

Amos

Amos 7:1-9

7:1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. **7:2** And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. **7:3** The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.

7:4 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. **7:5** Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

7:6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

7:7 Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. **7:8** And the LORD said unto me, **Amos**, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more: **7:9** And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

Amos 7:10-17

7:10 Then **Amaziah the priest of Bethel** sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, **Amos** hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. **7:11** For thus **Amos** saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

just an ordinary worker

Though he was just an ordinary man from the southern kingdom of Judah (1:1), God called Amos to minister as his prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel (7:15). As seen in 7:1-9, most of his prophecy was about the judgement of Israel. Naturally Amaziah, a leading idolatrous priest in the northern kingdom, did not like Amos' message (7:10-11).

7:12 Also **Amaziah** said unto **Amos**, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: **7:13** But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

7:14 Then answered **Amos**, and said to **Amaziah**, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: **7:15** And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. **7:16** Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. **7:17** Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

negatives

As one of the so-called “minor prophets,” Amos is not nearly as well known as Isaiah who ministered in the southern kingdom during the same period. Moreover, Amos is not even as well known as Jonah, another “minor prophet,” despite the fact that Amos is about twice as long as Jonah.

Jonah and Hosea are the two best known minor prophets because of the narrative nature of their Books. (*It has always been easier to remember stories than preaching.*) Nevertheless, there is an important but much overlooked story in Amos 7:10-17.

Stories of conflict are exciting, such as the dramatic competition between Elijah and the prophets of Baal in First Kings chapter 18. There is a much less dramatic but nevertheless still important conflict in Amos 7:10-17. God's prophet, Amos, was opposed by Amaziah, a priest of Bethel.

The northern kingdom was enjoying peace and prosperity at the time (2 Kgs. 14:25), which in part was probably because the Assyrians had temporarily repented. (See Jonah 3:10.) This, however, made the people of Israel more sceptical of Amos' message.

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

| | |
|----------|--|
| A | () Amaziah opposed God's prophet (7:10-13). |
| A-1 | () He opposed Amos' message of judgement (7:1-11). |
| A-2 | () He worked for and with the wicked king of Israel (7:9-11). |
| A-3 | () He opposed the true worship of the Lord in Jerusalem (7:10-13). |
| A-4 | () He probably did not believe that Amos was called by God (7:12). |
| A-5 | () He probably hoped that Amos would be killed (7:10-13). |
| A-6 | () He told Amos to return to sheepbreeding (7:12-14). |
| A-7 | () He claimed that Amos was disrespectful (7:13). |
| A-8 | () Amaziah was a false prophet (7:10). |
| B | () Amaziah and Amos were very different. |
| B-1 | () Amaziah was an insider. Amos was an outsider (7:10-15). |
| B-2 | () Amaziah spoke well of Bethel (7:13). God did not (3:13, 4:4, 5:5). |
| B-3 | () Amaziah was a professional religious worker. Amos was not (7:14). |
| B-4 | () Amaziah probably thought that the future was bright (7:10-11). |
| B-5 | () Amaziah died in captivity (7:17). Amos probably did not. |

positives

Conflict is inherently negative and unpleasant. However, there are often at least some positives that come with the end thereof. That is the case in Amos 7:10-17 as well. Amos and God had the last word. So even the powerful negative message in 7:17 should be viewed as a positive.

It is good for sin to be judged and removed. Therefore there would be a positive side of the Assyrian invasion. The idolatry that had been taking place in Bethel for centuries would be ended. *(Bethel is mentioned seven times in Amos, but rarely in the other prophets.)*

Since there are so many negative prophecies in Amos, it is easy to assume that his message was always negative. To the contrary, his ending in 9:11-15 is very positive. He often spoke against Israel at the time, but God allowed him to see far beyond his day to the future millennial kingdom.

Likewise, Jesus spoke out against the sinful people and especially against the sinful religious elite. Even so, he also spoke about his return and the future kingdom. The Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Romans came in turn, but the end is yet to come.

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

| | |
|----------|---|
| C | () Amos (and God) answered the priest of Bethel (7:14-17). |
| C-1 | () Amos told Amaziah about his call to speak for God (7:14-15). |
| C-2 | () He indirectly admitted that he was not a Bible scholar (7:14-15). |
| C-3 | () He indirectly admitted that he had NOT been invited by the king. |
| C-4 | () He denied being a professional religious worker (7:14-15). |
| C-5 | () He did not seem to be afraid of Amaziah or the king. |
| C-6 | () He did not stop prophesying (7:16-17, 8:1-9:15). |
| C-7 | () He was negative about Israel (7:16, 9:11-15). |
| C-8 | () His answer was firm and sure (7:17). |
| D | () It is good to compare Amos and others <i>(based on 7:10-17, etc.).</i> |
| D-1 | () Jeremiah was probably persecuted more than Amos (Jer. 20:2). |
| D-2 | () Like Amos, Jesus was opposed by religious professionals. |
| D-3 | () Through Amos, God shows that he uses ordinary people. |
| D-4 | () Like Amos, Jesus' speaking was mostly negative. |
| D-5 | () Jesus' disciples were ordinary people like Amos. |

worksheet answers

Nearly all the lines are correct. The clear exceptions are A-5, A-6, and D-4. Amaziah wanted to silence Amos by having him return to Judah rather than by killing him (A-5). The persecution was not as intense then as it was later in Judah in Jeremiah's day (D-1).

Amaziah apparently did not care if Amos preached in Judah against the idolatry in the north at Bethel as long as the people up north did not hear it. Therefore he did not go all out and tell Amos to return to sheepbreeding (A-6). His sarcasm in verse 12 shows that he most likely rejected the concept of a divine call (A-4). Although Amaziah was not a false prophet, by opposing Amos he acted like one. So line A-8 is either false or partly correct.

It is good to compare Amos with other prophets and even with the Lord Jesus, if the comparisons help bring out some important truth. Otherwise it is not good. (Line D is partly correct, but line D-4 is false.) Although Amos' preaching was mostly negative, Jesus' teaching was quite positive at times, such as instructing the disciples about the life of faith. Amos mainly preached about sin and judgement, but the final verses in Amos chapter nine are about the millennium. (Therefore line C-7 is only partly correct.)

So what?

Perhaps the most important observation to be made in this study and in this series of studies is the fact that God uses ordinary people. In the Old Testament Amos shows this to be the case (D-3), and in the New Testament Jesus' disciples are the prime examples (D-5).

Conversely speaking, this point means that God does not primarily call and use elitists, although there are exceptions. King Uzziah was one such, since he was in many ways God's man in Judah along with Isaiah (Isa. 6:1) during the time that Amos ministered in the northern kingdom. Much later, in the Gospels, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were exceptional people who contrasted sharply with Peter, James, and John regarding their backgrounds.

Amos seemed to boast about his lowly background in 7:14-15, because it meant that his message was from God rather than from himself. This was the source of his firm and sure answer to Amaziah as well (C-3). His opponent was an elite "priest of Bethel" (7:10), but the Lord himself called and enabled Amos.

*Perhaps you are just an ordinary worker without any special academic credentials or background. **So what?** Your relationship with the Lord is what really matters. HE can use you for his glory. Praise God for the example of Amos!*

applications

Apply the points which you believe are most important or seem most needful.
