

## Message #8

Amos 7:1-17

**One major lesson to glean from this book of Amos is that God has limits to His grace with His own people.** God gives His people plenty of time to respond to Him and His Word and if they do not respond, He will ultimately judge them and start doing terrible things against them. He is the Lord God of hosts, who is in charge of everything in heaven and on earth. If He commands negative things to hit His people because of their refusal to focus on obeying His Word, no one can stop it. **That point was certainly true in the O.T. with Israel and it is also true in the N.T. with the Church.**

God wants His people carefully understanding and applying His Word and if they don't, He will send His judgment. Now that point becomes very clear from this book of Amos. Most of the book is aimed at God's people. They were living plush lives and prosperous lives. There was peace in the land and there were plenty of things to enjoy. The economy was good, the housing market was booming; in fact, many of God's people had their summer homes and their winter homes. The problem was they totally lost sight of the importance of God and His Word. They lost sight of the fact that in the good times, they needed to keep their sights on understanding God's Word and applying it to their lives.

So God raised up Amos to go to His own people and tell them His judgment was on the way. **As we will see from this text, instead of the people saying God has sent us a man to tell us the truth so we can know and obey His Word, they said to Amos, we don't want you here, we don't want you telling us what the Word of God really says and we are not going to listen to you anyway, so go on back home to Judah.**

What these people did not realize is that Amos cared more about them than any religious or political leader because he knew that the best thing for a nation was to respond properly to the Word of God. Amos did not want God's people being judged and the only thing that could prevent that was properly responding to the Word of God.

**AMOS PRAYED AND ASKED GOD NOT TO JUDGE HIS PEOPLE AND FOR A TIME GOD ANSWERED THE PRAYER; BUT IN THE END, THE JUDGMENT WOULD COME BECAUSE THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERS AND THE PEOPLE DID NOT WANT TO KNOW GOD'S WORD AND OBEY GOD'S WORD AND THEY DID NOT EVEN WANT AMOS TELLING THEM GOD'S WORD ANYMORE.**

Now a prophet in the O.T. had primarily two responsibilities or jobs:

**Responsibility #1** - Forthtell the Word of God—tell people the precise Word of God.

**Responsibility #2** - Foretell the future of God—tell people exactly what would happen.

**The prophet received direct revelatory messages from God and his job was to go to the people and tell them exactly what God told him to tell them.** Sometimes the assignment was to reveal the Word of God and sometimes the future of God. The prophet would get a message from God and he was to reveal it to whomever God sent him.

Amos was a prophet from Judah in the south who was raised up by God to go to Israel in the north. His job was to inform Israel that unless she started to get her focus back on God and His Word, He was going to authorize a series of horrible things to happen to His own people as chastising judgment.

**Now so far in the first six chapters of Amos, God revealed various oracles to Amos, which revealed things in words. As we come to chapter seven, God reveals a series of visions to Amos, which reveals things in pictures.**

This chapter breaks down into three main parts:

**PART #1** – The judgment visions against Israel which God gives to Amos. **7:1-9**

In these verses, there are three visions God gives to Amos that all reveal what he is going to do to His people.

**Vision #1** - Amos receives a judgment vision of locusts. **7:1-3**

In **verse 1**, the “Lord GOD” (Adonai, Jehovah), the Sovereign Lord and Master over all things and the covenant God of Israel, showed Amos that He was about to send a locust (gobay) swarm to destroy the spring crop. The vision showed Amos exactly when this would happen; after the king had harvested his spring crop. Now the spring crop came early and was used to pay taxes, which is why it is called “the kings mowing.” But the second crop was for the food for the people.

What this would specifically mean for the people of Israel is that all of their food crops would be completely destroyed by this locust plague sent directly from God. In fact, according to **verse 2**, all of the vegetation of the land would be destroyed by these locusts.

What that would mean is that God’s people would not have food to survive and God let Amos see a vision that revealed exactly that. When Amos saw that vision, according to **verse 2**, he went to God in prayer and asked God not to send this judgment. He pleaded with God not to destroy His own people.

What Israel did not realize is that Amos was one of the best friends she had. He was a man of God, a prophet of God, who was actually interceding in behalf of rebellious people and was asking God to not destroy His own people.

According to **verse 3**, God decided to answer the prayer temporarily and He changed His mind about sending immediate judgment and God said, “It shall not be.” When it comes to promised judgment, there is the possibility that people can turn to God and stop the judgment.

In salvation, all are heading to hell as a judgment for sin. If someone will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the threat of eternal judgment ends.

Now of course this has raised a question in the world of theology about God changing His mind in view of the fact that God is immutable, which means He is not capable of changing. There are many passages of Scripture that teach God cannot change and is not subject to change: Numbers 23:19; Psalm 102:27; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:12; James 1:17. So naturally when we read in Amos 7:3, 6 that the “LORD changed His mind” we have to resolve this.

Now Bible-mockers simply say the Bible contradicts itself and this proves it is unreliable. But we do not believe there is any contradiction here whatsoever.

**When it comes to this matter of immutability, there must always be a clear distinction made between immutability and immobility. Immutability means God cannot change, whereas immobility would mean God cannot move. God reveals that He cannot change, but He also reveals that He can move and, in fact, He reveals that the prayer of righteous people can move Him.**

In other words, there is an immutable, unchanging principle that He has revealed about Himself and that is if My people pray to Me they can cause Me to move and if they do not pray to Me regarding certain things, I will not move. In fact, James said, “you have not because you ask not.”

Charles Baker, in his theology gives an interesting illustration of this principle by using the wind and weathervane. Which actually changes, the wind or the weathervane? In a true sense, it is the wind that changes. The weathervane will always move in accordance with the wind. In this case, the weathervane is immutable, it is the wind that changes, the weathervane just moves in accordance with the wind (*A Dispensational Theology*, p. 137).

God has structured Himself so that He moves in accordance in regard to what His people do. If His people get serious about His Word and obey Him, He will bless them; if His people do not obey Him, He will not bless them. If His people pray about certain things, He will move in accordance with their prayers. If His people do not pray about certain things, he will not move. Dr. Chafer said God “is not capable, susceptible of change, either by increase or by decrease, by development or by self-evolution; unchangeable, invariable; permanent; as, God is immutable” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 217).

God is immutable, but not immobile and what happened here is that Amos prayed and God answered the prayer and temporarily decided not to send the locust judgment.

**Vision #2 - Amos receives a judgment vision of fire. 7:4-6**

God showed Amos another vision and this time it was of fire. According to **verse 4**, God was so fed up with His people that He was about to send a wildfire that would ravage Israel and all its vegetation and crops.

We don't know how God was going to start the fire, but what Amos saw was a fire that was ravaging the land as a judgment of God. Now it is possible that He was actually going to send fire right out of heaven like He did against Sodom and Gomorrah. It is also possible that He would send a lightning strike to start a fire and then control the wind to burn the land up. He could cause some fire to get out of control and just burn Israel's land with it. Also, it is possible that He would send a military to destroy Israel and burn down the cities and the land.

He doesn't tell us how He would start the fire, but Amos saw it and again He prayed that God would not send this judgment and again God was moved to answer the prayer temporarily.

**Vision #3** - Amos receives a judgment vision of a plumb line. **7:7-9**

Now apparently some time passed between the first two visions and this vision. Now Amos received another vision and it was the vision of the plumb line. The plumb line was used to determine if a vertical wall was straight. This was part of the building code. Someone would go up and dangle a line down with a weight on the end and the gravity would show true vertical and determine if the wall were straight.

If you have gone out back where the new sanctuary is being built, there have been times when you can see they still use a plumb line. They dangle a line to determine whether or not the walls are straight.

God said I have done that with My people. They are claiming to be so godly, well, I have examined them in light of My Word to see if any are straight in line with it and they are not straight. They are way off course and they are not right with Me and therefore, as He says in **verse 8**, "I will spare them no longer."

There can be a huge difference between the way we see ourselves and the way God sees us. We must always measure ourselves in light of Scripture. That will show how straight we really are.

In **verse 9**, God says I am going to totally destroy all of your political and religious places and people. The high places which were the places built on hills that had their altars and shrines. God would totally destroy all their sanctuaries, which were their various temples they had built in cities to worship and he would topple the government of Jeroboam that was corrupt and godless.

This time Amos could not intercede. It was too late. The period of grace had ended and the time for getting God's mercy was over. This is a sober thing to think about. God only gives His people so long to respond to Him and His Word. You can harden your heart one too many times and God can say, "My grace offer to you is over" and "I will spare you no more."

**PART #2** – The response of the priest of Israel to the visions of Amos. **7:10-13**

Now apparently Amos was proclaiming all of this to Israel. He was going to the major cities and proclaiming this. He told them about the visions and how God had given them a “stay of execution” but he was now telling them grace was done.

So Amaziah, the pseudo-priest, the pseudo-religious leader of Israel, who was headquartered in Bethel, sent word to Jeroboam, and said you need to know what that guy is preaching. Amaziah said have you heard this guy and heard what he is saying? Amaziah was a typical religious leader. He made a good living as a backslapper. He had charisma and he was very cultured and he was a skilled orator, but he did not preach the Word. He told people good stories and made them all feel good about themselves, but he would not present truth.

According to **verse 10**, Amaziah told Jeroboam that Amos is going through Israel and has conspired against the king and his words were affecting the people. In fact, he is making serious predictions about us and our land. Do you see **verse 10** the land cannot endure the Word of God.

Now let’s think about this for a moment. Amos is preaching the Word of God in the land of Israel and the religious leader of Israel is saying, “We can’t endure this” and “we don’t want this.” Isn’t this what God’s people should want? Shouldn’t the people of God actually want to hear the true Word of God? Shouldn’t the people who go to church want to have God’s Word carefully taught to them? This group said, “We cannot endure this.”

You know we have many people today, who say they are Christian people, who do not like a serious, systematic approach to God’s Word. They cannot take it. They don’t want it. They want the fluff and the entertainment and their worship experience, but they do not want the Word and this priest did not want it either.

A good friend of mine who is skilled in the Word was asked to teach an adult Sunday school class in supposedly a Bible church. He was given a certain amount of time and decided to take them through a book of the Bible. He is a good teacher. After a couple of classes, some of the people said we don’t want this. We just want to gather together and talk about what we think it means to us. We don’t want to actually be taught what it actually means. These people were just like the group Amos was facing.

So in **verse 11**, Amaziah, who supposedly is the great religious leader of Israel, sent word to Jeroboam II, and said Amos is out there telling people that you are going to die by a sword as a judgment of God and that Israel is going to be taken into captivity. **Now this is an outright lie. Amos never said Jeroboam would die by a sword.** What he actually said in **verse 9** is that the house of Jeroboam would be taken captive by a military overthrow and many of them would die by the sword. In fact, Jeroboam himself did not actually die by a sword. **Amaziah is a religious leader who does not tell the truth. He shades things his own way.**

In verses **12-13**, Amaziah told Amos we don't want you here and we do not want God's Word. Leave us and go back home and do your preaching and prophesying there. Bethel is where we have our sanctuary and our political headquarters and we do not want the Word of God here because it upsets things. If we are not serious about God's Word, then we are just like Amaziah.

By the way, our job is to preach the truth. If we are not willing to stand up and present truths like Amos, then don't point your fingers at the politicians in Washington, because they are not failing us, we are failing them. Amos preached truth. Amos stood for truth. Amos confronted with truth and we have the same responsibility.

It is interesting to note that none of the great Bible teachers and expositors have ever been headquartered in Washington D.C.. Can you imagine what would happen if a true Bible teacher were to go to Washington National Cathedral, which features a bunch of religious leaders who promote sinful things and some of whom don't even believe in God? I am certain that he would get as warm a reception in Washington as Amos got in Bethel.

### **PART #3** – The response of Amos to the priest of Israel. **7:14-17**

Now apparently one of the ways that Amaziah was attacking Amos was by attacking his credentials. He was probably saying you are just some country boy from the south and you have come here to the big cities and the big time and you don't know what you are even talking about.

I love what one commentator said, Amaziah is basically telling Amos that he is not educated and sophisticated, and yet where are the books Amaziah wrote. The book of Amos has been preserved for well over 2500 years.

Amos was not intimidated by this religious leader and in **verses 14-15**, Amos says I was not originally a prophet and I did not go to prophet's school. I never went to any of your great theological schools. In fact, Amos says I was not even looking to become a prophet. I was a rancher and farmer. But God called me and told me you go prophesy to My people Israel. God specifically told me that my job was to go to "My people, Israel" and proclaim My Word and that is what I have done. **The authority Amos had was that he had a very special gift and calling of God. His job was to speak the Word of God.**

Some have said about ministry, if you can do anything else then do it. Well, the truth is many men like Amos could do something else. In fact, some would rather have done something else, but the calling of God would not let them. That was the way it was with Amos.

In **verses 16-17**, Amos says now you are saying I am not supposed to prophesy negative things against Israel; well, Amaziah, try this prophesy on for size. Sometimes people will allege that a minister is too harsh. When we speak out against certain people or groups, we are not loving. Well, look at this prophesy Amos gives Amaziah and he aims it straight at him:

**Prophecy #1** – Your wife will become a harlot right here in Bethel. **7:17a**

**Prophecy #2** – Your sons and daughters will all die by a sword. **7:17b**

**Prophecy #3** – Your land will be divided and given away. **7:17c**

**Prophecy #4** – You will die outside of the land of Israel. **7:17d**

**Prophecy #5** – Israel will be taken captive. **7:17e**

When God takes the plumb line of His righteousness in His hand and measures it against us, none are straight because we have all sinned. But there is one who can straighten us out—Jesus Christ. Believe in Him and you will be saved.