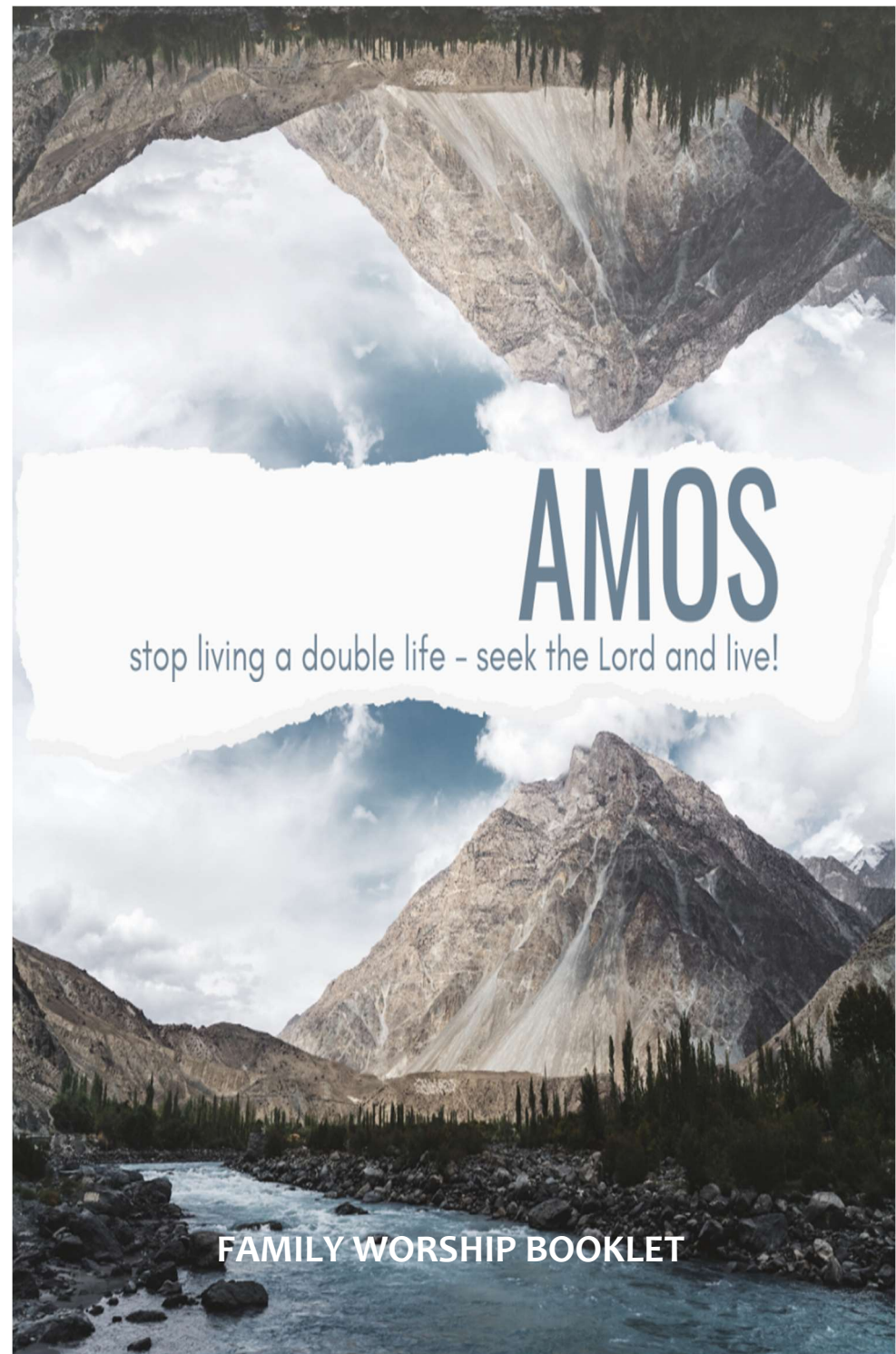


This is language of eternal security. As one commentator writes, “the church of Jesus Christ will never be deprived of its inheritance.”

The book of Amos ends with the profound declaration, “says the LORD your God”. God now again identifies himself as Yahweh, His covenant name, and not merely as Adonai, as He had in the beginning of chapter 9. Sin is serious. The book of Amos is clear evidence of the destruction and end of where the false promises of temptation can lead. May this book serve as a clarion call for the church to awaken to her true calling - of loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength, in and through Jesus Christ, and loving our neighbour as ourself. May we as Christians never forget the precious truth that Paul spoke of to the Romans, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:37-39).

Q1. What are the two headings that spawn hope for believers for the future in this passage?

Q2. As God’s people, where is our true prosperity and inheritance found?



AMOS

stop living a double life - seek the Lord and live!

FAMILY WORSHIP BOOKLET

principal mark of impiety. The vices of men have reached a point when they are touched neither by fear nor shame, but expect God's (favorable) judgements without any concern or anxiety."

Despite stripping away the pretensions of Israel, there remains great hope! There will be a remnant left. By God's electing grace, He will not "utterly destroy the house of Jacob" (v.8). We, too, as the bride of Christ, need to be sifting ourselves and always reforming. Being warned against the complacency of sin and false worship, may we recommit ourselves to fidelity to God's word and regulations!

Q1. What does the change of the name of God employed in chapter 9 teach us about God's relationship to Israel?

Q2. How can the danger of living just like the world inside the church awaken us to continual reformation and growth in grace?

Friday - Amos 9:11-15 - Future Salvation.

The climatic vision of Amos depicts both the judgement of Israel and the establishment of covenant promises, to preserve and save for God Himself, a treasured possession (Malachi 3:17).

The vast majority of prophecies in Amos have been announcements and predictions of gloom and destruction. But, ultimately, the book looks ahead to the promise of eternal glory for the church. And this is understood under the heading of both the restoration of David's tent (vv.11-12) and the glory of the new covenant (vv.13-15).

1. David's tent restored - John Calvin writes in his commentary on this passage, "God would punish the sins of the people of Israel in such a way as to remember still his own promise." The day mentioned in v.11 is the day of the revealing of the messiah. Other commentators suggest that "David's tent" has a double meaning. It recalls both the "booths" or "tents" that Israel dwelled in while living in the wilderness, as well as a measure of how far the kingdom of Israel had fallen. The king used to dwell in a "house", or more permanent building, but the monarchy has fallen in the eyes of the Lord, so low they are back to living in a fallen tent. But there will come a new King! He will restore the ruins and broken places! This is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ! His kingdom will have no end, and indeed will encapsulate all the peoples of the earth, not just the 12 tribes of Jacob. His kingdom is not of this world - but of the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 22).

2. The glory of the new covenant - what is in view here is the new testament age, hundreds of years before its culmination. As the church, we live in both the present and future reality of the glory described. Between the two comings of Christ, the church works as a witness and ambassador for Christ, sowing the seeds of the gospel. V. 13 is an answer to the miseries of famine described previously in the text of Amos. We are to claim God's promises in obedience and with great diligence. And God promises that He will bring back His exiled people.

*Produced by Ottawa RPC to help family worship.
These notes on the book of Amos have been prepared by
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Q1. What lessons can we learn about caring for those in need? Consider Matthew 25:41-46.

Q2. How does the consequence of a spiritual famine of God's word impact our commitment and dedication to studying the Bible? What happens to a society that disregards the truth of God's word?

Thursday - Amos 9:1-10 - The Final Verdict.

The fifth and final vision of warning is now revealed to Amos. Final is a fitting description, for it announces the end of the kingdom of Israel in such a manner that there is no opportunity of deliverance.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of this final vision is that Amos begins using a different name for God. Up to this point in the prophecy, he has been using God's covenant name: Yahweh. We translate it in our English bibles with capital letters (i.e., LORD). But a relationship change has occurred between God and His people. He has rejected them because of their rejection of the covenant. And so now Amos describes God as Adonai, which means "ruler over all", and is rendered Lord in our bibles.

The Lord is standing by an altar (which one we aren't sure, and that's likely by design). He will destroy false altars and, symbolically, false worship everywhere. There are two main features to this final verdict of judgement. The first, as we've already mentioned, is that God has rejected His covenant people. The second is that He will sift through the remnants of His people to persevere a faithful number for Himself. This is a glimmer of grace to brighten the prospect of revival - which we will consider more tomorrow in the last few verses of the book.

Vv.1-6 demonstrate how fast Israel's special relationship with God in His covenant is coming to an end. This event came to fruition just a few decades after the prophecy of Amos in 722 B.C., when the northern kingdom was destroyed - never to be returned. God's people were taken into exile into Assyria. This judgement is total - "not one of them will escape" (9:1). God's justice must be satisfied, and His justice is in no way a contradiction of His love and mercy. Sin is rather the contradiction. It contradicts all the good and beauty that is the character of God and His creation. Christ resolves the paradox of God's judgement and mercy- by bearing our sin at the cross, where God's wrath is satisfied. Yet it was love that compelled God to do it. It is God who does this, "the LORD is his name" (referring back to His covenant name for a moment to underscore the severity of Israel's violation). If God promises it, we can rest assured it will come to be.

Vv. 7-10 reveal that God sees them as a sinful kingdom, just like any other pagan nation. Israel believed herself to be exemplary. They operated under the impression of their own self-superiority. How dangerous it is when we presume upon the favour and blessing of God. How sad a state of affairs when we are no longer amazed by grace, but we are amazed by wrath and justice against sin. People want to believe God is on their side and accepts them no matter what. But God knows us better than we know ourselves. As John Calvin writes, "Security then, which of itself, ever generates a contempt of God, is here mentioned as the

Monday – Amos 7:1-9 - Visions of Warning.

Last week we saw how Amos predicted five judgements that would befall Israel due to their sin (Amos 3:1-6:14). Now Amos will reveal five visions that illustrate Israel's condition and predicament. Each of these visions intensify the urgency of the prophet's message, as well as preparing the way for the final section, which speaks of the promise of revival under the Messiah to come.

The first two visions are contained in vv. 1-6. They basically teach the same truth. The only difference is in the progression and severity of the succession of judgements. However, we also witness God's relenting grace and mercy when he responds to Amos' prayer and does not bring about the disasters of locusts and fire that He had promised. In vv. 1-3 the swarms of locusts mentioned arise from the first crop. That first crop was typically saved for the King's horses (1 Samuel 8, 1 Kings 18:5-6) and the second crop would be for the people's own cattle (and thus themselves). Amos, whose ministry saw virtually no positive response in Israel from his hearers and likely from a human standpoint was incredibly discouraging, pleads with God for mercy, "O Lord GOD, please forgive!" (7:2). James reminds us, "the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working" (James 5:16). God hears and relents. Praise Him for His mercy, as well as His justice!

The second vision (v.4-6) reveals a great 'judgement of fire', such that even the waters or 'the great deep' are devoured and destroyed. These seemingly natural disasters are shown to be providential and not merely circumstantial. The Bible tells us that all events that occur in this world fall within the eternal plan and purpose of God. There may be immediate or secondary causes and consequences, but, as our Westminster Confession reminds us, God "freely and unchangeably ordains whatsoever comes to pass" (WCF 3:1). But, again, Amos petitions the throne of grace, and, again, God hears and will not bring the judgement to fruition.

The third vision is not as devastating, at least immediately, as the first two, but is nonetheless apprehensive. The Lord is seen in vv. 7-9 as a building inspector. He is standing behind a wall - which represents the people of Israel - and is about to measure it with a plumb line. The plumb line detects where the wall is sagging or flush. If it is sagging, then the wall is not sound and must be torn down. God measures Israel in this way and finds them wanting. In other translations, v. 8 can be rendered "I will spare them no longer" (NIV). God will no longer pass over their rebellion. He then goes on to detail the destruction that will come upon them. This time the prophet has no prayer to offer. And God does not relent.

As the church, we live in between the first and second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we encounter passages like these in the prophets, may they serve to warn, as well as to call us to repentance. We, too, can be put to the test. We, too, can be measured in our sanctification. But let us focus on the Lord Jesus, who lived as a perfect substitute for our broken and sagging lives. He is the true plumb line and cornerstone upon which the walls of the church and our Christian life is built.

Q1. How can Amos' prayers for Israel inform our own prayers for our world and culture? As well as God's character?

Q2. As a church, as a family, and as individuals - how would we fare if measured against God's plumb line for righteousness and faithfulness?

Tuesday – Amos 7:10-17 - Amaziah Responds - Amos' Opposition.

It's telling about the state of preachers and ministers in the Northern kingdom, that God would have to send a missionary from the Southern kingdom to get His message across. The establishment of preachers in Israel are quite content with the status quo of empty formalism in worship and religious life. Therefore, it's not shocking that opposition would foment against Amos and his preaching of Yahweh's righteousness.

In this passage today we meet Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (v.10). His opposition would likely have been common for those with an outward antagonism to the truth of God's word. He calls upon the King, Jeroboam, to accuse Amos. Amos' message, after all, does indict the King for his wickedness and spiritual atrophy. Amaziah wants to do away with Amos politically. He attacks the minor prophet personally before bringing up anything Amos has actually said. This is typical of an 'ad hominem' fallacy, where one attacks the person making an argument, rather than addressing the argument itself. Amaziah believes that Amos is a menace to society; a great and dangerous threat to the peace and prosperity of Israel. In v. 12, he attacks Amos as a foreigner. It's as if he is saying, "Get out of here, Amos! You don't belong here. Go back home to Judah. You don't get our way of life." His arguments in this section reveal a complacency over Amos' warnings; they are fine for Judah, but don't you dare disturb our beloved Israel! Israel had no appetite for repentance or turning from their evil ways. And so Amaziah tries to banish Amos from ever preaching at Bethel again. Notice, in v.13, he recognizes the owner of the temple. It's not God's dwelling place, but he calls it "the king's sanctuary". Amaziah's speech only reinforces the message of condemnation that Amos has been prophesying.

So, how does Amos respond to these accusations and threats? He defends his commission from God. He was no mere professional prophet (an insinuation Amaziah makes in v.12). He's a professional farmer who is more than able to provide for himself. He does not need to earn a living off the people of Israel. He has spoken because God has called him! In the final analysis, that is all justification any of us need for obedience. God who is faithful calls us, and we are to answer that call in whatever circumstance and situation He has equipped us for. Amos concludes this section with a specific prophecy of devastation for the priest of Bethel (v.17). Amos will not be silenced. God's word cannot be stopped! It will not return void (Isaiah 55:11).

Q1. How do we recognize in the church if a minister is merely following the "status quo"? Why is such a ministry dangerous?

Q2. How can this passage remind us of the importance of addressing principles and not just personalities?

Q3. What can we learn from Amos' response to Amaziah?

Wednesday - Amos 8:1-14 - A Spiritual Famine.

In our passage today we encounter the fourth vision of warning. At first glance it is perplexing. We normally associate a ripe basket of fruit with blessing and God's provision. After all, God's people had been called to celebrate festivals of harvest (i.e., tabernacles) in Exodus 23. But this particular vision communicates an entirely different message. In chapter 8, through the vision of Amos, God makes three specific points about Israel's true condition:

1. Israel is ripe for God's judgement (8:1-3) - This basket of ripe fruit does not symbolize fruitfulness or blessing, but, as He mentioned in ch. 7, He will "spare them no longer" (NIV translation). Their time is up. Israel looked healthy and prosperous, but that is just on the outside. Material blessings can be a poor harbinger of spiritual fruit. A further declaration from God displays His commitment to being done with this perverse generation (v. 3). In the presence of God, on judgement day, every mouth will be stopped. No one can claim innocence or that they are found worthy (Romans 3:19).

2. Israel's way of life will be turned to ashes (8:4-10) - Israel has enjoyed exploiting the weaker members of their community. The bible is clear: oppression of anyone, anywhere, is a gross injustice. God hates it. As one commentator has written, considering God's people at this time, "Israel was less a society and more a food chain, as mutual help and interdependence dissolved in predatory selfishness." Amos gives some examples of their guilt. V. 5 shares how they can't wait for the Sabbath and festivals to be over, in order to resume their money making. Another commentator pointed out - at least they waited for the sabbath to be over! How tragic that many professing Christians have zero appetite for even observing the sabbath, all day, at all. Once again Amos exposes that outward observance is not enough. Heart-filled devotion and obedience to God's holiness is required. The land of Israel will tremble because of this (v.8) Their religious feasts of joy will be turned into mourning. It would have been better had they never even attempted the appearance of spiritual maturity. They were wicked hypocrites.

3. Israel will soon experience a famine of the word of God (8:11-14) - In the previous section God promised to take away the sunlight for one day in an eclipse, but now He pledges to take away the light of His word permanently. There can be no greater prophecy of doom! At first this seems like an empty threat, since clearly the people have not cared or hungered for God's word for some time, but now they will tragically get their wish. Human societies owe much more than they realize to the truth of the bible and the Saviour that is revealed therein. Essentially, to take away God's truth is a withdrawal of God's blessing. Deuteronomy 8:3 says, "Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." Vv.12-14 show what will happen when God's word and blessing is removed. Utter devastation and chaos. "they shall fall, and never rise again." (8:14).