

Amos 7:1-9 “The Locusts, the Fire and the Plumb-Line”

For the Children: Have you ever seen pictures of old buildings that are leaning over on a frightening angle? Look up the “Leaning Tower of Pisa” for an example. If these buildings lean over too far, engineers try to fix them up before they fall over. But sometimes old buildings just have to be pulled down. They become too dangerous! When people reject God, their whole lives are out of balance. They are headed for a fall. When this happens to God’s own people, He brings them down as well – before they harm others. This is what He said He was going to do with rebellious Israel. **Questions:** How did God bring down rebellious nations like Israel? How does He do it with pretend-believers today? Should we be scared He will do it to us?

Introduction:

First Point: The Locusts

- 1) Extensive Devastation: The Lord had often used locusts as a judgement (Ex. 10:12ff; Dt. 28:42; Joel 1:4-12). Now He was preparing a locust-plague against the rebellious Northern Kingdom. The locusts would come at the worst time. Amos fears a total devastation (v. 2). Some disasters are part of the Lord’s general punishment of sin, but some may be particular punishments for particular sins. Either way, such things warn men to repent and seek the Lord.
- 2) Intercession for Pardon: Amos pleads with the Lord to pardon Israel completely. He does so on the basis of God’s merciful character – for Israel is ‘small,’ with nothing to offer the Lord. The people had not even repented yet.
- 3) The Lord’s “Repentance”: The Lord responded to Amos’ intercession by “changing His mind” or “repenting.” This was not like our human “change of mind.” God turned from the course of immediate punishment, based on His unchanging attribute of mercy, and because He wanted Israel to learn about the necessity of intercession – ultimately, Christ’s intercession. This was all according to His unchanging plan of salvation.

Second Point: The Fire

- 1) Even More Extensive Devastation: However, Israel still would not repent. So God showed Amos a second vision, in which He would contend with Israel by fire. This fire would dry up the “great deep” (underground water?) and consume the farm land. The resulting famine and drought would be even more devastating than the locusts, since Israel was refusing to heed the first warning. See Lev. 26.
- 2) Intercession for Cessation: Amos again appeals on the basis of God’s mercy. This time, however, he does not ask God to pardon. For Israel was refusing to repent. He simply asks the Lord to hold back the punishment. Israel had become like the nations who do not believe in God. We can pray that God will show mercy, in common grace, to hold back the full weight of His wrath and bring relief from disaster. But we cannot ask for pardon of sins for those who do not believe in Christ.

Third Point: The Plumb-Line

- 1) Testing the Wall: The third vision makes the situation plain. God’s people had hardened their hearts against Him. Now He stood to measure and test them, like someone testing a wall with a plumb-line. They had rejected repeated warnings, so judgement would be stepped-up (Lev. 26, especially vss. 30-33).
- 2) Spared No Longer: The outcome was that the Lord would no longer spare Israel. Their high places where they worshipped, and the House of Jeroboam II, their king, would be destroyed. See 2 Kgs. 15:8ff. This implied that no intercession would now avail, so Amos makes none. The NT parallel is that if God’s people go on sinning after receiving the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for their sins. Christ will not intercede for them. They can only expect a terrible judgement. See Heb. 10:26-27.
- 3) A Remnant Spared: Yet even in this warning, there is mercy. The plumb-line would test all of God’s people, and a remnant would be preserved, even if the nation as a whole was brought crashing down. All those who trust in the Lord Jesus will receive the full pardon for which Amos was pleading

Conclusion:

