

## Our Faithful God

- Amos 9:1-15
- We have come to the end of this little book, and I hope it has been an encouraging word, even as it has provided some unsettling as well. I am reminded of what Vance Havner said once: “Sometimes your medicine bottle has on it, 'Shake well before using.' That is what God has to do with some of His people. He has to shake them well before they are ever usable.” Well, may we who have been shaken be useful to the Lord. Let’s get shaken again as we look at this final chapter under these two headings: The End, and The Beginning. Or if you prefer, Destruction and Restoration.
- **The End**
- **Destruction is certain.** In the first ten verses, God again describes the destruction that is coming to bring an end to the northern kingdom. Judah, the southern kingdom, will go into exile as well, just a little bit later. It is interesting in verse 1 that we see God standing beside the altar. Why is he standing there? Because the altar of our lives determines everything. Who or what we worship determines everything else about us. We become like what we worship, and we reflect that to the world. God is standing beside the temple in Bethel, where the people worship their idols in vain. God says that their temple will come crashing down on their heads. Some say what you believe about God and faith and religion and the Bible doesn’t matter. They say, all that matters is that you are a good person who treats other people with respect and dignity? But that’s just it. You can’t be a good person, and you can’t treat people with dignity and respect, while at the same time rejecting God. The people of God in Israel couldn’t do it then, and we can’t do it now. When we turn away from God, as a person or as a people, it is a slow and certain slide into the depths of depravity. When the foundations are destroyed, everything comes down.
- **No escape.** In verses 2b-4, God makes it plain that there is no escape. This reminds us of Psalm 139 where David rejoices that no matter where we go, God is there for us. But here, God says, no matter where you hide, I will find you. And really, does God have to “find” us. Did God not know where Adam was when He said, “Adam, where are you?”
- You say, “Even on the top of Mt. Carmel, God can see me?” Yes. Thomas Comiskey writes, “Carmel was a high, densely forested peak overlooking the Mediterranean, popularly considered in Israel as Baal’s property. (Remember the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel?) “And in popular imagery, the bottom of the ocean was horribly distant from the areas of human reach.” (Key word, “horribly.” Remember what Jesus said about someone who leads a little one astray? He said that person would be better off having a millstone around in his neck and him thrown into the deepest part of the ocean. Matthew 18:6. That would have struck a horrifying chord: it was an unimaginable death for a Jew.) What is God saying to us here? Psalm 11:4, “The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord’s throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.”
- Notice the number of “I wills” God says when it comes to his dealings with unrepentant sinners: “I will kill with the sword.” “I will bring them down.” “I will search them out.” “I will command the serpent.” “I will fix my eyes upon them.” If we need further encouragement for a broken and contrite heart, look at
- **God’s absolute sovereignty**
- Vv. 5-6, Let none doubt God’s authority or His power! Who is He? Verse 5a: The Lord God of Hosts. God’s military title. Who is He? Verse 6b: The Lord is His name. In between: God is absolutely sovereign. What God made, God controls. He built the vaults of heaven and He built the depths of the earth. And to those who are hoping for a multi-verse, and not just a universe, if there are other ‘verses’ out there, he wrote them, he built them, he controls them with a whisper.
- **God’s impartiality: God does not play favorites**

- Vs. 7 The Cushites, the Nubians, were black tribes, a distant people, relatively obscure. But the people of Israel are no better than they, nor than the Philistines or the Arameans. The only difference was that Israel had entered into a covenant with the Lord, but they had broken that covenant.
- Vs. 8a Again, God's eyes are on them for harm, not for good. Their destruction had been prophesied even by Moses, in **Deut. 4:26**.
- **God's mercy: certain, but not total, destruction**
- Verse 8b Their destruction, though certain, will not be total. Our God is faithful to keep HIS covenant!
- Vs. 9-10 The grain will survive, the pebbles (hard-hearted people who have rejected God) will not. The righteous will be saved, but the wicked will be destroyed. This is an eternal truth.
- The purpose of Verses 1-10 is not so much to give new information about the imminent judgment of God, but to stress its inevitability. Even as the people he is speaking to through Amos do not believe it will happen. As in the days of Noah, they are living without a care in the world, pursuing their own sinful ways without any thought to impending judgment. Is it not the same today, all over the world?
- **The Beginning**
- You have been waiting for it, and it is finally here. Every prophet God gave to His people brought words of judgment...and words of hope. Because as we have said, and as I will say again, love and discipline are not strangers but traveling companions and best friends. God loves those whom he disciplines, just as a father loves his children enough to correct them and train them and discipline them. The purpose of judgment is to bring repentance, and therefore restoration.
- **One day**
- Vs. 11 "At that time" A sudden shift to the distant future! In that day, David's booth is rebuilt. In that day, the tent stakes will be stretched out to include all the nations of the world. Even to include Edom. What day is this? Is this when Jesus died on the cross? You could make an argument for that. That is the turning point, the crossroads, if you will, of history. Or is it the day of Pentecost? You could make that argument, as that day people from all over the world heard the truth spoken in their own language. Or is this a day that has not come yet? You could make that argument, though I think that is the weaker of the ones mentioned. Is there another day that God could be referring to? A day when there is a divine conquest of saving grace, and all the nations would be brought into the covenant of God. When was that realized on the earth? Some would argue, at the Jerusalem council. Remember why the council met? There were Christians (completed Jews) who were teaching in the first century that a Gentile should have to become a Jew in order to then become a Christian. The council in Acts 15 met to decide this question, and it was a monumental decision. It turned the Gospel out to the streets in earnest for the whole church, not just a few who understood it, and the whole world was included in its reach. James understood this and quotes it in Acts 15:16-17! That was a very important day. But we still long for the Day. We long for the day when EVERY knee will bow. We long for the Day when He will separate the wheat and chaff, the sheep and goats. And as we long for that Day we must work in THIS day. As Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do." (John 14:12)
- **These days**
- Now God talks about, perhaps, an even more distant future, and perhaps first he refers to our day, before he refers to a day still in the future. The hyperbole he uses, when the plowman overtakes the reaper, may be a spiritual reference.
- Vs. 13 The harvest will be "so abundant that harvesters will still be trying after many months to finish collecting one crop when it will be already time to plant the next one." Perhaps this a reference to the expansion of the Gospel for the last twenty centuries. A continual harvest of people coming to believe in Jesus Christ, from every tribe and tongue and nation. Muslims are coming to Christ in numbers that are staggering. More Muslims have come to Christ in the last twenty years, somewhere between 2 and 7 million, than in all the centuries that Islam existed before that. The gospel center is not the west, as it

used to be, but in Latin America and in sub-Saharan Africa. We are up to our ears, all over the world, in baby Christians who need discipling. More missionaries, both short-term and long-term are needed, but fewer from the west are willing to go. The harvest of souls is increasing, as the plowman are catching the reapers.

- **Those days**
- I believe the last two verses refer to Israel's future.
- Vs. 15: God will plant his people, and they will never be uprooted again. The physical part of this was finally realized in 1948, when Israel was restored to its land and became a sovereign nation again. Verse 14: They will be able to "engage simply...in normal agriculture, doing what they love, independent and able to pursue their occupations in peace." A basic enjoyment of the fruit of one's labor is a favorite prophetic way to express the serenity of the restoration. I also thought of Paul's reference to minding your own business and working with your hands. And Solomon's wisdom in Ecclesiastes to eat, drink, enjoy life.
- But the spiritual reality of this promise has not yet been fulfilled. Israel is still in exile and her blindness has not yet been removed. (2 Cor. 3:14-15) We await the revival, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. But we must also make sure that our own hearts are right with God, and that revival is coming to our souls day by day as we walk with Him in truth.
- As we close this book, with the sounds of shaking foundations in our ears, the sound of judgment against the wicked, let me encourage you with these words from Hebrews. "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28-29)
- Pray