

Who is Like You, O LORD?

Amos 7:1-9

7 This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. **2** When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said,

"O Lord GOD, please forgive!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!"

3 The LORD relented concerning this:
"It shall not be," said the LORD.

4 This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, the Lord GOD was calling for a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. **5** Then I said,

"O Lord GOD, please cease!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!"

6 The LORD relented concerning this:
"This also shall not be," said the Lord GOD.

7 This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. **8** And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"Behold, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them;

9 the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

Passages like this one reveal something to us of God Himself, that leave us asking, with Moses, “Who is like you, O LORD?”

When we approach scripture, we approach holy ground, for it is not just a book, but the very mind of God, revealed.

Two actions of the Lord that leave us in awe of Him

Two visions in this passage, two prayers of the prophet, and twice that the Lord relents in His judgement

The sovereign Lord who relents

verses 1-6

Reminder: there is an expiration date on God’s patience.

Amos gets a vision of what could happen in the future. Seems to be in a private setting (verse 7).

Vision 1

verses 1-3

In the first vision, God starts with the word, “Behold” – “Listen”, “pay attention”.

God was forming locusts – the same language that Jeremiah uses to refer to God forming him in the womb.

The latter growth was for the people – after the King took his cut, his taxes. If the locusts wipe out the latter growth, the people are left starving.

Amos asks, “how can Jacob stand? He is so small!”, but Israel saw themselves as the best of the best. Amos is seeing things correctly, even though Israel is not. Israel is seeing their own power, but Amos is seeing them in comparison to God’s power.

Vision 2

verses 4-6

Fire is coming.

“The great deep” – The water table; the subterranean water (Genesis 7:11) – wells on which farmers and ranchers depend during dry seasons.

This is a reminder that Israel is not living on their own land, but on God’s land, and He can take it back whenever they break His covenant.

Amos’ plea for Israel again hinges on the size of the nation.

What are we to make of God relenting?

1 Samuel 15:29 says the exact opposite of what God does here. But even in 1 Samuel 15 itself, we get what seems like a contradiction – God regretted that He made Saul king.

This is an act of condescension on God’s behalf for us.

Jeremiah 18:7-10 explains it. God is a just judge, but also a compassionate savior.

Amos understands what wicked Israel had forgotten: that God is compassionate but will judge sin.

God bases His action toward the sinner on the actions of the sinner.

This is a lesson to us about the overwhelming compassion of God, and about the significance and priority of prayer in the lives of Christians.

Amos loves the nation of Israel so much that he pleads for them with God. Do we love the unsaved in the same way? Where are the weeping prophets who plead for the sinners?

The sovereign Lord who ruins

verses 7-9

In this vision, God takes the lead, and Amos does not ask God to stop.

This time, rather than seeing an instrument of judgement, Amos sees God Himself.

The focus of the vision is the plumb line.

“I will never again pass by them” – reminiscent of the Passover, when the Lord judged the sins of the nation of Egypt. God is saying that He will not do that again, but that judgment will fall with absolute certainty.

Notice that now it is not a locust storm or a fire that is executing judgement, but God Himself.

There are three areas on which God’s judgement would fall

1. The high places of Isaac
 - a. religiosity
2. The sanctuaries of Israel – synonym for high places
 - a. religion
 - b. The places in Dan and Bethel built by Jeroboam I so that Israel would stop making pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
3. The house of Jeroboam
 - a. Government

God told Israel to make righteousness roll down like rivers, but they had turned it into poison and wormwood.

The plumb line is the Word of God.

Is my life plump?

The way to stand plumb is to be in Christ. Period. If you attempt to line up straight with God’s commands on your own, you will find that you cannot. No one is straight when it comes to God, just as no one is big when it comes to God.