 Amos sees the LORD Himself. The three visions in Amos 7 probably refer to the three invasions of Assyria in the land of Israel. The first raid takes place under Pul, where Assyria withdraws after Menahem has paid a fortune in taxes, which has ruined the land (2Kgs 15:16-21). The second invasion is when the same Pul, the king of Assyria, also called Tiglath-Pileser, invades Israel in the days of Pekah, takes possession of several cities and deports the inhabitants, but spares most of the land (2Kgs 15:29). At the third invasion, the final deportation of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser to Assyria takes place (2Kgs 17:6,22-23).

Visions 1 and 2 belong together because these visions are another discipline which God does not exercise after intercession. Visions 3 and 4 also belong together. It is no longer about discipline, but about no longer saving the people. The people will perish in the way shown in the fifth vision. That is a vision in which Amos sees the LORD Himself.

It is not clear whether the people have noticed anything of the impending disasters shown in visions 1 and 2. In any case, they get the background information that these disasters are judgments of God, but that they have been averted on the basis of the prayer of His servant. The Lord Jesus is the perfect Intercessor.

God has had patience for a long time. More than once He has been on the verge of judging Israel. The intercession of the prophet, that is the Spirit

of Christ who works in the prophet, has stopped the scourge. But now the judgment is inevitable. The LORD stands with the plumb line in His hand and nothing can bring Him back from the execution of the judgment.

Amos 7:1 | Mowing and Spring Crop

1 Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, He was forming a locust-swarm when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop [was] after the king's mowing.

The LORD shows Amos, and also us, what he is going to do. The question is: Do we have an eye for it, do we also see it (Amos 3:7)? Amos sees it and it brings him to intercession. God shows Amos what He is doing. He forms a locusts-swarm, not just as creatures, but as instruments of His wrath (Jer 8:11a). We can see a picture of the Assyrians in these locusts. In Joel 1-2 we also find the transition from the literal locusts in Joel 1 to the Assyrian army in Joel 2. Joel calls this army "His army", i.e. the army of the LORD (Joel 2:11).

The locusts are formed to eat the spring crop. The first grass that came up and was already cut went to the royal stables. The Israelite kings seem to have claimed the right to take the first cut of the grass for their own stables (cf. 1Kgs 18:5). What reappears after this mowing is the spring crop. This serves as food for the livestock of the population. A plague of locusts that devours this spring crop causes an outright disaster, a famine for humans and animals.

We can make the following application of the mowing and the spring crop. Mowing the grass refers to life being cut off. The Lord Jesus must mow grass in our lives, that is, He must take away the flowers we cherish, our experiences of which we are proud. After mowing, the spring crop appears. It is said that the most beautiful and juiciest grass grows where it is mowed most often. There is no fear of God as great as that which follows a repeated mowing by God.

When our health, friends, money, and favorable circumstances are repeatedly taken from us, often afterwards the most beautiful times of love, prayer, and devotion arise. We are allowed to know: when the grass is mowed, after that, the spring crop emerges.

In the mowing and the spring crop we can see another picture. The mowing is a picture of the lost glory due to the invasions of enemies, but after that, glory arises again. And yet in the end that new glory is in danger of being lost again, as has happened in the history of Israel.

Amos 7:2 | Intercession

*2 And it came about, when it had finished eating the vegetation of the land, that I said,
"Lord GOD, please pardon!
How can Jacob stand,
For he is small?"*

Amos speaks to the LORD with the freedom of one who has a confidential relationship with Him. He points out to the "Lord GOD" (*Adonai Yahweh*) that the punishment is very heavy, for this "worm Jacob" (Isa 41:14). Here we see the other side of Amos. The fearless preacher, who speaks harshly to the people, lifts up his big herdsman's hands here to God pleading for the benefit of his people to spare them. In the face of the people he roars, before the face of God he struggles and begs.

He does not see the people now in comparison with other peoples; then they feel themselves to be quite strong. He sees them in connection with God, and how small and sinful they are then. With the words "he is small" Amos speaks a completely different language than the prickly ones who boast on their own strength (Amos 6:13). He calls the people here "Jacob", by which he indicates that they are a people of sinners, but also the people to whom God has wanted to connect His Name.

Prophets pray to God for those to whom they prophesy in God's name. It is a great privilege that God shows us what He is planning. At the same time, it also gives us a great responsibility. It brings Amos to preach and intercede. This must also be the effect on us in everything we may know about God's plans. We can learn a lot from those with whom we see this effect, such as Abraham (Gen 20:7), Moses (Exo 17:8-13; 32:30-31), Samuel (1Sam 7:8; 15:25), Jeremiah (Jer 15:1), Ezekiel (Eze 9:8) and Joel (Joel 1:19).

Amos 7:3 | Effect of Intercession

3 The LORD changed His mind about this.

"It shall not be," said the LORD.

In His sovereignty the LORD listens to the prayer of His servant and gives it a place in the progress of His work. He does not forgive – forgiveness is only possible after confession – but does not carry out this punishment. He ‘changes His mind about this’ or He ‘repents’ (Darby Translation). He is not the unrelenting God, the God of stone. Not that He changes His plans, but He changes the way He carries them out. God’s repentance has never to do with a wrong decision He would have made, but with a change in the way He works out His right and irrevocable decision.

What a blessing are intercessors for the people, possibly even without the people being aware of it. What an encouragement to intercede. Love for God and His people manifests itself especially in intercessory prayer. Intercession is not done by people who believe that everything is fixed and that God cannot change His mind after all. Real intercession is also not done by people who believe that you can manipulate God through prayer. Then we would get the impression that we, humans, know better than God.

God knows everything in advance. There are no surprises for Him. In His plans He takes into account the intercession of His people. God expects from His children the greatest possible involvement in what He is planning. That is why He has informed them extensively about this. All His information can be found in His Word. That is why reading and studying His Word is an absolute condition to become an intercessor.

Amos 7:4 | Fire

4 Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, the Lord GOD was calling to contend [with them] by fire, and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farm land.

Vision 2 is an extension of vision 1. They both have to do with natural phenomena that are formed by God and called to attack the sources of Israel’s life. Behind the locusts and fire we see the hand of God.

In this second vision it appears that the people did not want to repent, despite the postponement of the previous vision. Amos sees that the fire is already raging. The fire here is the sun that consumes everything with its scorching heat. It represents Tiglath-Pileser, the Assyrian king (2Kgs 15:27-29; 1Chr 5:6,26; 2Chr 28:20). God has the power to summon everything He wants to use to discipline His people. He calls a fire, and what He calls, obeys.

“The great deep” represents the deep or extent of the judgment and “the farm land” [literally portion] the land of His people Israel. The fire is not an earthly fire, but the wrath of the LORD.

Amos 7:5 | Intercession

5 *Then I said,
“Lord GOD, please stop!
How can Jacob stand, for he is small?”*

In verse 2 Amos sees that judgment is about to be exercised. There he asks for forgiveness. Here he sees that the judgment has already begun. That is why he says: “Lord GOD, please stop!” Amos is the intercessor again, but he does not automatically repeat the prayer of the last time. He sees clearly what the LORD is doing and what is going on before his eyes. On that basis he appeals to Him again.

When we intercede, it is important to have an eye for the actual situation. Then we are able to pray in a focused way. God expects us to pray with insight in His actions. For the Christian this is one of the characteristics of sonship. A son is someone who acts with insight in his father’s plans.

Amos 7:6 | Effect of Intercession

6 *The LORD changed His mind about this.
“This too shall not be,” said the Lord GOD.*

This second hearing is an extra encouragement to continue to intercede. We do not have to fear that God will get tired of listening to us. How could that be if He actually says that we will persevere in prayer (Eph 6:18; 1Thes 5:15; Col 4:2). Abraham experienced this in his intercession for Sodom (Gen 18:22-33). Up to six times he gets what he asks for.

The parable of the unjust judge shows the same (Lk 18:1-8). The Lord Jesus speaks this parable to His disciples, and to us, “that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart” (Lk 18:1). And in the application of the parable, He says: “Now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly” (Lk 18:7-8a).

Amos 7:7 | God’s Work Is Perfect

7 Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand.

In vision 1 and 2 the Lord GOD (*Adonai Yahweh*) shows to Amos what He is doing. He is in the process of preparing and even performing the judgment. This brings Amos to intercession. In this third vision Amos sees “the Lord” (*Adonai*) Himself as Judge. He gains insight into the absolute justice of the verdict, which has already been postponed twice on the basis of his intercession. When Amos has seen this, he no longer intercedes.

The Lord stands “upon a wall of a plumb line”, as it literally says. The wall is a picture of Israel as God intended it to be: a well-ordered and fixed structure (cf. Song 8:9-10). The fact that He stands upon it indicates that Israel is His perfect property and is subject to Him.

The plumb line shows the absolute order and lawfulness of God’s work in and with Israel. There are no deviations or imperfections in His work, they are not present in it (cf. Isa 5:1-4).

Amos 7:8 | The Plumb Line

*8 The LORD said to me, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said,
“Behold I am about to put a plumb line
in the midst of My people Israel.
I will spare them no longer.*

When the LORD asks questions, He does so to involve us in His actions. He wants to give us insight in this, so that we can see that He is acting righteously and we will agree with His actions. By involving us He can also include us in His plans. He wants us to understand Him in His actions.

Asking questions forces the other person to observe attentively and often also to think.

Amos is not asked if he knows what it means. He gets the explanation, without us hearing his question. If someone looks attentively at God's actions, he will certainly be curious about the reason for them. Jeremiah and Zechariah are also asked what they see (Jer 1:11,13; Zec 4:2; 5:2). After their answers the LORD also tells them the meaning of what they see.

To the question of what Amos sees, he could have answered: 'You', or: 'A wall'. But he answers: "A plumb line." That is what it is all about. The plumb line is a piece of plumb on a line that one hangs next to or in front of a structure to see if it is erected perpendicularly. In a figurative sense it is used here to demonstrate the precision, the exactness of the judgment of Israel (2Kgs 21:13; Isa 34:11).

The wall is perpendicular, the plumb line indicates that. God's work on Israel is perfect. Now the plumb line is placed in the midst of Israel. The plumb line indicates that a perfectly straight measure is applied to show their iniquities, so that the deviation will have to be acknowledged by everyone. God has an unchangeable standard to test the spiritual sincerity of His people. The measure by which the life of the people is measured is the law. The plumb line is held next to everything the people do.

After demonstrating the deviations, further delay would give the impression that God does not take sin seriously. Amos sees that by placing the plumb line the Lord is cutting off the way to further intercession. The judgment is established and will now be carried out. God's decision is certain: "I will spare them no longer", literally "I will pass him by no longer" as He did in Egypt (cf. Amos 5:17). In Egypt God has passed by forgiving because of the blood on the doorposts (Exo 12:13). But now God's patience has come to an end.

Amos 7:9 | The Judgment Executed

9 *"The high places of Isaac will be desolated*

And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste.

Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

With “the high places of Isaac” reference is made to Beersheba, where the LORD appeared to Isaac and where he built an altar and called upon the Name of the LORD (Gen 26:23-25). It has become a place where the people also go to fulfill their religious obligations (Amos 5:5).

In this judgment we find another reference to the actions of the Assyrians, this time under King Shalmaneser (2Kgs 17:1-6). The verdict on “the house of Jeroboam” was executed on the son of Jeroboam, Zechariah, who reigned for six months and was then murdered (2Kgs 15:10). After Zechariah, five more kings ruled Israel, together for forty-one years. Under the last of these five, King Hoshea, the people were taken away by the Assyrians. This happened in 722 BC (2Kgs 17:6).

Amos 7:10-11 | The Resistance of Amaziah

10 Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent [word] to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is unable to endure all his words. 11 For thus Amos says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’”

The section of verses 10-17 is an interlude that connects to the first three visions. The history with Amaziah proves that the people persist in following evil and do not allow themselves to be distracted by any of it, not even by the message of Amos. That is why judgment can no longer be averted.

While Amos intercedes for the people, a false priest accuses him of conspiracy. This false priest, Amaziah, is called “the priest of Bethel” and not ‘the priest of the LORD’. Amaziah must have been the chief or high priest. The false accusation he makes is the first reaction to Amos’ preaching we hear. That reaction comes from a religious leader. Religious leaders always feel violated in their supposed spiritual rights when a true servant of God comes. They know themselves to be unmasked as people who claim a position that benefits them and which they therefore do not want to abandon.

This is how it is with every preacher who proclaims truths that condemn human religious institutions. It is just like in the days of the Lord Jesus, when also the opposition came from the religious leaders (cf. Acts 23:2; cf. Acts 6:13). A religion organized by the politics of man without any fear of God cannot bear the testimony of the truth.

Amaziah opposes God's work. To do so, he makes use of a false accusation. False accusations have always been used by the devil to undermine God's work (Jer 37:14-15).

The word "then" beginning with verse 10 seems to indicate that Amaziah has been informed or brought to know all that Amos has said, and that verse 9 fills the measure for him. In fact, it is likely that Amos has expressed his vision, because Amaziah quotes what is written in verse 9. In doing so, he inadvertently gives testimony to the words of the prophet.

After Amos has pronounced the final verdict, Amaziah can no longer bear it. He takes two actions, one to King Jeroboam and one to Amos. Towards King Jeroboam he twists the words of Amos. Amos has spoken of "the house of Jeroboam" (verse 9). Amazia turns it into "Jeroboam" in person.

If one's own position, often assumed, is threatened, people will often defend it, not only with false accusations, but also by quoting half-truths or twisting words. In such cases we see that they always act selectively. Amaziah, for example, does not say a word about the intercession of Amos.

When it comes to going into exile, Amaziah quotes the words of Amos correctly. This is how Amos said it (Amos 5:27).

"The land is unable to endure all his words", means that the peace of the land is disturbed by what Amos says. With this, he unconsciously testifies to the power of the words of Amos, which are in reality the words of God.

Amos 7:12 | Expelled

12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying!"

Then the action to Amos follows. Amaziah will call Amos "seer" (cf. Isa 30:10; Mic 3:7) because of his visions and the announced judgments. It is possible that he uses this word in a mocking sense because he does not believe his words at all. Amaziah says to Amos that he should go to Judah, where he can earn his living undisturbed by prophesying. As if, with the removal of the messenger, the message no longer applies. As if with the death of a doctor who has said that you suffer from a serious illness, the illness is made undone.

Amaziah's call also shows that he forgets, or ignores, that God knows no borders when it comes to His people. Likewise, there are no "district churches" where certain pastors are in charge and true servants of God are excluded – even though God gives each of His servants their own territory (2Cor 10:13-18). No one may speak of 'my church' except the Lord Jesus (Mt 16:18). And He has given His gifts to His church, which are all believers (Eph 4:7,11).

Amaziah considers Amos to be someone who earns his living as a prophet, certainly just as he does as a priest (Mic 3:5,11). He cannot understand that Amos does not exercise the "profession" of prophet, but prophesies as a servant called by the LORD.

People today do not understand that either. It is unthinkable for a materialistic man that someone who places himself in the service of the Lord Jesus will not be guided by money. Such a person does not go where he gets the most, but where God wants His Word to be preached. God knows the places where the preaching of His Word is needed, regardless of whether people are waiting for it or not.

The so-called good advice that Amaziah gives in anticipation of the king's answer is purely in his own interest. He wants to get rid of Amos.

Amos 7:13 | Mixture

13 But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence."

In the designation "sanctuary of the king" and "royal residence" the mixture of politics and religion can be seen, as if religion were a political affair. This is reflected in the names of some denominations, such as Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Church of England and German Evangelical Church.

It is the sanctuary of the king because a king (Jeroboam I) founded it (1Kgs 12:28). He did so for political reasons. There is no more powerful political 'binding factor' than religion. From this point of view King Nebuchadnezzar had a great image erected in the valley of Dura. This image is the center around which he gathers all the rulers to worship it (Dan 3:1-7).

It does not work differently in the islamic countries. Unfortunately, Christianity is also permeated by it, with the Vatican as the clearest expression. When people replace God's center of worship with their own invention and also pursue political goals, this results in what is described as 'the woman on the beast', the great harlot (Rev 17:1-6). The woman is the world church or roman catholic church with, as a result of ecumenism, under her wings the protestant churches. The beast is Europa that has become a unity.

In the striving of the world council of churches for ecumenism there is no place for the voice of God. God is from above, we are from below. All thinking is focused on living on earth. God is only given a place in so far as He fits into the plans of man's striving. But where there is no place for the voice of God, there is no place for Him.

Amos 7:14 | Amos, the Ordinary Boy

14 Then Amos replied to Amaziah, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.

The 'advice' of Amaziah is ignored by Amos. Just as the Lord Jesus ignored the advice of the Pharisees when they said to leave because Herod wanted to kill Him (Lk 13:31-35). Amos is not a prophet by profession nor is he in training for it. He has had no theological training or bible school. In his family he cannot point to someone, for example his father or an ancestor, who has made a name for himself among God's people (cf. Gal 1:1).

Thus, the first apostles were simple fishermen and illiterate people (Acts 4:13). In the book of Judges we see how God, in order to free His people from the power of the enemies, often makes use of people who have a certain weakness. It is said of the Lord Jesus: "How has this man become learned, having never been educated" [in schools recognized by Pharisees]? (Jn 7:15; Zec 13:5).

Amos is a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. He testifies with great boldness to his ancestry and activities, because this is an additional proof that it is not he who is important, but his Sender and the message he brings on His behalf.

Amos 7:15 | Amos, the Instrument of the LORD

15 But the LORD took me from following the flock and the LORD said to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.'

From the answer Amos gives to Amaziah, it appears that despite his humble origins and his low social status, he is not at all impressed by the words Amaziah utters. Why should he be? The LORD has done something to him and said something to him.

He had to let go of something. That is often the first exercise that anyone who wants to do something for the Lord gets. Exactly how it went with Amos is not communicated to us. As a caring farmer he must have wondered who had to look after his cattle when he left. The LORD gave him the peace that he should not worry about that. If He calls, He will also take care of his cattle (cf. Mt 4:22). Amos had to leave his cattle where they were, trusting that the LORD would take care of them, and go and do what the LORD commanded him to do.

The command was clear: "Go prophesy to My people Israel." Short and powerful Amos tells Amaziah that the only reason to speak is because the LORD called him. As mentioned before, this is not an easy task. Yet Amos knows himself supported by the LORD Himself, for He has spoken of "My people Israel". In this the love of God for His people resounds. The fact that they are to be prophesied "against" them does not change that love, it is an expression of it. When His people no longer walk with Him, He has to confront them. Amos expresses the voice and feelings of God.

Amos 7:16 | A Word to Amaziah

16 Now hear the word of the LORD: you are saying, 'You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.'

To malign the messenger is to malign his sender. To disdain an ambassador is to disdain his king. We see an example of this in what Hanun, the king of the Ammonites, is doing to the messengers of David (1Chr 19:1-6). The reaction of Amos against the man who is supposedly a minister is razor-sharp. Here the true religion clashes with the false one. Amos does not literally represent what Amaziah said, but it does exactly reflect its in-

tion. The word “speak” is literally “flow”, which is a typical expression for prophecy (Eze 21:2; cf. Job 29:22).

The fact that the people apparently see themselves as “the house of Isaac” may indicate that they boast of their position as descendants of Abraham. Isaac is the son of promise. But such a profession is worthless if it does not include the faith and works of Abraham (Jn 8:39-40).

He speaks “the word of the LORD”. That is truth and does not tolerate contradiction. Amaziah could have said: ‘I did not say that.’ Many who speak in veiled language say: ‘I did not say that’ when they are confronted with what they said. A man of God knows how to take out the hidden undertone, by which the other is placed in the light. There are no escapes, there is no response from Amaziah.

Amos 7:17 | Rejected by God

17 Therefore, thus says the LORD, ‘Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a [measuring] line and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’”

The judgment given by Amos on Amaziah shows how serious it is to silence a prophet of God. We do not read that Amaziah has beaten Amos or thwarted him in any other way. Preventing the speaking of God’s Word is so bad, that Amaziah takes this terrible judgment upon himself and his house. Let it be a warning to all those who want to silence God, because that is what Amaziah actually wanted.

Amos here contrasts the word of the LORD, “thus saith the LORD”, with the word of Amaziah, “you say” (verse 16). The priest who opposes the word of Amos, which is in fact that of the LORD, will personally have to bear the consequences of his opposition and Israel will surely go into captivity. What will happen to the priest and his family is symbolic of what will happen to the people.

His wife, after her husband has been taken away to die in exile – on “unclean soil”, that is, outside Israel – will start to earn her living as a harlot. Amaziah is primarily responsible for the judgment that affects his family. His wife will not have hindered him from exercising his presumed priest-

hood, perhaps even encouraged him to do so. His children share in the consequences of this bad parenthood. If they are lost, it is because of their own sins. Amaziah has a field and is apparently not excluded from land ownership (1Kgs 2:26), but he will also lose this property.

Stopping the mouth of the prophet will not stop the progress of God's Word, for God continues to speak and His Word never returns empty.

Amos 8

Introduction

Amos gets a fourth vision. In it he sees how the people are ripe for judgment. He acknowledges its righteousness, for he no longer intercedes. The actions of the people are described once more as an additional argument that the judgment is justified. Their behavior demands it. God will turn their situation completely upside down. He will darken the broad daylight with the clouds of His judgment and turn their feasts into mourning.

On top of that, He will give them a hunger and thirst for His words. But they have departed too far from the LORD to come to Him to satisfy that hunger and thirst. To satisfy their hunger and thirst they go to the idols in Bethel, Dan and Beersheba.

Amos 8:1 | A Basket of Summer Fruit

1 Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, [there was] a basket of summer fruit.

The wicked king, Jeroboam, and the false prophet, Amaziah, cannot prevent the judgment from coming. On the contrary, they quicken it. After the fierce confrontation described in the previous chapter, Amos continues fearlessly to let himself be used by the LORD. He who has been called cannot do otherwise. He does not slow down, but brings his message with the same passion. He simply continues where he left off. He passes on the next vision.

A true prophet can only be silenced if you kill him. Otherwise he will not keep silent. He cannot because the LORD is not silent and he is His mouth. And even if a real prophet is killed, what he has said remains completely intact. For he has spoken God's Word and that "abides forever" (1Pet 1:25).

This fourth vision is in line with Amaziah's attitude, which shows total unwillingness to bow before the living God. His attitude is that of the whole people. Thus the people appear to be ripe for the judgment that was pronounced on Amaziah and his house in the previous verse. This judgment

is presented in the basket of summer fruit, as the LORD will now explain to Amos.

Amos 8:2 | Ripe for Judgment

2 He said, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me, "The end has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer.

The question "What do you see, Amos?" (cf. Amos 7:8), forces Amos to look closely and answer. In this way, he becomes intensely involved in the vision. God wants us to really see what He shows and not give our own vision of what He shows. This is also important in view of what He says in His Word. It does not suit us to say 'I do not see it that way' when God has clearly shown in His Word how He thinks about certain things. In the same way, every time we read God's Word, the question of the Lord comes to us, where He mentions our name, just like with Amos: 'What do you see ...?'

The question to Amos is clear and not difficult to answer. His answer is exactly what God shows. That is why he is told what the meaning is. Herein lies also for us the secret of growing "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pet 3:18). When we 'see' what God shows in the Bible, He makes its meaning clear. He then gives us insight into His thoughts.

The summer fruit shows that the end is certain and also near. In Hebrew there is a play on words. The word for summer fruit is pronounced almost the same as the word for 'end' in: "The end has come for My people Israel." The verdict "I will spare them no longer", literally "I will pass him by no longer" (cf. Amos 7:8), will bring mourning over Israel, as it did over Egypt at the time (verse 10). If people do not put an end to sin in their lives, God must put an end to man, even if it concerns His people Israel.

Amos 8:3 | Songs Will Turn to Wailing

3 The songs of the palace will turn to wailing in that day," declares the Lord GOD. "Many [will be] the corpses; in every place they will cast them forth in silence."

The feast they celebrate in their idol temple on the occasion of the harvest will turn to wailing with the coming of the end. But they do not think about this end. They do not think for a moment about the approaching judgment. And if they think about it, it will take their time. So they live happily on in the delusion of 'after us the deluge'.

We find the same evil thinking in Christianity, as it is represented in the parable of the good and evil slave (Mt 24:45-51). There is no song with which the apostate people of God rock themselves to sleep like the song "my master is not coming for a long time" (Mt 24:48).

We can compare this with the attitude of the people that Amos describes and reproaches them because they "put off the day of calamity" (Amos 6:3). But God often reminds Israel of the day of the end and Christians also need to be reminded again and again of the coming of the Lord. This end will come at a time when one is in a festive mood and every thought of judgment is banished, for "the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape" (1Thes 5:2b-3).

Numerous are those who will fall prey to this judgment (Psa 110:6). The corpses will not be buried, they will not even be burned (Amos 6:10), but cast forth. Death rules everywhere. The flabby rest and the life of pleasure have given way to a grievous agony of death.

Silence fits this unusual event, for which man can only be awestruck. Any human speech would show total insensitivity to the terrible things that have happened. It does not fit to hear anything from man in these moments of the greatest seriousness of Divine intervention (Zep 1:7; Hab 2:20). It is the frightening silence because of the judgments of God.

Amos 8:4 | Again: Hear!

4 Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land,

The silence is used to call again to listen to God's voice that must be heard (Amos 7:16). Now no longer to listen to a way to escape, but to the accusations and the verdict. The prosecutor speaks again and resumes the accu-

sations before the judge pronounces the verdict. There must be listening! Amos has twice pleaded before God as the advocate for the people. It was to no avail.

Amos 8:5 | Man's Big Talk

*5 saying,
"When will the new moon be over,
So that we may sell grain,
And the sabbath, that we may open the wheat [market],
To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger,
And to cheat with dishonest scales,*

Amos exposes the thinking of these people here. We can apply this directly to our time. If we know ourselves a little and dare to take an honest look at ourselves, we recognize ourselves in it. It is about us when we use the time in the church or meeting to think of methods to earn even more. The day of the Lord cannot be over soon enough to be able to trade again and increase our possessions with ungodly practices.

In Israel, they do this by tampering with the bushel [literally ephah], the shekel, and the scales. An ephah is a measure of content with which corn is measured. Its content is probably between twenty and forty-five liters. They make an ephah in which less liters can be measured. The shekel, which weighs between ten and thirteen grams, with which they weigh their wares, is too heavy, the customer thus also receives less value for money. They sell corn using their own measure, while pretending it is the usual measure. They also do the same with weighing. Their weight is heavier so the price to pay is higher. Their deception is double. They give less and ask more. Moreover, the scales do not indicate properly. People are cheated in three ways.

This way of acting is an abomination to God (Deu 25:13-16; Pro 20:10). Here people are described who count with everything except God and therefore have counted wrong eternally. Don't we know it? Singing nicely about Jesus as the highest Good, while life testifies that all earthly riches are the highest good. Time in church and work for the Lord does not bring hard cash and what brings nothing is loss. After all, time is money. While

they hold the Sabbath outwardly, they are inwardly in the market square. Although the market square is empty, they are busy in their thinking with their trade. The Mammon is their god. Who would rather sell corn than worship God, is a stranger to God and an enemy to himself.

Amos 8:6 | The Lust for More

*6 So as to buy the helpless for money
And the needy for a pair of sandals,
And [that] we may sell the refuse of the wheat?"*

This charge is a repetition (Amos 2:6). They want to take all the possessions. In doing so, they do not even shun taking people as their possessions. The law of the strongest applies (Job 22:8; Isa 5:8; cf. Neh 5:2-5). First the possessions are taken, then the freedom. They pride themselves on selling garbage, while pretending it is nutritious grain. Then they do so in addition to their scams with size, price and weight.

By supplying garbage they take away the health of those in their power. The meaner they have ripped off someone, the more they praise their skill. They lack decency, honesty and any sense of humanity.

A human being obsessed with money will want to enrich himself at all costs and without shunning any means to achieve this goal. Such people confirm the truth of the word: "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1Tim 6:9-10).

Amos 8:7 | Another Oath of the LORD

*7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob,
"Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds.*

Again the LORD swears that He will judge. Previously He swore by His holiness (Amos 4:2) and by Himself (Amos 6:8). Here He swears "by the pride [or: glory] of Jacob", which is ultimately also He Himself. Thus the LORD is called "their Glory" (Psa 106:20; Jer 2:11). Jacob, that is the people of Israel, rejected that glory and trampled it underfoot by all the guilty

deeds expressed by Amos. However, God will uphold His honor and glory in judgment.

He is not like an earthly judge to whom some of the atrocities committed escaped. A limitation period is unknown to Him. His glory is all that becomes visible of Him. He is glorious in upholding the law whereby He will righteously repay every deed. No act remains unpunished or unrewarded. If He would not do so, He would deny His glory.

For the execution of the judgment, God keeps accurate accounts. All man's deeds are recorded with painful precision (Rev 20:11-15). When the books are opened and the deeds are seen and the indictment is read, it will not occur to anyone to oppose its accuracy. The judgment that is made will be just, without a semblance of error.

Amos 8:8 | The Normal, Appropriate Response

*8 "Because of this will not the land quake
And everyone who dwells in it mourn?
Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile,
And it will be tossed about
And subside like the Nile of Egypt.*

The announcement of the judgments that God will bring on Israel should not leave the earth unmoved. It will have to disturb everyone who hears about it. Amos asks it as a question. He describes what is an appropriate response to the speaking of God. If there is no response to what God has said, indifference proves it. The whole land falls under God's judgment.

It will go with the people, like with the Nile in Egypt: then it will rise up and flood everything, then it will retreat into its bed. The land will be tossed about, as it were, jumping from its place. It will go with the land like the river of Egypt, which is pushed and driven out of its ordinary bed, to subside into its bed again.

Amos 8:9 | Darkness in Broad Daylight

*9 "It will come about in that day," declares the Lord GOD,
"That I will make the sun go down at noon
And make the earth dark in broad daylight.*

The expression “in that day” usually refers to the end time, to which Amos here refers for the first time in his prophecy. It is not a day of twenty-four hours, but a period in which the great reckoning of the LORD will take place. What Amos describes here is the same as what the Lord Jesus refers to in His end time speech (Mt 24:29-30). It is about the time when the Lord Jesus will appear on the clouds to judge the ungodly mass of His people, which at the same time will mean the deliverance of the faithful remnant, ‘His elect’.

The application to the generation that hears the words of Amos is that their glory will end at a moment when they do not expect it at all. While everything seems radiant, darkness suddenly sets in. It is like an airplane suddenly crashing or exploding in the air. It will be like the sun setting while it is not the time for it. In the same way, the sun sets for every person at noon, when he is suddenly torn away from life by death. The same goes for whole nations.

Amos 8:10 | Mourning Instead of Festivals

*10 “Then I will turn your festivals into mourning
And all your songs into lamentation;
And I will bring sackcloth on everyone’s loins
And baldness on every head.
And I will make it like [a time of] mourning for an only son,
And the end of it will be like a bitter day.*

Amos has talked about “your festivals” before (Amos 5:21). There God expresses His deep contempt for them. Here Amos points out what will replace their festivals. If God’s judgments are on Israel, all festivals will turn into the heaviest mourning. The cheerful songs will give way to lamentations. Their festive clothes will be exchanged for robes of mourning. They will shave off all their beautiful hairstyles (Isa 3:24). Every thought of a festival is gone. The hopping mass has turned into a grieving crowd.

The mourning they will make heard is not one of repentance and remorse for the sins they have committed. It is the mourning of the judgment that God carries out and from which there is no escape. If an only son dies, the continuation of the family is out of the question, and thus the cause

of the heaviest mourning (Jer 6:26). The end of mourning is not in sight; it remains a bitter day.

Amos 8:11 | A Hunger Sent by the LORD

*11 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD,
"When I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water,
But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.*

In those days of deep sorrow, they will also miss the light and comfort of the Word of God. They will feel the need for what they have always despised. To fulfill that need, they will look for prophets who can tell them the Word.

Nothing seems to be wrong with that. On the contrary, it seems to be a very good pursuit. After all, God likes to see His people hungry and thirsty for His Word, doesn't He? He makes us long for it (1Pet 2:2). But God sends this longing to His people as an extra judgment. That is what the following verse makes clear.

Amos 8:12 | Searching and Not Finding

*12 "People will stagger from sea to sea
And from the north even to the east;
They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD,
But they will not find [it].*

They will stagger without any sense of direction. They will wander without orientation, because they are deprived of any guidance from the LORD. "From sea to sea" is from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, that is from east to west, but also all over the earth. They will look for Him Who they have always despised. The call "seek Me and live" is silenced and does not sound anymore (Amos 5:4). That time is over. The hunger and thirst they will feel and which they can no longer satisfy will increase the bitterness of the time of punishment. On earth they will already experience some of the horrors of hell.

If the Lord now withholds His Word, the light of revelation, from anyone, it means that the judgment is final. Nothing more can be changed.

All opportunities are offered, but rejected with contempt. In the Bible we encounter seekers who have not found. King Saul was such a seeker who did not find (1Sam 28:6,15). People like Saul are the most tragic persons the world has known.

Therefore, for everyone who reads this and has neglected the Lord Jesus so far: “Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near” (Isa 55:6). The day may come when it is too late and you will seek and not find. Then you will call but He will not answer you anymore (Mic 3:7; Eze 7:26; Lk 17:22; Jn 7:34).

So it will be with apostate Christianity when the church and the Holy Spirit are taken away from the earth. God will then be silent, and then His silence is worse than His speaking.

Amos 8:13 | The Beautiful and Strong Youth Succumbs

13 *“In that day the beautiful virgins
And the young men will faint from thirst.*

Hunger and thirst will be common. The usually carefree young people will also search for the words of the LORD. But no matter how much energy they have for that search, they too will search without finding. Their youthful attractiveness does not help to get the coveted and their youthful strength is not enough to keep them standing. If this is the fate of the youth, it seals the fate of the whole people.

Amos 8:14 | Searched in the Wrong Places

14 *“[As for] those who swear by the guilt of Samaria,
Who say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan,’
And, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives,’
They will fall and not rise again.”*

The youth collapses and dies because they seek their support in the wrong places. Their hunger for the words of the LORD they try to satisfy by consulting the idols. “Swear by the guilt of Samaria” means swearing by the golden calf of Bethel, also called the calf of Samaria (Hos 8:6; 10:5). The “god of Dan” is the golden calf of Dan. They also swear by “the [pilgrim’s] way to Beersheba”, like the Arabs swear by the pilgrimage to Mecca.

So today, countless people are looking for a god. That may be Mary or a guru, as long as it is not the God of the Bible, the God Who can only be found and known by His Son Jesus Christ.

The hunger for the words of the LORD which He Himself placed in their hearts reveals their longing for the idols they have served. They will share in the fate of the idols, for they do fall and do not rise again. Thus their final end is determined.

Amos 9

Introduction

In this chapter we see a kingdom disappearing and a kingdom coming.

Amos 9:1 | The fifth vision

*I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said,
“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.*

This fifth and final vision is by far the most terrible. The Lord stands beside the altar. That must be the altar in Jerusalem. This altar means atonement for those who believe. For those who disobey, judgment comes from the altar. What is the basis for the atonement now becomes the place from which the judgment comes. It shows the nothing sparing judgment.

Here happens what has already been announced (Amos 5:17; 7:8; 8:2). There is only talk here of “the Lord” (*Adonai*), the sovereign Ruler, and not of the LORD (*Yahweh*), His Name indicating the relationship with His people. God does not come here in judgment to any other people, but only to His own people. God speaks and His hand strikes.

By “the capitals” are probably meant the pillars of the temple. The question is whether this is the temple of Jerusalem or that of Bethel. Most obvious is that it is the one of Bethel because Amos preaches there. This is not only the literal temple, but the entire religious system of the ten tribes realm. It is also not impossible that the words of Amos also apply to the religion of the two tribes. After all, Amos involves Judah more often and also further on in this chapter he talks about the restoration of the entire realm.

Here it becomes clear that God demolishes the whole religion of man, which is seen in the smiting of the capitals, by which is meant not only the destruction of the temple building. The direct consequence of the smiting

is that the whole temple building collapses, killing all the temple-goers who are present there. The people gathered at the temple will be buried under the collapsing temple. Also here the whole people are represented by these people who are directly involved.

Amos 9:2 | In the Realm of the Dead and Heaven

2 *“Though they dig into Sheol,
From there will My hand take them;
And though they ascend to heaven,
From there will I bring them down.*

Nowhere is a hiding place to escape the Divine wrath (Jer 51:53; Oba 1:4). It is reminiscent of Psalm 139, but there it is about the happiness a man finds in the knowledge that God sees him everywhere. There it is about understanding for the better, which a believer wants (Psa 139:1-4,22-23). Here it is about the fear of having to appear before God.

The shelters that Amos calls – “Sheol” and “heaven” – are completely beyond the reach of man. It is impossible for him to get there on his own or with the help of someone else. That the prophet nevertheless calls these extreme spaces of the universe – which are opposite each other and lie outside the visible creation – he does, in a manner of speaking. If he could get there, God would know to find him there as well. Fleeing and becoming untraceable is impossible.

Amos 9:3 | On the Summit and the Floor of the Sea

3 *“Though they hide on the summit of Carmel,
I will search them out and take them from there;
And though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea,
From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them.*

Man himself could see the impossibility of reaching a hiding place as mentioned in the previous verse. Then he would look for hiding places that lie within the visible creation and are accessible to man. The Carmel with its many dens and strongly overgrown and winding paths has been a refuge for persecuted people for centuries.

But whether someone is in the deepest den at the height of the Carmel, or in the deepest den on the floor of the sea, it does not matter. Nowhere a man is untraceable for God and His judgment. Nowhere is a place where he can hide or God takes him away from there. Nowhere is a place where he can hide but God's judgment will strike him there.

Amos 9:4 | God's Eyes Against Them for Evil

*4 "And though they go into captivity before their enemies,
From there I will command the sword that it slay them,
And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good."*

No matter how sad the position of captivity is, life is still present. If you are captured by one enemy, you are protected against another enemy. Like someone who was in prison, said he felt safe there, protected from his criminal 'friends' who wanted to get rid of him.

But in the case of Israel, captivity does not offer a solution when it comes to the judgment of God. The judgment of captivity is not heavy enough. He will also deprive them of the hope of return. Therefore, He sends "the sword" of His judgment after them to kill them where they have been taken into captivity (Jer 9:16).

'To set eyes against someone' is usually an expression of benevolence (Gen 44:21; Jer 39:12). Here God directs His all-seeing eye against His people for evil. All their evil deeds are before His face (Hos 7:2). Nothing escapes His gaze. He includes everything in His omniscient judgment. That is why He acts completely righteously. Everyone will have to acknowledge that He acts righteously when He treats His people for evil. They only have to blame themselves for it.

Amos 9:5-6 | God in His Omnipotence

*5 The Lord GOD of hosts,
The One who touches the land so that it melts,
And all those who dwell in it mourn,
And all of it rises up like the Nile
And subsides like the Nile of Egypt;
6 The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens*

*And has founded His vaulted dome over the earth,
He who calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the face of the earth,
The LORD is His name.*

As before (Amos 4:13; 5:8) we have here a description of the omnipotence of God. Following on from the previous verse, it means that He, Who directs His eye toward them, is this omnipotent God. The power of the LORD is described to show that He is able to carry out what He has said. He is the God Who directs everything and submits everything to Himself, “the Lord GOD of hosts” (verse 5). He not only has the authority in and over Israel, but all the powers on the whole earth and in heaven fall under His authority.

Perhaps Amos in his description of God’s omnipotence alludes to the judgment of the deluge. In any case, that thought is obvious when we read that He “calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the face of the earth” (verse 6). “His upper chambers of heaven” are His heavenly chambers (Psa 104:13), from where the water that is poured out over the earth comes (Psa 104:3; Gen 7:11). Amos has already spoken of “the Nile” and “the Nile of Egypt” (Amos 8:8).

Amos 9:7 | God’s People Are No Better Than the Gentiles

*7 “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me,
O sons of Israel?” declares the LORD.
“Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?*

The judgments come on Israel because they are no better than the nations. In practice they are no closer to the LORD than the Gentiles. God takes away the carnal certainty on which they rely, namely that they trust that they are the elect people. After all, God proved that when He delivered them out of Egypt, didn’t He? This election guarantees that God will not reject them as His people or have them destroyed by the Gentiles, they believe.

But to them what we read in Romans 2 applies: “For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of

the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision" (Rom 2:25). He who keeps the law is a true member of God's people and can count on God's protection. The apostates will perish; they have become equal to the Gentiles. To boast that they are Abraham's offspring is misplaced if they do not also do the works of their father Abraham (Jn 8:33,37,39-40). Their behavior is equal to that of the nations, therefore they will be treated as the nations.

The equality with the nations mentioned by Amos is not meant in an absolute sense (Amos 3:2). But practically, the apostate Israel has come to the level of these peoples, who are also not connected to God. It is also true that apart from Israel, God also interferes with the other nations of the earth and gives them a place to live.

All in all, there is no ground for Israel to exalt itself, as if God's meddling were limited to Israel and thus Israel would be indispensable to Him. It is therefore not about denying Israel's special privilege, but about opposing Israel's carnal conception of it.

The sons of Ethiopia are mentioned because of their black skin (Jer 13:23) as a picture of the spiritual blackness of Israel. Jeremiah describes it this way: "How dark the gold has become, [How] the pure gold has changed!" (Lam 4:1). Although they are children of Israel, they have no more value to God than the sons of Ethiopia.

Christians, too, can behave in a way that they are in practice, no different to God than sons of darkness. Then He rejects them and their service, just as He does here with Israel. For degenerate Israel the exodus from Egypt has no higher meaning than that of the two mentioned heathen peoples from their former homeland to the area where they now live.

It seems that the Philistines and the Syrians are not arbitrarily mentioned as examples. The Philistines are uncircumcised and therefore despised by Israel. But Israel behaves as if they are uncircumcised and that is why God equates them with the Philistines. The Syrians are mentioned because in exile they will be brought back to Kir, the place of their origin (Amos 1:5). What will happen to the Syrians is an example of what will happen to Israel, the judgment that will affect them (Hos 11:5).

Amos 9:8 | Judgment and a Remnant

*8 "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.*

Here again we speak of "the eyes" of the Lord (verses 3-4). His eyes are directed "on" in the sense of 'against' the sinful kingdom (cf. Lev 20:5; Psa 34:16). For the "sinful kingdom" no continuation is possible and it will not rise again. God can never remain in connection with sin. If His kingdom, the government of which He has entrusted to His people, becomes a kingdom ruled by sin through misrule, then God becomes its Opponent.

He wanted someone to sit on 'His throne' (2Chr 9:8), 'the throne of the kingdom of the LORD' (1Chr 28:5), who represented Him. But His throne has increasingly fallen into the hands of people who only pursued their own interests and not the interests of God.

Where man reigns without the awareness that he represents God, there, sin comes to power and the whole kingdom is permeated by sin. In this kingdom, God sees nothing but sin. That is why He must wipe it off the face of the earth. How different will be the kingdom over which the Lord Jesus will be King. How different that will be, we will see in the millennial realm of peace.

Yet in the midst of this announcement of judgment, God introduces an element of hope. He "will not totally destroy the house of Jacob". There will be a remnant from which He will form a new realm and holy people. This element has so far been lacking in the preaching of Amos; it was only judgment and nothing else.

Amos 9:9 | The Sieve

*9 "For behold, I am commanding,
And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations
As [grain] is shaken in a sieve,
But not a kernel will fall to the ground.*

“All nations” are like a sieve in the midst of which “the house of Israel” will be shaken, shocked, and ravaged. They will be rejected from one place to another. But the real Israel will be preserved precisely by this ‘sieving’. What remains in the sieve is a remnant that will be spared.

The normal use of a sieve is that the bad disappears and the good remains in the sieve. All chaff, dust and impurity will fall to the earth through the sieve to be trampled and exterminated. But not a kernel, no good grain, will be lost. Nothing will be lost of what is meant to remain.

Amos 9:10 | The Sinners of God’s People

*10 “All the sinners of My people will die by the sword,
Those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’*

The self-confident sinners who rely on the mere fact that they belong to God’s people and therefore believe that judgment cannot affect them will perish by the sword. In the same way, today there is a frivolous reliance on outward appearances such as baptism and the Supper. As if baptism and the Supper have any meaning in themselves for God. What matters to God is the mind of the heart of those who participate in these institutions.

The sinners of God’s people may try to flatter themselves with the thought that they will escape, but the prophet has cut off all possibilities to escape in verses 1-4 of this chapter. The exception we have just seen in verses 8b-9 applies only to the pious who bow under the judgment of God.

If sinners say that the calamity, that is the judgment, will not overtake them, then with the coming of the judgment the remnant sees their salvation by God out of their distress. The pious suffered greatly from sinners, their sinful fellowmen. But God will take care of them by saving and preserving them in His Divine grace.

Amos 9:11 | Raising up the Fallen Booth

*11 “In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David,
And wall up its breaches;
I will also raise up its ruins
And rebuild it as in the days of old;*

Also here the expression “in that day” points forward to the future (Amos 8:9). It indicates the time when the Lord Jesus will publicly appear in favor of the believing remnant in ungodly Israel to deliver them from their enemies. This remnant will be poor and miserable, but it is they who are connected to the house of David.

Of the once so glorious house of David, which under Solomon knew the peak of its glory, not much is left but a “booth”, which conjures up a picture of weakness and bewilderment. This picture is reinforced by the word “fallen”. In connection with the “shoot ... from the stem of Jesse” in Isaiah 11 (Isa 11:1), where we find the same thought, the “fallen booth” of Amos refers to the kingdom of David, while the shoot of which Isaiah speaks, refers to the lineage of David.

How much the house of David has declined is also made clear by the genealogy of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 1 (Mt 1:1-17), as well as the circumstances under which the Entitled to the throne (Lk 1:32-33) is born. Amos speaks here about the Messianic promise of salvation and this is there for the twelve tribes of which David was king. It is remarkable that also in a Jewish writing (‘Sanhedrin 96b’) in view of this verse of the Messiah it is said: ‘After all, the Messiah is the restorer of the fallen booth.’

The restoration for the house of David mentioned by Amos corresponds to what Paul mentions in a speech, the “SURE [blessings] OF DAVID” (Acts 13:34). These blessings can be fulfilled because the Lord Jesus has risen from the dead. His resurrection is the guarantee that all the blessings promised to David will be fulfilled. He is the Son of David in Whom and to Whom God will fulfill all His promises. That fulfillment takes place in the raising up in glory and splendor of what is still here called “the fallen booth of David”.

The raising up of that fallen booth of David refers to the restoration of the whole realm, in which the great tear between the two and the ten tribes will also be closed (Eze 37:22). Also the many other tears, caused by internal divisions as well as external attacks, will be closed. Then the promise to David will be fulfilled (2Sam 7:11-12,16; 1Chr 17:10-14).

Amos 9:12 | The Remnant of Edom and the Nations

*12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom
And all the nations who are called by My name,"
Declares the LORD who does this.*

It seems as if there will be something left of Edom after all, but it will be of no significance and will belong entirely to Israel. What is left of Edom is his territory and that will be hereditary to Israel because God has reserved it for his people. How that will happen, Obadiah, the next prophet, tells us. In his prophecy the fate of Edom is described in detail (cf. Num 24:18).

Amos uses Edom as an example of the restoration of God's authority. God exercises His authority through His people over all peoples who were once subject to Israel, but who had withdrawn from its authority because of the decay of the house of David.

The proclamation of the name over something or someone indicates ownership (2Sam 12:28; Isa 4:1; Jer 7:14; Deu 28:10). The whole restoration of Israel into the land of blessing and the restoration of his authority over the nations is only the result of the LORD's actions. Although He uses His people, it is He who puts His people in that position and gives them strength to subdue past enemies. He is "the LORD who does this".

This verse and the previous one are quoted by the apostle James in Acts 15:16-18. In that chapter the question is discussed whether believers from the Gentiles can be included in the church without becoming Jews, i.e. without being circumcised. In the fierce battle of words that ignites about this, James speaks healthy words. He shows that it has already been said in the Old Testament that the Gentiles will be blessed without joining Judaism.

To confirm that his statement is in agreement with the prophets, he quotes these verses from Amos 9 (verses 11-12). He does not speak at all about the fulfillment of the prophecy. He only says that the prophets are in agreement with what Peter said earlier during the discussion on this issue. Amos makes it clear that people from the nations will bear the Name of the LORD, independent of Judaism.

What James does not say with his quotation is that with the birth of Christendom the fallen booth of David was erected. As has been shown before, the erection of the fallen booth refers to the time when the Lord Jesus will reign on earth on the throne of His father David. But just as it will be in that future time – that there will then be blessing for the Gentiles as a separate company – so does James apply the quotation from Amos to the present time. Also in this day and age happens what God will do in the future and that is blessing the Gentiles. God blesses them, not by allowing the Gentiles to join Judaism, but by forming Jew and Gentile into one body, the church.

An important difference is that the believing Gentiles in this time are blessed by Christ in heaven. This also applies to the believing Jews nowadays. Soon the nations will be blessed through the restored Jewish people, the once fallen booth.

James does not speak about the blessed position of the church. The truth of the church in which Jew and Gentile together form something totally new will be taught and explained by Paul, especially in the letter to the Ephesians. James only quotes the words of Amos because they correspond to what is happening at that moment and not to say that the prophecy of Amos is now being fulfilled.

The correspondence between what Amos says and the problem in Acts 15 is that there is blessing for the Gentiles as such. The difference is that Amos speaks prophetically about a time when there is blessing for the Gentiles in the future when they submit to Israel; he does not speak about the present time. Acts 15 is about the time of the church in which we still live today and is about the fact that blessing for the Gentiles comes through repentance to God and not through becoming a Jew. Amos speaks about the time of the realm of peace in which the whole earth will be blessed through Israel.

Amos 9:13 | Abundant Blessing

*13 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD,
"When the plowman will overtake the reaper
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;
When the mountains will drip sweet wine*

| *And all the hills will be dissolved.*

In the two previous verses, the prophet spoke of the restoration and expansion of the outer kingdom. Now he is going to speak about the inner glory with the richest blessings for the land (verse 13) and for its inhabitants, the people of Israel (verse 14). The whole will exist for eternity (verse 15).

Verse 13 connects to Joel 3, where also such an abundance of blessing is described (Joel 3:18). It is almost even richer here than there. One is barely ready with ploughing, that is preparing the ground for sowing, or the other already comes to reap the ripe grain. That is how fast the corn will grow and ripen. The same goes for the grape harvest. This is how great the fertility of the land will be under the Messianic rule.

Here we find the situation promised in case the people will be obedient to the LORD (Lev 26:5). This abundance of earthly blessing is due to the work of Christ on the cross. If the smallest insect or herb had been left out of this work of the atonement, the enemy would still have won the victory over God and Christ, and that is impossible.

Amos 9:14 | The People Enjoy the Blessing

| *14 "Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel,
And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live [in them];
They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,
And make gardens and eat their fruit.*

But what is all the abundance worth if there are no people to enjoy it? God has a supply of blessing just for His people. A land without people is dead. A people determines the land. God's people live in God's land. Once God has restored the captivity of His people, it means that His people are no longer in the foreign land, where God has led them because of their unfaithfulness, but that He has brought a change in their captivity.

He has brought them back to their own land, the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their offspring. Through their own sins they have been driven out. Through God's grace and the work of Jesus Christ, their Messiah, they are brought back into it.

With Him at their head (Hos 1:11) they will rebuild their cities and live in them without anyone frightening them. With Him at their head, they will plant vineyards and enjoy undisturbed joy, of which the wine is a picture. With Him at their head, they will eat all the fruits that their orchards will produce, without fear that others will eat them (Deu 28:33).

The people will be able to enjoy the results of their labor in undisturbed peace, without fear of punishment (cf. Amos 5:11). There will be an abundance of mouths to consume the abundance of fruit.

Amos 9:15 | Blessing Forever

*15 "I will also plant them on their land,
And they will not again be rooted out from their land
Which I have given them,"
Says the LORD your God.*

The blessing they will then enjoy will last forever. It is not possible to see its fulfillment in the time after exile when a remnant returned from Babylon. It is also not possible to see these things being fulfilled in the course of the history of the Christian church with the fullness of the nations as the final fulfillment.

Israel has been driven out of its land many times in the course of the centuries. But under the reign of the Messiah that time is gone forever. God Himself will plant His people in His land. And if He plants and nurtures, who will tear them away?

Amos began his prophecy with weeping shepherds and a withered Carmel. He concludes his prophecy with a scene full of joy and fertility. The glory of that time will be so great that all suffering will be gone and forgotten. Then the word of Isaiah is fulfilled: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind" (Isa 65:17).

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