

COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . IN THAT TIME, WHEN I SHALL BRING BACK THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM . . . I WILL GATHER ALL NATIONS, AND WILL BRING THEM DOWN INTO THE VALLEY OF JEHOShAPHAT; . . . The words "in those days, and in that time" most definitely refer back to the preceding Messianic prophecy of the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh and the great and terrible day of Jehovah of 2:28-32. Therefore, whatever gathering together into the valley of Jehoshaphat and judging to be done will be done in the Messianic age. Furthermore, we must also interpret the "bringing back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" as an event to be within the same Messianic age. The phrase translated "bring back their captivity" could be translated, "make an end of their oppressions." The RSV translates it, "when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem." The conclusion of chapter three shows that God, in "restoring their fortunes" is going to bring on something more glorious than the literal return from the Persian captivity. So, the "bringing back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" undoubtedly means that God is going to relieve His covenant people from all oppressions delivering them from all their enemies.

In addition, He is going to execute His judgment upon all the enemies of His people in that same glorious age of the Messiah. Lange says, "This distinctly shows that the object of the day of the Lord is, the deliverance of the people of God. The judgment of the heathen world is simply a means to that end." God's judgment (His victory over the enemies of His people) is given a contemporary setting. Jehoshaphat, by the miraculous help of God, won a great victory over a Gentile army in a valley which was afterward named for him (II Chron. 20). So the prophet's use of the king's name and the valley of Jehoshaphat would remind the people of this glorious victory over the enemies of God. Also, the name Jehoshaphat means "Jehovah judges." That there is ever going to be a literal gathering of *all* the nations into this valley near Jerusalem is a geographical impossibility! There is not going to be a literal war there between the literal forces of all the nations of the earth and the literal forces of a millennial kingdom of God. The prophet was led by the Holy Spirit to use the valley of Jehoshaphat in a symbolic or figurative way much the same as we say someone has met his Waterloo. At the end of the Messianic age (which will be the end of all ages) God is going to demonstrate a complete and final victory over all the forces of evil. Actually, God has already won the complete victory over evil in His Son. He "de-

spoiled the principalities and the powers . . . making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in Him" (Col. 2:15). The prince and god of this world has been "judged" and "cast out" (Jn. 12:31) (see our comments on Obadiah). But at the end of this age He is going to manifest and vindicate that which He has already revealed in the Bible—that those now who are in Christ are "more than conquerors" (cf. Rom. 8:28-39). And why is God going to judge all nations in a final way if He has already accomplished victory over Satan, sin and death in Christ?—"for my people and for my heritage Israel!" God is jealous for His people. The forces of evil and enmity against God will be shown to be what God said they were all along—eternal death and destruction. At the same time faith and righteousness and obedience to God will be openly shown to lead to what God said they would all along—eternal life and bliss.

v. 4-8 YEA, AND WHAT ARE YE TO ME, O TYRE, AND SIDON . . . WILL YE RENDER ME A RECOMPENSE . . . SWIFTLY AND SPEEDILY WILL I RETURN YOUR RECOMPENSE UPON YOUR OWN HEAD . . . I WILL SELL YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS INTO THE HAND OF THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH . . . Now Joel turns to a contemporary enemy of God's people—Tyre and Sidon and the regions of Philistia. These heathen powers had plundered the precious heritage of God. They had carried away the silver and gold from God's temple and desecrated it in their idolatrous temples. They had even carried away people and sold them as slaves into the far distant lands of Greece. The prophet represents God as almost incredulous at the audacity and brazenness of these heathen powers. Have they no sensibility to the wrath of the Higher Being? Do they dare to go on in their evil in complete disdain of judgment? We are reminded of those of our own age who seem to be completely and unabashedly disdainful of righteousness, justice or judgment. There are even those who would speak happily of the "death of God" while they hold requiem for Him. But God promises to return to them what they have sown? God's promises do not fail! This prophecy was fulfilled by Alexander the Great and his successors, under whom many Jewish captives were liberated and restored to their own land, while various parts of Philistia and Phoenicia were brought under Jewish rule.

v. 9-10 PROCLAIM YE THIS AMONG THE NATIONS; PREPARE WAR . . . BEAT YOUR PLOWSHARES INTO SWORDS . . . Now the prophet, on behalf of God, throws down the challenge. Let all the enemies of God and His people put forth every effort—let them muster every ally—let them turn every resource into a weapon for war and then let them

gather themselves together and come with haste against Jehovah God. It is interesting to note in verse 10 the reverse figure of speech to that of Isa. 2:4 and Micah 4:3 where the swords are beaten into plowshares and the spears into pruninghooks. There the figure is to depict the peace that the Messianic reign will bring into the hearts of men. Here the figure is used to depict the evil enmity that reigns in the hearts of the unconverted.

v. 11-12 HASTE YE, AND COME, ALL YE NATIONS ROUND ABOUT, . . . THITHER CAUSE THY MIGHTY ONES TO COME DOWN, O JEHOVAH . . . LET THE NATIONS BESTIR THEMSELVES, AND COME UP TO THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT; FOR THERE WILL I SIT TO JUDGE ALL THE NATIONS ROUND ABOUT. Verse 11b seems to be a prayer of the prophet in the midst of his pronouncements. He prays that God will send His forces to do battle against the forces of heathendom. The answer to his prayer comes immediately in verse 12 and continues in verse 13. Lange cannot accept the idea that angels are referred to here. However, in the light of all that the Scripture says of angels carrying out the judgments of God and fighting the battles (even literally at times) of the chosen people it would seem that a reference to angels could be the only acceptable meaning. Daniel is told by an angel of the spiritual conflict of angelic beings (cf. Daniel 10:13, 20, 21).

v. 13-15 PUT YE IN THE SICKLE; FOR THE HARVEST IS RIPE . . . MULTITUDES, MULTITUDES IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION . . . THE SUN AND THE MOON ARE DARKENED . . . Yes, God answers, I will send my mighty ones to carry out the grim task of reaping a harvest of wrath. God's angels have carried out such assignments in the past (the death angel in Egypt; the angel of the Lord who slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers), they are carrying out such assignments now as they protect and serve the saints (Heb. 1:14) and they will in the future (Matt. 24:31; I Thess. 4:16; II Thess. 1:7-8, etc.). Both harvest and winepress are figurative descriptions of the fullness of their wickedness and both terms are also used to symbolize judgment.

The term, "multitudes, multitudes" may be translated "tumult, tumult in the valley of decision." The word literally means "noisy crowds." The repetition of the word signifies a confused, tumultuous multitude. The picture Joel draws for us is that of "thongs upon thongs" of these enemies of God in a blind, raging confusion surging headlong and headstrong into a showdown with an Omnipotent Judge. The Psalmist adds to the picture, "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against Jehovah, and against his

anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh: The Lord will have them in derision. Then will he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure: Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psa. 2:1-6). Joel says the wrath of God will be so terrible that even the heavenly bodies (the whole universe) tremble at it and withdraw from looking upon it!

God's judgment of the nations for injuries done to His people here is the final and ultimate judgment of all the enemies of all the elect, both Old Testament and New Testament. Each judgment of God upon each enemy of His people foreshadowed and certified the one which is to come finally. Each judgment also turned into a redemption for the elect of God and so foreshadowed and certified the final redemption. And we have received an immutable oath from God, sealed with the blood of His precious Son (Heb. 6:17-20), that our redemption has been forever accomplished and awaits only the consummation. It is this fundamental truth prophesied by all the prophets, accomplished by Jesus Christ, which brings hope to our hearts.

QUIZ

1. What does the prophet mean "bring back the captivity of Judah...?"
2. Will there be a literal battle between God and heathendom in a literal valley of Jehoshaphat? Explain!
3. How has God already judged the world?
4. What is God's way of dealing with his enemies as illustrated with Tyre and Sidon?
5. Does God send His angels to battle for Him against the forces of evil? Cite Scripture references for your answer.
6. What is portrayed by the phrase "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision"?
7. What lesson are we to learn from each of the judgments of God upon His enemies in the past?

III THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE (cont'd) GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE

TEXT: 3:16-21

- 16 And Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem: and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel.

- 17 So shall ye know that I am Jehovah your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.
- 18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with waters; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of Jehovah, and shall water the valley of Shittim.
- 19 Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.
- 20 But Judah shall abide for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation
- 21 And I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed: for Jehovah dwelleth in Zion.

QUERIES

- a. How will God make Jerusalem free of "strangers" passing through her forevermore?
- b. What is the "fountain" coming forth from the house of Jehovah?
- c. What "blood" has Jehovah *not* cleansed and how will He then cleanse it?

PARAPHRASE

And from the midst of the redeemed people of Zion God will speak with a mighty revelation of His power and He will shake the principalities and powers of the heavens and the earth; but God will dwell among His Covenant people and be a refuge and a stronghold for them. Then your generations will know from experience that I am Jehovah, the God who keeps His covenant for then I will be dwelling in the midst of Zion, the covenant people; furthermore, the covenant people shall then be a holy people and the unholy shall not be permitted to dwell in their midst. It will come to pass that the redeemed will be supplied blessing upon blessing; and a Fountain shall spring forth from presence of Jehovah and shall refresh with the water of life those thirsting after righteousness. On the other hand, I will make all My enemies arid, impotent and barren like the wilderness because they have done violence and hurt to My people and have shed innocent blood. But my precious elect will dwell secure forever and I will declare their innocence finally and fully for I will be dwelling in the midst of My redeemed people.

JOEL
SUMMARY

God's presence among a people prepared for Him by repentance will mean protection, holiness, blessing and vindication.

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v. 16 AND JEHOVAH WILL ROAR FROM ZION . . . AND THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH SHALL SHAKE: BUT JEHOVAH WILL BE A REFUGE UNTO HIS PEOPLE . . . This closing hymn is the completion of the first section of chapter three showing that the end result of the future covenant fulfillment is not judgment but redemption and victory and blessing from a new and personal relationship with God. The Lord "roaring" from Zion will proclaim judgment. In the "latter days" of the Christian age the Lord will cause the message to go forth, "The time of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31). This message will not only come from His covenant people, whom Joel represents as "Zion" and "Jerusalem" (where the presence of God abides), but Christ says that the prophets foretold its going forth literally from "Zion" and "Jerusalem" first (cf. Lk. 24:44-49). When God established His kingdom on earth (the church), He shook down all other kingdoms, both those in the heavenly places and those on earth (cf. Dan. 2:44-45; Eph. 1:18-23; Col. 2:15; Heb. 12:18-29). Paul, in Hebrews chapter twelve, points out that those who had become Christians had then come to Mount Zion, the kingdom that shall never be shaken, but that those who rejected Christ and held on to Judaism belonged to that which was about to be (70 A.D.) shaken.

Jehovah, when He should become "Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14) ("God with us"), would be a refuge to His people. Incidentally, this same idea of being a refuge and protection to the covenant people with the coming of the Messiah is exactly what Isaiah was foretelling. Hebrews 6:18-19 is the fulfillment of this prophecy by Joel.

v. 17 SO SHALL YE KNOW THAT I AM JEHOVAH YOUR GOD, DWELLING IN ZION . . . THEN SHALL JERUSALEM BE HOLY, AND THERE SHALL NO STRANGERS PASS THROUGH HER ANY MORE. That Zion means the church ought to be evident from Hebrews 12:22. But it is even more evident that Joel is writing of the church when we see Paul referring to the church as the "Jerusalem that is above"

in Galatians 4:26. The word "above" as Paul uses it here does not mean high up in the heavens, that is, he is not referring to heaven, but "above" is used in the sense of preeminence. Paul's allegory is between the two covenants, Old and New Testaments, and so the Jerusalem that is above is the New Dispensation. It is on "mount Zion" that the Lord was going to "make a feast of fat things . . . destroy the covering that is cast over all peoples . . . and swallow up death forever" (Isa. 25:1-12). And Isaiah is also the one who spoke of the Messianic age as the "Holy Way" where the "unclean would not pass over it . . . but the redeemed would walk there and the ransomed of the Lord would return and come to Zion with singing . . ." (Isa. 35:1-10). So it seems to us that Joel is looking at the Messianic age. He is looking at the future (exactly when even he does not know) fulfillment of God's covenant promises. It may even be that he is compressing the whole Messianic age (from beginning to end) into a few verses here. But he is not interested in pinpointing a schedule of "times and seasons" but in graphically proclaiming the certainty of God's fulfillment of His promises to the people if they repent.

v. 18 AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THAT DAY, . . . THE MOUNTAINS SHALL DROP DOWN SWEET WINE, . . . AND A FOUNTAIN SHALL COME FORTH FROM THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH . . . As we have mentioned above, the prophets used contemporary terms of agricultural prosperity to depict in a figurative way the blessings of God in the Messianic age (cf. Isa. 25; 55; etc.) Jesus depicted the kingdom like a feast again and again. Paul calls the Christian life a feast (I Cor. 5:7-8).

As for the "fountain" flowing from the presence of God we have a number of indications that this must be the Living Water, the Messiah (cf. Ezek. 47:1ff; Zech. 13:1; John 4:13-15; 7:37-39; I Cor. 10:1-4). And so God, in fulfilling His covenant promise in sending the Christ, has sent a cleansing, refreshing, life-giving Fountain to satisfy those who thirst after righteousness, lost in the arid deserts of sin. And the consummation will come when the redeemed are gathered at the river of the water of life (Rev. 22:1ff).

v. 19 EGYPT SHALL BE A DESOLATION . . . FOR THE VIOLENCE DONE TO THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH. When God shall make Christ the "yea" of all His promises (II Cor. 1:20) He will render His enemies impotent. He has "destroyed him who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14); He has destroyed the works

of the devil (I Jn. 3:8); and by His power in us we are able to conquer our enemies (Rom. 8:31-39) and protect ourselves (Eph. 6:10-18).

v. 20-21 BUT JUDAH SHALL ABIDE FOR EVER, . . . AND I WILL CLEANSE THEIR BLOOD, THAT I HAVE NOT CLEANSED: FOR JEHOVAH DWELLETH IN ZION. So God's elect shall be justified—they shall not be condemned. If God justifies, who can condemn? (Rom. 8:31-39). The phrase ". . . I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed" probably means that when God ushers in the consummation of the Messianic age He will vindicate completely His precious saints. Justice, which in some cases on this earth is left undone, will be carried out by the Just Judge of all the earth. It might, on the other hand, refer to the fact that when the blood of Christ is shed all those sins of the Old Testament saints which were purged only potentially (Heb. 10:1-4) will be once for all cleansed (Heb. 10:5-18; Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 9:15-17).

Joel's prophecy ends on the same glorious note of triumph and complete victory as Obadiah's. Ezekiel prophesied that the New dwelling place of God, the church, "the habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22), "the name of the city henceforth shall be, The Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35). Yes, Christians form God's holy temple (I Cor. 3:16-17).

Joel's closing chapter has a certain eschatological element to it but this is primarily because Joel is looking forward with eager anticipation to that day when God will consummate His covenant. The prophets all predict the future; but they do so primarily because God has directed them to foretell of the eventual fulfillment of His covenant promises. The prophets are not interested in giving us a literal picture of some future millennial war or a national restoration of carnal Israel because, as the New Testament so specifically points out, the covenant blessings were never intended to be fulfilled in their final sense in any carnal nationality (Gal. 3:16-17, 29; Eph. 2:11, 13, 19).

We quote here from *Prophecy Interpreted* by John P. Milton, ". . . because God is active in redemptive history this history is moving towards a divinely appointed goal. The prophets picture that goal in terms of *the covenant fulfilled*. In speaking of this fulfillment they employ much of the "times-coloring" of their own age, with the emphasis in the actual fulfillment seen to be upon the "fundamentals" rather than upon the "times-coloring." In the conviction of the prophets the goal of the covenant becomes the "goal of history." Simeon's prophecy in Luke 1:68-75 is a good example to show how

the prophets spoke in a language contemporary with their times and yet intended it to refer to what the Messiah would accomplish—He would “save Israel from her enemies . . .” and “perform the mercy promised to their fathers . . .” and “remember his holy covenant . . .”, etc.

If we take these frequent references like the one here in Joel which imply a final redemptive act of God and divest them of the local “times-coloring” then we have in essence the prophetic message of hope which the N.T. confirms: a hope fulfilled in Christ, yet moving forward to the day of “the great Restoration” of which Christ is God’s own guarantee for the faith of His people.

Indeed, as the prophets often see history, the past and the present blend into the future (or as Milton has said “their perspective is shortened”). The prophets are never concerned with the past for its own sake, but rather with its relation to the present and to the future; for in their concept of history *the present moment* is unintelligible apart from the past, and meaningless apart from the future covenant fulfillment of God in all the various stages of that fulfillment.

QUIZ

1. How has God “roared” from Zion?
2. What Zion is Joel speaking of?
3. Show how the New Testament is the fulfillment of Joel here.
4. How does Joel’s use of figurative language compare to that of Isaiah respecting the Messianic age?
5. What other scriptures speak of the “fountain” from Jehovah?
6. What two possible interpretations may there be for verse 21?
7. How do the prophets consider and write of the far distant future?

JOEL
EXAMINATION
CONSIDERATIONS

1. What did the "Day of Jehovah" mean to the people of Joel's day? What does it mean to you?
2. Who was Joel? and what about his literary style?
3. What is Joel's contribution to the Messianic prophecies?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two.

1	2
Jehoiada	Pethuel
Joash	Mt. Zion
Valley of Jehoshaphat	high priest
Joel	trumpet
Tyre	pour out my spirit
locusts	boy king
Jerusalem	judgment
Pentecost	Jehovah is God
Athaliah	my army
shophar	queen
Joel's father	city of Phoenicia

MEMORIZATIONS

Fill in the blanks:

"Yet even now, saith Jehovah, _____ ye unto me with all your _____, and with _____, and with weeping, and with _____: and _____ your heart, and not your garments, and _____ unto Jehovah your God; for he is gracious and _____, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and _____ him of the evil. Who knoweth whether he will not _____ and _____, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal-offering and a drink-offering unto Jehovah your God?"

"And it shall come to pass _____, that I will pour out my _____ upon all _____; and your sons and your _____ shall prophesy, your old men shall _____, your young men shall see _____."

"And I will show _____ in the heavens and in the earth: _____, and fire, and pillars of _____. The sun shall be turned

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into _____, and the moon into _____, before the great and terrible day of _____ cometh. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be _____; for in mount _____ and in Jerusalem there shall be those that _____, as Jehovah hath said, and among the _____ those whom Jehovah doth call."

CONTEMPLATIONS

1. What was Joel's interpretation of the meaning of the locust plague?
2. What does his interpretation mean to our concept of God and history?
3. Name the things the people were instructed to do to show their repentance.
4. What is the meaning of the terrifying figure or picture Joel gives of the sun turning to darkness and the moon to blood?
5. Is the "valley of Jehoshaphat" a place where a literal judgment will be made or does it stand as a figurative representation of God judging the nations in Christ? Prove it!
6. Why does Joel reverse the saying of Isaiah when he says, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears?"
7. Have strangers ever passed through Jerusalem since the time of Joel—will Jerusalem be inhabited forever?

JOEL

“REPENT”

SERMON ON JOEL

Joel 2:12-14

INTRODUCTION

I. JOEL THE AUTHOR

A. Nothing but what is known about him in this book can be discovered

1. Name means literally, Jehovah is God, which is providentially according to his message

a. The name Joel is a common one among O. T. people, cf. I Sam. 8:2; Neh. 11:9

B. His style

1. A literary master

a. Carefully polishes and beautifies his work as no other O. T. writer

b. Everything is set before us vividly as though we ourselves were witnessing it

c. He adds detail to detail; parallelism to para.; each clear, brief, distinct, a picture in itself, yet adding to the effect of the whole

C. His character

1. The tenderness of his soul is evidenced by his lingering over the desolation which he foresees

2. He was, evidenced by his description of repentance, a man of deep religious feelings, heartfelt experience and warm sympathy

3. He threatens, warns and penetrates into the very recesses of the soul with his figures of speech

4. He is a poetic man, yet one of strength, tenderness, insight and dignity

5. He was a man of moral integrity, undoubtedly a native of Judah being familiar with the Temple and the ministry of the priesthood

II. BACKGROUND OF THE TIMES

A. Disasterous locust plague and drought has devastated the land

1. So severe that there is not enough even to present cereal or drink offerings at the Temple

SERMON FROM JOEL

2. So severe that it is a "Day of Jehovah"
- B. Prior to Joel's time Athaliah (wicked woman) ruled
 1. But Jehoiada, high priest, led a revolt which deposed her and put Joash, boy king, upon the throne
 2. It was really Jehoiada, the high priest who was the voice behind the throne . . . the priesthood was in the ascendancy in Joel's day . . . they were the leaders of the people . . . to them Joel appeals for repentance.
 3. Jehoiada started a revolt but it was short-lived and the people had returned to formalism
 4. So God sent these calamitous calls to repent . . . and sent Joel to interpret the events
 5. Already the people were on their way to moral downfall

III. PURPOSE AND TEACHING OF JOEL

- A. Joel has been sent to call the covenant people to repentance and holiness
 1. God desires a sanctified people through whom He may fulfill His covenant promises
- B. To bring this people to repentance and holiness of life, the great day of Jehovah's chastening judgment has come upon the land in locust and drouught
 1. Thus the ever-recurring method of God in saving the world is chastening judgment causing repentance, followed by redemption as He purifies a people fit for communion with Him
 2. This method reached its perfection in the Messiah and His spiritual kingdom
 - a. Even the first coming of the Messiah is spoken of as a day of Jehovah's judgment cf. Mal. 3:1-4; Jn. 9:39; 16:11
 - b. So combined in the Messiah and His kingdom is the method of God's salvation—judgment and redemption
 3. Each judgment/redemption experience of national Israel foreshadowed and predicted that final and complete judgment/redemption experience realized in Jesus' 1st advent and the consumation awaits only His second advent
 - a. This is the message of Joel
- C. And his message was primarily directed to his contemporaries
 1. Judah was soon to come under the oppression of successive world empires
 2. The cruelty and corruption of these pagan oppressors would

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cause many of God's elect to think God had forgotten His covenant promises

3. Joel was commissioned to preach the ultimate act of God's conquest over the powers of the world darkness. God brought them to the valley of Jehoshaphat in Christ (Col. 2:15)

THE DWELLING OF JESUS AMONG HIS PEOPLE—THE RESTORATION OF THE COMMUNION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN, IS THE FINAL GOAL OF JOEL'S PROPHECY . . . THIS IMPLIES, OF COURSE, THAT GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FITTED FOR GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG THEM . . . JOEL CALLS THE COVENANT PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS SO THAT GOD CAN FULFILL THESE COVENANT PROMISES

DISCUSSION

I. PLEA FOR REPENTANCE, Ch. 1 & 2

A. The Exclaimer—God's spokesman, the prophet

1. The prophet Joel is commissioned to put his message in the form of an exclamation
2. So unprecedented were the calamities which had come to Judah that for generations and generations back no one could recall such a thing
3. So unprecedented were they, they were to serve as a reminder for generations to come
4. When God does such a thing there is no doubt about it . . . He has done it again and again but men deceived by their own pride have not learned what God wants them to learn

B. The extent of God's call to repent: IT IS VIVID, ARRESTING, FORCEFUL, UNMISTAKABLE

1. The crops, vineyards, fig trees were stripped of their bark, splintered, chewed up, burned up
 - a. Something like no man's land in the battle zone or like the woods around an ammunition plant when it blows up
2. Joel represented even the beasts of the field and the ground itself mourning
3. v. 1:11 represents the farmers as unable to comprehend . . . completely dumbfounded
4. The food vanished . . . there was nothing whatsoever to joke about nothing to make one glad
5. Barns and graneries falling into disuse and ruin . . .
6. The beasts perplexed and dismayed, crying unto God for water

SERMON FROM JOEL

7. IT WAS A DAY OF GLOOM (like declaration of war) A DAY OF DARKNESS . . . THICK DARKNESS . . . PEOPLE WERE LIKE THOSE OF DUST BOWL DAYS . . . EARTHQUAKES

C. The Executor of the plea—GOD, using natural agents

1. The locusts are called "a nation"
2. What has come is a day of the Lord . . . destruction from the hand of the Almighty
3. God used the drought to burn up the crops and pastures v. 19-20
4. The terrible nature of the locusts is described in 2:4-10
5. In v. 11 they are called God's army . . . He is their general . . . He commands them

MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, GOD COMMANDS ALL OF NATURE AND USES IT TO SERVE HIS PURPOSES OF CALLING MEN TO REPENTANCE THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE FORM OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH EXCEPT GOD HAS ORDAINED IT TO BE SO . . . HE ESTABLISHES THE BOUNDARIES OF NATIONS . . . HE SITS UPON THE THRONE OF THE UNIVERSE . . . ALL NATURE AT HIS COMMAND

II. THE PLAN FOR REPENTANCE, Ch. 1-2

A. What we have done here is go through the two chapters selecting the words Joel uses to signify THE MANNER REPENTANCE IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

B. The People

1. Awake, like the prodigal who came to himself
 - a. Repentance involves the powers of reason as well as emotions
 - b. PEOPLE NEED TO WAKE UP TO WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THIS AGE OF GRACE AND MERCY IN THE GOSPEL CALL TO REPENT!
 - c. THEY NEED TO WAKE UP TO THE FACT THAT IN CHRIST THE WORLD HAS BEEN JUDGED AND CONDEMNED
2. Wail, lament, weep, like Peter
 - a. There needs to be sorrow for sin . . .
 - b. There needs to be wounded hearts, pricked consciences, shame
3. Be confounded, men need to be humiliated before God . . . to feel the futility of their own righteousness and wisdom
 - a. They need to be brought to the very point of death so that they will learn to depend on God! II Cor. 1:8-9
4. Blow the trumpet in Zion—repentance must be proclaimed
 - a. Few people ever hear sermons on repentance today

JOEL

- b. There are two kinds of promises in God's book . . . one equally as emphatic as the other: Curses and Blessings; warnings and blessings
- 5. Tremble, again, that which God does in nature and through His revelation in Christ should cause men to fear and reverence God . . . THIS IS WHY THERE IS A LACK OF REPENTANCE . . . THERE IS A LACK OF FEAR
 - a. When Jesus demonstrated His deity, Peter cried, Depart from me for I am a sinful man
 - b. Men trembled when in the presence of angels
 - c. We had better tremble when we read His word which is just as penetrating, discerning and Holy in nature? THERE JUST ISN'T ANY EXCUSE FOR IRREVERANCE WHEN THE WORD IS BEING READ OR PREACHED . . . FOR THIS IS THE GOD BEFORE WHOM WE TREMBLE SPEAKING!
- 6. Fast, mourn . . . GIVE YOURSELF TO CONCENTRATION ON THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL . . . SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE
- 7. RETURN TO THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART

C. The Priests

- 1. Gird on sackcloth, pass the night in penitent prayer
 - a. IF THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS CANNOT LIVE PENITENT LIVES HOW CAN ONE EXPECT THOSE OF THE FLOCK TO REPENT?
 - b. FOR SOME REASON OR ANOTHER SOME PREACHERS AND ELDERS AND DEACONS HAVE GOTTEN THE IDEA THAT WHAT IS GOOD FOR THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH IN REPENTANCE DOES NOT APPLY TO THEM
 - c. These are the kind of shepherds of the flock of whom Ezekiel writes, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep . . .
- 2. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly
 - a. Religious leaders are to lead in CONCENTRATION ON SPIRITUAL THINGS
- 3. Cry to the Lord
 - a. Prayers of intercession, supplication to the Lord
 - b. Prayers of dependency get men in the right frame of mind and attitude toward God in order that God may truly bless them

PRAYERS DO NOT CHANGE THE MIND OF GOD . . . GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE AND WITHOUT VARIATION . . . PRAYERS ARE MANIFESTATIONS

SERMON FROM JOEL

THAT MEN ARE GETTING THEMSELVES INTO THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP TO GOD . . . MEN ARE SURRENDERING TO HIS WILL WHICH IS TO BLESS AND GIVE MAN ALL HE NEEDS FOR LIFE AND GODLINESS

4. And so the priests are charged to lament and wail . . .

III. PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE, Ch. 2 & 3

A. Immediate blessings

1. Restoration of the crops, 2:18-19

a. THESE ARE THE MATERIAL BLESSINGS GOD GAVE TO JUDAH FOR HER REPENTANCE

b. THESE SAME PRINCIPLES HOLD TRUE FOR ANY NATION IN THE MATERIAL SENSE TODAY WHO WILL WALK HUMBLY IN THE PENITENCE BEFORE THE GOD OF ALL THE EARTH . . . THEY CAME TO GOD FEARING FATHERS OF AMERICA, BUT HOW LONG THEY WILL REMAIN IN VIEW OF AMERICA'S GROWING UNGODLINESS IS UNCERTAIN!

2. Removal of the Plague, v. 20

a. GOD HAS POWER TO TAKE AWAY THE SCOURGE OF HIS JUDGMENTS AND TO RENEW THE LAND AS IF IT HAD NEVER BEEN JUDGED

3. Remembrance by the Lord, v. 26-27

a. HERE JOEL BEGINS TO PASS FROM THE MATERIAL BLESSINGS INTO THE SPIRITUAL

b. The Lord will remember His people to protect them, guard them and guide them

B. Future blessings, spiritual blessings, 2:28—3:21

1. God will prepare a new people

a. He will pour out His spirit upon all flesh

b. THIS PROPHECY WAS FULFILLED, OF COURSE, IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH Acts 2. THE PROPHETS SPOKE OF THIS FUTURE EVENT IN DIFFERENT WAYS

2. God's victory over the enemies of His people

a. THIS WAS INTENDED TO BE FULFILLED AT THE COMING OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM ALSO

b. IT IS JUST THAT JOEL PUT IT IN THE VERNACULAR OF THE PEOPLE OF HIS TIME! OF COURSE THERE WERE JUDGMENTS UPON THE NATIONS THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE O. T. PEOPLE BUT IT WAS ALL POINTING TO THE FINAL OVERTHROW OF ALL WORLDLY POWER IN THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH AND HIS KINGDOM

JOEL

3. God's presence among His people, v. 3:17-21
 - a. GOD DWELLS IN ZION, THE CHURCH . . . THE CHURCH IS A HABITATION OF GOD IN THE SPIRIT!
 - b. THE FOUNTAIN COMES FORTH FROM THE HOUSE OF THE LORD TO REFRESH THE COVENANT PEOPLE
 - c. ZION WILL BE A HOLY KINGDOM AND IT WILL NEVER AGAIN BE CONQUERED . . . STRANGERS WILL NEVER AGAIN OVERCOME GOD'S PEOPLE

CONCLUSION

- I. THE LESSON THAT GOD'S WAY IS THE WAY OF DISCIPLINE
 - A. Paul writes to the Hebrews that the Israelites of old did not know God's way and fell through unbelief
- II. GOD DOES NOT CHANGE BUT MAN MUST IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS OF GOD
- III. THE LESSON THAT GOD'S ULTIMATE PLANS WERE TO BE PERFECTED IN THE MESSIAH AND THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM
 - A. We are the sons of the covenant . . . heirs of the promise
 - B. We are to be a new people, victorious, with God's presence in our midst, protecting, sustaining, guiding



Jonah 3:1-5, 10

1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time; saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

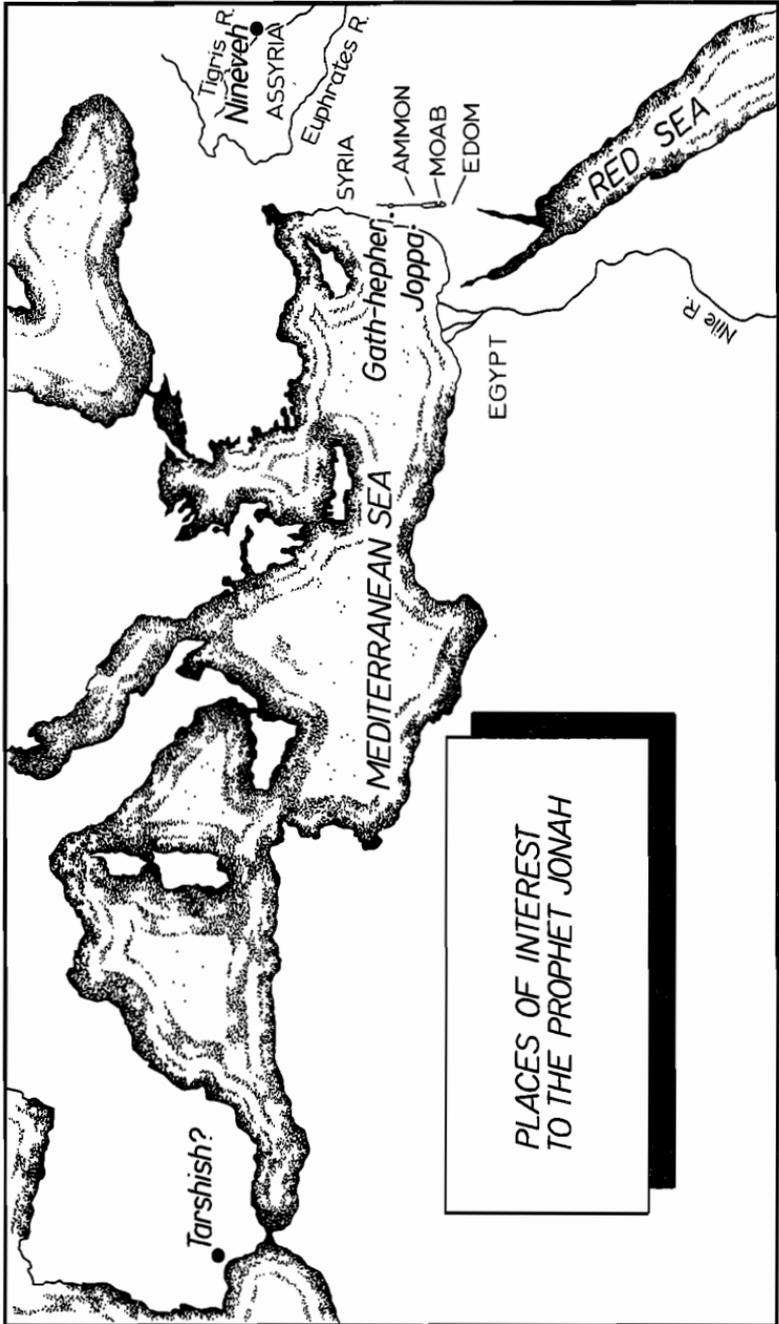
4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

* * * * *

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

JONAH



JONAH

INTRODUCTION

Author: Jonah (or *yonah*, which means literally, *a dove*), the son of Amittai, from Gath-hepher in Galilee. Jonah was a citizen of the northern kingdom, Israel. The destructive critics attack the book as "legendary, mythological—a fairy-tale." One of the reasons the book is attacked as unhistorical is the presence of Aramaic phrases within the book which the critics say would be impossible if Jonah lived at such an early date. The presence of Aramaisms in the book cannot be made a criterion for determining the date or the authorship since Aramaisms occur in Old Testament books from both early and late periods. Furthermore, the recently discovered texts from Ras Shamra contain Aramic elements and they date as early as 1500-1400 B.C.! To deny the authenticity of Jonah is to impeach the integrity of our Lord Jesus Christ for He not only verified the historicity of the miracles recorded in the book (Matt. 12:39-40) but also the historicity of the prophet's mission to the Ninevites thus verifying the authorship and veracity of the book! In addition to the foregoing proof of the book's historicity, J. W. McGarey adds the following observations in his little book "Jesus and Jonah": (a) It is incredible to believe that any Israelite, although capable of conceiving such a tale, would be so irreverent toward one of the great prophets of his nation; (2) It is even more incredible to believe that, if the book be a myth, the chosen people would at any period of their history allowed such a document a place in their Canon of Scriptures—nothing of the mythical is to be found elsewhere!; (3) No Israelite would ever invent a story representing God showing mercy towards the Gentiles; (4) A late date for the book makes the book to be written hundreds of years after the Assyrian city had fallen into virtual obscurity and obliteration!

Date: It is not difficult to date the book if the passage in II Kings 14:25-28 be accepted. Jeroboam II, under whom he carried out the most of his ministry, reigned from 783-743 B.C. But, as Fairbairn points out, this statement in II Kings 14 was made at a time when the affairs of Israel were in the most shattered and depressed condition; "there was none shut up or left, nor any helper for Israel . . ." and this was certainly not true in the days of Jeroboam. Israel had been in this condition in the days of Joash, Jeroboam's father, and Joash gradually restored it by a succession of victories and began the prosperous administration which Jeroboam inherited. So the prediction of Jonah concerning the recovery of Hamath and Damascus seems

JONAH

to belong to the reign of Joash, which would make Jonah a contemporary of both Elisha and Joel. Perhaps the date of Jonah would best be put at approximately 800 B.C.

Background of the Times: It is important to understand what has transpired in the history of the divided kingdoms as well as what is currently taking place in Jonah's time in order to understand the purpose of the book. When God first decided to give part of the kingdom over to Jeroboam I (I Kings 11:26-40), it was because Solomon had perverted the chosen people from their God-appointed purpose of leavening the heathen nations round about them! Instead of being an influence for holiness and a witness to the true God, the chosen people under Solomon incorporated heathenism into their religion and their lives. Jeroboam the First was called by God to bring reform (I Kings 11:37-39) and to be the witness God desired among the heathen. But Jeroboam did not fulfill this high calling. His perversion of worship by worshipping idols caused great numbers of the priests to desert back to Judah (II Chron. 11:13-14) while a revived prosperity in the southern kingdom also led many to desert back to Judah (II Chron. 15:9ff). Now this did not abate even though there were periods of superficial reform between Jeroboam I and Jeroboam II. Jehu, great-grandfather of Jeroboam II wrought a bloody purge of the prophets of Baal in his day. Jehoahaz, Jeroboam's grandfather also attempted a reform (see our comments on the Introduction to Obadiah) but it was short-lived. And Jeroboam II followed the example of his ancestors (II Kings 14:24) in keeping up the idolatrous worship of the golden calves. He reigned for 41 years and outwardly his tenure on the throne seemed to be one of prosperity, peace and growth. But, as Amos and Hosea describe it, it was a time of heinous crime and licentious indulgence (see our comments on the Introductions to Amos and Hosea). The material prosperity was a thin veneer covering the utter spiritual decadence which the prophets, men of righteousness and faith, saw plainly.

Purpose: Israel had become so bereft of any right relationship to the One True God they had begun to call Jehovah, Baal and Baal, Jehovah (Hosea 2:16). So Jonah's mission and the recording of it was to teach Israel that if they would repent God would spare them the judgment that must inevitably come from the Righteous Jehovah should they continue in wickedness. Further, if they should continue in heathen wickedness and reject their divine calling to become a peculiar people, a holy nation, witnesses to the One True God, then

INTRODUCTION

God had children among the Gentiles who would repent and thus become the vessel God needed to carry out His purpose to redeem the world. Fairbairn's interpretation of Jonah's behaviour at the withdrawal of Nineveh's destruction by God is tied in with this purpose of Jonah's mission. Mr. Fairbairn is persuaded that Jonah is so desperately anxious that his own people, Israel, repent he believes the only thing that will bring about this repentance is a terrible manifestation of God's judgment upon this wicked Nineveh. So when Nineveh is spared, Jonah is "grieved and vexed sore," not because he is a sadist and delights in seeing thousands of people suffer, but because he is sure that now Israel will not repent. Mr. Fairbairn does not in any way attempt to excuse Jonah for the spiritual blindness he manifests in misunderstanding the mercy God shows to the Gentiles but his interpretation certainly portrays Jonah in a kinder light than the sadistic, pessimistic, bigoted character by which he is usually portrayed. We personally feel Fairbairn's treatment of Jonah is fairer and represents a deeper understanding of this man whom God called and Jesus praised. We shall have more to say about Mr. Fairbairn's book, "Jonah, His Life, Character, and Mission," later in our exegesis of the text.

Jesus pointed to Jonah twice as a typical prophecy of His Messiahship. Jonah was a *sign* of the humiliating death, and glorious resurrection in the personal experience of the Messiah. The reception of Jonah's preaching by the Gentiles also typified the fact that the message of the Messiah would be rejected by the Jews and received by the Gentiles (cf. Matt. 12:38-42). There are some (Lange, for example) who would, while in full agreement as to the historicity of the account, extend the typical nature of the book even farther. Mr. Lange sees Jonah typifying the nation of Israel as follows:

Jonah

1. Sent to Nineveh to declare the nature of Jehovah to Gentiles.
2. Shuns his call and attempts to forget God by taking a trip.
3. God attempts to reprove the fugitive by a storm.
4. Jonah is thrown into the sea and swallowed by a monster.

Israel

1. Set amidst the heathen to declare the nature of Jehovah to Gentiles.
2. Abandons purpose and goes after other gods.
3. God calls them to repent through national calamities.
4. Israel is thrown into the sea of heathendom and swallowed by a monster ("beast" says Daniel).

JONAH

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| <p>5. In adversity Jonah prays to God.</p> <p>6. Jonah remains there for a definite time allotted to serve God's purpose.</p> <p>7. The fish vomits Jonah out at the command of God.</p> <p>8. Jonah is sent a second time to be a witness to the Gentiles.</p> <p>9. Jonah's preaching works repentance among the Gentiles.</p> <p>10. Jonah rejects God's mercy unto the Gentiles.</p> | <p>5. In adversity Israel turns to God.</p> <p>6. Israel remains there for a definite time allotted to serve God's purpose. (Hosea 6:2).</p> <p>7. God stirs up Cyrus to "vomit" out Israel.</p> <p>8. Israel is restored in order to be the holy nation she was purposed to be at her first call.</p> <p>9. Israel's bringing in the Messiah works repentance among the Gentiles.</p> <p>10. Israel rejects its Messiah because of mercy extended to the Gentiles.</p> |
|--|---|

After a number of years studying and teaching the Old Testament Prophets and studying and teaching the book of Hebrews and the emphatic, all-inclusive statements concerning the typical nature of the Old Testament in Hebrews, it is not difficult for us to accept Mr. Lange's view as altogether in harmony with the typical nature of the Old Testament. One has but to refer to the many references of the New Testament to see that the entire Old Testament, although absolutely historical, was at the same time "a shadow of the good things to come." Compare the following references (Matt. 5:17; Lk. 24:25-27; Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 3:18, 24; I Cor. 10-11 where the word *typos* "type" is used; Heb. 8:5; 9:9; 9:23; 10:1). One thing is certain—Jonah's experience was typical for the Lord Jesus so classified it! And it is interesting that Jesus implied Jonah's experience was to be a "sign" to the Jewish nation pointing to their Messiah and He inferred that the Jews, even of His day, should so understand it!

In all our attempts to outline the book of Jonah and in all our searching for suitable outlines we have found that the book falls into four natural divisions (by chapter) which practically all commentaries and survey books use as a standard outline.
Theme: God's Messenger Is To Declare God's Message To All Men (Rom. 3:29)

- I God's Messenger Running From God (chapter 1)
 - A. The commission of Jonah (1:1-2)
 - B. The contrariety of Jonah (1:3-10)
 - C. The chastening of Jehovah (1:11-17)

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- II God's Messenger Running To God (chapter 2)
 - A. The prayer of Jonah (2:1-6)
 - B. The promise of Jonah (2:7-9)
 - C. The preservation of Jonah (2:10)
- III God's Messenger Running With God (chapter 3)
 - A. The commission renewed (3:1-3)
 - B. The cry for repentance (3:4)
 - C. The consequences of repentance (3:5-10)
- IV God's Messenger Running Ahead of God (chapter 4)
 - A. The displeasure of Jonah (4:1-3)
 - B. The demonstration by Jehovah (4:4-10)
 - C. The declaration of Jehovah (4:11)

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING FROM GOD— THE COMMISSION OF JONAH

TEXT: 1:1-2

- 1 Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
- 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

QUERIES

- a. Who was Jonah—where did he live—when did he live?
- b. Why send a Jewish prophet to a Gentile city?

PARAPHRASE

And now at Jehovah's appointed time in the course of events the word of Jehovah was communicated to Jonah, the son of Amittai. Jehovah said to Jonah, Arise and go with haste to that great Gentile city of Nineveh, in Assyria, and preach My sentence of judgment against it; for the wickedness of the people is great and it has come up before Me.

SUMMARY

Jehovah's righteous judgment is about to fall upon Nineveh but He commissions Jonah to go with a final message of repentance, which, if heeded, will bring salvation from the impending judgment.

JONAH
COMMENT

v. 1-2 . . . THE WORD OF JEHOVAH CAME SAYING . . . GO TO NINEVAH . . . AND CRY AGAINST IT . . . The story of Jonah, beginning with the conjunction *vav*, unites with all the preceding history of God's scheme of redemption and thus becomes "one more pearl of great price" fitted to the whole string of pearls which form the priceless revelation of God's grace to man. It has a specific purpose to serve, it is not incongruous. It reminds the Jews of their election to be a witness to the nations; it proclaims God's sovereignty over all peoples; it typifies the Messiah's humiliation and glorification; and it prophesies Israel's chastening to come. It is God's trumpet blast warning both Jew and Gentile of their responsibilities toward Him at a critical time in the scheme of redemption.

The city of Nineveh, according to Diodorus, was the greatest city of antiquity. It had a population of about 600,000 and was some 80 miles in circumference. Upon its walls, 100 feet high, flanked with 1500 towers, each 200 feet high, four chariots could drive abreast. It filled, together with the adjoining suburbs, the whole space between the rivers Tigris, Khoer, the Upper or Great Zab, the Gasr Su, and the mountainous boundary of the valley of the Tigris on the east. This great metropolis occupied an area of about 18 square miles.

The first mention of Nineveh is in Gen. 10:11 where it is stated that Nimrod (or Asshur) went out into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen, adding, "the same is the great city." It is very probable that the Nineveh of Jonah's day consisted of all these cities in one "great city." The first king of any greatness in Nineveh was Assur-nasipal II (885-860 B.C.) who was warlike and cruel but who welded Assyria into the best fighting machine of the ancient world. Shalmaneser II (860-825 B.C.) was the first Assyrian king to come in conflict with Israel. Ahab fought him and Jehu paid him tribute. Then came Shansi-adad (825-808 B.C.) and then Adad-nirari (808-783 B.C.). Adad-nirari is undoubtedly the person who was king when Jonah went to "cry against" that great city. There are archaeological records to indicate that Adad-Nirari made reforms in his empire similar to those of Amenophis IV in Egypt. And, under the reigns of the three kings following Adad-Nirari (Shalmaneser III, 783-771 B.C.; Assur-dayan, 771-753 B.C.; Assur-lush, 753-747 B.C.) there was a let-up in Assyrian conquests. In this period Israel recovered lost territory, II Kings 14:25. These are hints that Jonah's influence on Nineveh was profound.

About 100 years later, under Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) Nineveh blossomed into beauty and splendor that she had never known. Sennacherib built his palace which covered 8 acres and was elevated on a brick platform 90 feet above the city level. Flights of marble steps led up all four sides of the palace and each entrance was flanked by five pairs of human headed beasts, lions and other figures. These palace ruins show numerous halls, rooms and passages, many of which were faced with slabs of coarse alabaster, sculptured in relief with military operations, hunting-scenes, mythological figures, etc.

Assur-banipal (668-626), one of Assyria's last, but greatest kings, built one of the ancient world's greatest libraries. It contained originally over 100,000 volumes. It was thoroughly cataloged and indexed and specific volumes were easily referred to. Archaeologists have found magnifying glasses supplied to read the many texts which, because of voluminous amount of material, had to be written in small characters. Among these volumes were such works as grammars, dictionaries, interlinear translations, works on astronomy relating observations of eclipses and the like, religious texts, legal texts including the code of Hammurabi, scientific works in taxonomy, geography and medicine, poetry, epics on the great Deluge and the Creation, fiscal documents relating to collection of taxes and works of various other natures.

About 612 B.C. Nineveh was destroyed by a coalition of armies from the Babylonians and Medes. It happened exactly as Nahum, the prophet, predicted it. Its destruction was so complete that even its site was forgotten. When Xenophon and his 10,000 passed by 200 years later he thought the mounds were the ruins of some Parthian city. When Alexander the Great fought the famous battle of Arbela, 331 B.C., near the site of Nineveh, he did not know there had ever been a city there.

To this cruel, cold-blooded, profligate, power-worshipping, materialistic, animistic metropolis God sent Jonah. Jonah was commanded to "preach against" that great city. Their wickedness cried out to the whole earth and God saw it just as He had seen it before (Gen. 6:5; 18: 20-21). The wickedness of every man and every nation is a "cry against God." But God has, by sending His Word, "cried out against all wickedness" (cf Rom. 1:18ff). Who will win in this struggle? Men cry their rebellions against God—God cries His judgments upon men. Whose voice shall be finally heard? The Bible says God's cry will prevail and history confirms it!

But why send Jonah to a foreign nation? Did he not have enough to do in preaching to his own people? No doubt he had preached

to Israel time and time again of God's judgment to come upon them because of their materialism, rebellion and unbelief. But his preaching had fallen upon sin-deafened ears. Nothing he said, however scathing, could turn them from their headlong plunge into heathenism. But look again at Nineveh. Its power and security, its prolificacy and licentiousness had become a by-word throughout the whole world. It was the subject upon every lip—the fear in every heart. Whatever might be achieved there by God through His prophet would not be "as a thing done in a corner!" The report of whatever should be accomplished there at Jonah's preaching would be reported throughout the world!

If by this one call to repentance Jonah should effect the repentance of this Gentile city, what a lesson that would be to the sin-calloused hearts of Israel. It should reveal to Israel the perverseness and foolishness of her behaviour toward her loving God—it should make her ashamed. If it did not so shame her into repentance then there was nothing left for God to do but cast Israel out as one no longer worthy to be called a child and receive and honor the recovered and penitent prodigal, Nineveh. This is precisely the use Jesus made of the preaching of Jonah at Nineveh and its results. Jesus told the Jews of His own generation that the people of Nineveh would rise up in the judgment to condemn them, because *they* had repented at Jonah's preaching; while He, a greater than Jonah, spoke only to cold and unconcerned hearts. The lesson to be learned from the response of the Gentiles should be even more graphic to the Jews of Jonah's day. The Ninevites surrendered to the call of God and ceased from their sins while the covenant people despised God's word and His prophet and hardened their hearts fearing Him not. Israel then could only learn that repentance, such as expressed by Nineveh, would bring salvation. The only other alternative was certain, sure and just retribution from the God they insisted upon spurning.

This is a principle common to all ages. Jesus used it over and over again (Matt. 8:10-12; 22:1-14; 21:33-41); Paul reiterated it again and again both by example and precept (Acts 13:46-47; 28:24-28; Romans 11, etc.). This principle is: God is not now nor was He ever a respecter of persons, "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34). When God chose the seed of Abraham He intended to bless not simply the physical offspring of Abraham but the spiritual seed of Abraham. The people of Israel in Jonah's day were in very real danger of

forgetting this truth. Jonah is merely illustrating by an object-lesson this great truth which Hosea would later prophesy (Hosea 1:10; 2:23) and which Paul would quote in Romans 9:19-26. When God judged and redeemed Israel it was a revelation—a lesson—to all mankind at large. Just as Israel, in apostatizing, became as the heathen falling under the judgment of God, so Israel in being redeemed upon her repentance was equally a promise to all Gentiles of their redemption if they should repent. In the case of Jonah's preaching to the Gentiles and bringing about their repentance and salvation it was this same lesson *in reverse*—teaching the principle which those who should have known it best had so readily forgotten!

This was why Jonah was sent. God would use the repentance and salvation of Nineveh as a last effort of a loving Father to provoke a recalcitrant child (Israel) to shame and to a jealousy that would penitently seek the favor of its Father (cf. Rom. 10:19). But Jonah, so intent upon his own opinion as how to best accomplish Israel's repentance (which would be by a catastrophic display of God's wrath upon the sin of Nineveh), was found "running ahead of God."

Another prophet, enamored of his own ideas as to how best bring about the purposes of God, was also found "running ahead of God" in a similar way and received a similar rebuke (cf. I Kings 19:9-14). The Jewish concept of the Messiah was one of a mighty military despot who would come to bring the retribution of God upon the Gentiles thus calling Israel to repentance but the Messiah came with the "still small voice" and the Jews, having already formed their concepts, rejected Him. We shall have more to say of this later.

QUIZ

1. How does this singularly unique book of Jonah fit into the whole revelation of God?
2. How "great" was the city of Nineveh—population, area, militarily?
3. Who was the king of Assyria when Jonah preached "against" its capitol city?
4. What was the eventual fate of the city of Nineveh?
5. Why was Jonah sent to a Gentile city to preach "against" it?
6. Are there any illustrations of other ages and other people of God's purpose in Jonah's commission? Name some!

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING FROM GOD— THE CONTRARIETY OF JONAH

TEXT: 1:3-10

- 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.
- 4 But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.
- 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jonah was gone down into the innermost parts of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.
- 6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not.
- 7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.
- 8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?
- 9 And he said unto them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land.
- 10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.

QUERIES

- a. How did Jonah think he could flee "from the presence of Jehovah?"
- b. How could Jonah sleep through the storm upon the sea?
- c. Why did the mariners want to know so much about Jonah?

PARAPHRASE

But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh so he decided to go far, far away to Tarshish hoping thereby to relieve himself of the obligation of serving God in this special task. He went down to the great seaport of Joppa and finding a ship there bound for Tarshish, he

paid his fare and went aboard and climbed down into the inner-most part of the ship and sailed with them in order to be free of the responsibility of this particular task God had given him. But God sent one of His servants to bring a great wind upon the sea and there was a mighty tempest on the sea which threatened to break the ship apart. Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors cried to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard in order to lighten the ship. All this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold of the ship. So the captain went down after him. What do you mean sleeping at a time like this? he said. Get up and cry to your god and perhaps he will have mercy upon us and keep us from perishing. Then the crew decided to cast lots to see which one of them had offended the gods and caused this terrible storm; and the lot fell upon Jonah. You, who have brought this displeasure of the gods upon us, tell us, they said, Who are you? What is your occupation? Where are you from? What is your country—and your nationality? Jonah replied, I am a Hebrew; I worship Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the earth and the sea. Then the sailors were terrified and yelled at him, Why have you done this? They knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.

SUMMARY

Jonah, thinking to relieve himself of the prophetic responsibility if he gets away from the place where this commission was given, flees toward Tarshish. But God arrests him in the middle of the ocean by a storm and the falling of a lot upon him. Jonah then confesses his failure to the ship's crew.

COMMENT

v. 3 JONAH ROSE UP TO FLEE UNTO TARSHISH FROM THE PRESENCE OF JEHOVAH . . . Was Jonah foolish enough to think that he could hide from God? Destructive liberal critics of the Bible say that the phrase "from the presence of Jehovah" indicates a "tribal concept of God." That is, the liberal critics think the Hebrews of Jonah's day had the same concept of their God as the heathen did of theirs—each ethnic group of people had their own localized gods—and when they got away from their homeland the local gods had no power over them. This attack upon the supernatural character of the Bible is too absurd to be given much credence by anyone who has ever read the Bible at all. Long before Jonah ever lived the Hebrew people knew that Jehovah God was the Only True God and that He was Creator and Sus-

tainer of the whole universe—that His presence was everywhere (cf. Psa. 139:7ff). What then is the meaning of this phrase "from the presence of Jehovah?" The Jewish commentator, Kimchi, says, "He imagined that if he went out of the land of Israel, the Spirit of prophecy would not rest upon him." In other words, Jonah was simply trying to rid himself of the responsibilities of his official status in this one particular task of going to Nineveh. The phrase ". . . presence of Jehovah" is often used to indicate some official capacity (cf. Gen. 41:46; Deut. 10:8; I Kings 17:1; 18:15; II Kings 3:14; Lk. 1:19). Jonah's intention was not to hide himself from the omnipotent God, but to withdraw from the service of Jehovah. So Jonah acted, as men often do today who do not like God's call upon their lives to special service, by removing themselves as far as possible from being under the influence of God, and from the place where he *could* fulfill God's command. All the circumstances which weighed upon Jonah's soul causing such disobedience we are not told. However, he gives us one reason himself near the end of the book (4:2). Fairbairn supposes Jonah to have rationalized thus: "Alas! what can I hope to accomplish as the bearer of God's message against the crying sins and abominations of Nineveh? I, a solitary individual, a poor and unknown stranger, in the midst of a proud, overgrown city, revelling in wealth and wantonness! What success have I had at home even among the people of my own tongue and nation? Here, with every advantage on my side, I have borne the testimony of God in vain, and have seen the hand of the Lord stretched out to save from impending ruin, with no other effect among the people at large than of giving new wings to profligacy and corruption. My soul is already sick with looking at the things which have been proceeding around me; my hands hang down nerveless and enfeebled; and yet I am the man to be sent to deal with that mighty mass of pride and unrestrained wickedness! Is there the least likelihood of their listening to my voice? . . . And, whatever success might attend my labors when transferred to that distant field, will not He who has so long spared Israel under so many provocations, much more spare them? Why may not matters, then, be allowed to take their course? Or, if the call to repentance must be proclaimed, let it be at least committed to one better prepared for the toils and difficulties of the undertaking." Discouragement, the devil's sharpest knife, has stabbed the heart of Jonah and many a preacher of God since, weakening their faith and prodding them into "fleeing from the presence of Jehovah." Jonah had seen no visible "success" from his ministry and so he was ready to quit. He had seen enough in the past to believe that all his preaching to Nineveh would not bring

the judgment of God upon them but mercy which would be but another failure. His faith was not strong enough yet to accept at all times that the ways of men are not always the ways of God (Isa. 55:8). When Isaiah was warned many years later that his preaching would not be listened to, Isaiah cried out, "How long, O Lord?" The Lord answered Isaiah and all preachers who have ever asked the same question, "Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste . . ." (Isa. 6:9ff). Lack of apparent success, unresponsive listeners, discouragement blinded the eyes of Jonah to the power of God and he went with haste to the city of Joppa, one of Israel's greatest seaports, and paid his fare on a ship bound for Tarshish.

Tarshish is probably Tartessus, in Spain, about 2000 miles west of Palestine, and one of the most western points of all the Phoenician trade. Jonah was fleeing in as opposite a direction from Nineveh as he could go, as Nineveh is almost directly east of Palestine about 500 miles. Joppa is the city where Peter was when God called him to take the Gospel to the Gentile army captain, Cornelius (Acts 10:5ff).

v. 4-5 BUT JEHOVAH SENT OUT A GREAT WIND UPON THE SEA . . . THEN THE MARINERS WERE AFRAID . . . BUT JONAH . . . WAS FAST ASLEEP. His going out from the presence of the Lord did not ensure his escape from the government of the Lord. All the forces of nature are at the command of God, and are pressed into His service when need requires. The ship started on course, but God sent out a wind (cf. Psa. 104:4; Heb. 1:7). The mariners were heathen—they were polytheists—men who worshipped many gods. This tempest was so severe that even these experienced seamen were terrified. When prayer to each one's deity did not avail they hurled their cargo overboard, but even this did not help. The ship was groaning and creaking, tossed about, and in immediate danger of breaking apart. And Jonah was fast asleep! It is hardly justifiable to attribute his ability to sleep through the storm to a perverse stupified, seared conscience. He was probably so exhausted from the long trip from Gath-hepher to Joppa (a distance of some 60-70 miles) and from the psychological wrestling with his soul (which causes physical exhaustion) that he simply fell into a deep sleep which the rocking and rolling of the ship might even have helped, as we ourselves have experienced drowsiness induced by the rolling of a ship under our feet.

v. 6-7 . . . WHAT MEANEST THOU, O SLEEPER? . . . COME, AND LET US CAST LOTS . . . AND THE LOT FELL UPON JONAH.

The "chief-sailor" (shipmaster) remembered the passenger who had boarded at Joppa and probably had been informed that he was asleep down in the hold. Jonah had told them (exactly when, we are not told) that his purpose for buying passage was to flee from the presence of Jehovah (v. 10). So the chief "rope-puller" (the literal word for "sailor") awakened Jonah shouting, over the noise of the storm and in incredulity that he could sleep, "What do you mean sleeping at a time like this? Get up and call upon your God in hope that he will look with favor upon us all that we do not perish." These polytheists had tried calling upon every god represented by every other man on board all to no avail. They had thrown the cargo overboard. Now, they will try Jonah's god. The record does not indicate whether Jonah prayed then or not, but the crew decided to take further action as a last resort. These sailors were at their wits' end when it occurred to them that this violent storm was the expression of the gods' anger with someone on board. Although many of the ancient and contemporary heathenistic concepts of God and natural phenomena are utterly false yet the Bible reveals very plainly that there is a relationship between man's sin and natural calamity (see our comments on Joel and Special Studies on Prophetic Philosophy of History and The Day of Jehovah).

The Arabic word which corresponds to the Hebrew word "lot" is translated "stone, pebble, etc." Stones, pebbles, dice, colored balls, pieces of wood of different lengths, and so on, were used for the "casting of lots." Because men of old believed that the will of the powers which ruled over man's destiny could be known in this way, it was a common practice to cast lots for important decisions. We also read that individual Israelites and the entire nation made use quite frequently of some sort of "lot." The Urim and Thummim, placed into the breastplate fastened to the ephod worn by the high priest in his official duties served to reveal God's will, the exact manner of such revelation being unknown to us (cf. Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21; Josh. 9:14; I Sam. 22:10, 13, 15; 23:6-13; 30:7ff; Neh. 7:65). The Lord commanded the casting of lots only in important matters (Lev. 16:8; Num. 26:53ff; 33:54; 34:13; Josh. 7:13ff; chs. 14-21). Saul's use of the lot (I Sam. 14:37-45) was an act of a king rejected by God (I Sam. 13:13ff), an example illustrating Prov. 13:33, without giving permission to resort to casting the lot. In the New Testament there is no divine command to cast lots and only one example of such being done (Acts 1:26). Neither the deacons (Acts 6:1-6), nor Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to the heathen (Acts 13:1ff), nor the delegation sent to Antioch by the congregation at Jerusalem (Acts

155:22ff), nor the evangelists placed in the newly planted congregations (I Tim. 4:14; Titus 1:5) were chosen by casting lots. We do not think it would be sinful if a congregation or individual Christians resorted to the lot in order to decide certain details in carrying out a work in which they are agreed in general. But the outcome of the lot is not to be regarded as a divine decree. God has made know His will through which "he has granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through a knowledge of Him (Christ)" (II Pet. 1:3ff). God has given us minds to make intelligent decisions and when our decisions are in accord with His revealed word we do not need to cast lots.

In the Old Testament times God revealed His will in "divers portions and divers manners" (Heb. 1:1). In the case of Jonah here it is very evident that God controlled the outcome of the casting of the lots. The lot fell upon Jonah. It was God's way of saying, "Thou art the man!"

v. 8-9 . . . WHAT IS THINE OCCUPATION? AND WHENCE COMEST THOU? . . . I AM A HEBREW; AND I FEAR JEHOVAH . . . They inquired about his occupation, because it might be a disreputable one, and one which excited the wrath of the gods; also about his parentage, and especially about the land and people from which he sprang, in order that they might deal with him according to his position, or influential friendships. They would not want to deal severely with a man whose influence might get them into trouble later.

We cannot but admire the frankness of Jonah's confession of guilt, and his willing surrender to the claims of justice, when he was tempted sorely to take an opposite course. This certainly shows that Jonah's conscience was not seared over. He answers their questions truthfully and at the same time finds an opportunity to bear witness to the One True God. His testimony resembles a great deal that made by the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 14:14-18; 17:22-31).

v. 10 . . . WHAT IS THIS THAT THOU HAST DONE? Now if Jonah's claims were true, it was Jonah's God who had sent the storm. How then could Jonah rebel against such a god? The sailors were amazed by what Jonah had told them. It was as if they said, "Jonah, if your god is the god of heaven, sea, and land, how could you dare disobey him and run away from his command to you?" They also wanted to know why he had involved them in his troubles with his god!

QUIZ

1. Was Jonah foolish enough to think he could hide from God?
2. What does the phrase "... from the presence of Jehovah" mean?
3. Why did Jonah "flee from the presence of Jehovah?"
4. Where is Tarshish?
5. Why was Jonah asleep?
6. Should we try to determine God's will by casting lots?
7. Why did the sailors question Jonah about his occupation, country, etc.?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING FROM GOD— THE CHASTENING OF JEHOVAH

TEXT: 1:11-17

- 11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea grew more and more tempestuous.
- 12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.
- 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get back to the land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.
- 14 Wherefore they cried unto Jehovah, and said, We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee.
- 15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.
- 16 Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and made vows.
- 17 And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

QUERIES

- a. How did Jonah know God wanted him thrown into the sea?
- b. Would God hear the prayers of these heathen?
- c. What sort of fish swallowed Jonah?

PARAPHRASE

Then the mariners said, Either you pronounce your own sentence or tell us what your god would have us do to you that this stormy sea may be calmed—we are not going to be responsible for guessing

at what should be done. The sea and the storm grew worse and worse. Then Jonah, knowing from God's revelations of the severity of His justice, said, Throw me out into the sea and then the sea will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm has come because of my rebellion and I deserve to die for it. But the mariners do not at once throw Jonah into the sea and try harder to row the boat to the land and safety but they are not able to do so because the storm grew even more fierce than before. Then they raised a prayerful cry to Jehovah, Jonah's God: O Jehovah, do not make us die for this man's sin—do not hold us responsible for his death. In the sending of the storm and the falling of the lot upon him, you have ordained that we must cast him into the sea—it is your doing and not ours. Then they picked up Jonah and threw him overboard into the raging sea—and the storm stopped suddenly! The seamen were gripped with fear of Jehovah and they immediately offered a sacrifice and made vows to Jehovah. As for Jonah, the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow him; and Jonah was in the belly of this fish for three days and three nights.

SUMMARY

Jonah knows that this raging storm is God's chastening hand against him. He surrenders to God's justice and commits himself to death for his rebellion. As he is cast into the sea, the storm ceases, and he is swallowed by God's providentially prepared fish.

COMMENT

v. 11-12 . . . WHAT SHALL WE DO UNTO THEE . . . TAKE ME UP, AND CAST ME FORTH INTO THE SEA . . . The "lot" having fallen upon Jonah, coupled with Jonah's confession of fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, the men correctly conclude that Jonah must somehow be made to atone for his sin. They have seen enough and Jonah has told them enough to make them very reluctant in presuming to pronounce sentence upon this Hebrew themselves. They know Jonah is a prophet of his God and so they ask him what shall be done.

Jonah's reply is that he should be cast into the raging sea "because I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." K & D say, "He pronounces this sentence, not by virtue of any prophetic inspiration (direct revelation from God), but as a believing Israelite who is well acquainted with the severity of the justice of the holy God, both from the law and from the history of his nation." This

is correct. Every Hebrew would know from such historic incidents as Achan, Uzzah, Korah and others of the severity of the justice of the holy God. Pusey says, "In that he says, *I know*, he marks that he had a revelation; . . ." Whichever be the case, the subsequent calm of the storm shows Jonah's pronouncement to be God's will.

v. 13 NEVERTHELESS THE MEN ROWED HARD TO GET THEM BACK TO THE LAND; Even though Jonah asked the crew to throw him overboard, they were reluctant to do so. Not because of any feeling of mercy towards Jonah, but probably they hesitated to lay hold of a man after whom a god would chase and raise such a storm. This Hebrew was a chosen servant of a most powerful god. They may have reasoned that this powerful god would be more pleased if they could deliver the runaway prophet safe to the land. But row as hard as they might, the storm only increased in fury. This would be a final demonstration to them that only the life of Jonah would satisfy his god.

v. 14-15 . . . WE BESEECH THEE, LET US NOT PERISH FOR THIS MAN'S LIFE, AND LAY NOT UPON US INNOCENT BLOOD . . . SO THEY TOOK UP JONAH, AND CAST HIM FORTH INTO THE SEA These heathen seamen saw that there was no possibility of rowing to land against this storm whose raging increased by the moment, so they began to shout a prayerful cry to Jonah's god. If, as the circumstances seemed to dictate, Jonah must be cast into the sea, they wanted to be sure it was all right with Jonah's god. They did not want to be found in rebellion against such a god as this. If such a god could pursue a reluctant prophet to the middle of the sea and bring on such a storm as this, what might he do to these sailors who had never even prayed to him before? Their prayer contained two requests. First they prayed, Do not let us perish along with and because of this man. Secondly they prayed, Do not hold us guilty of willful murder in the case of this man—we are innocent of his blood. It is all between this man and his god—we are innocent bystanders. We had no control over Jonah—he did what he did of his own free will; we had no control over the falling of the lot upon him and we are not therefore guilty when we throw him overboard. The circumstances leading to the present predicament were not of their own choosing, but, rather, Jonah's god had done as it pleased him. As Calvin suggests, "We see, therefore, that although they had never enjoyed the teaching of the law, they had been so taught by nature, that they knew very well that the blood of man was dear to God, and precious in His sight." All heathen races have enough of the

revelation of God's character through Nature to condemn them under sin (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; 2:11-16). What they now need is God's special revelation in Jesus Christ in the New Testament to save them by His grace! This revelation they can never know unless it be preached to them, and how shall preachers go to them except the churches send them (cf. Rom. 10:13-17).

Having prayed to Jonah's god, the seaman lifted Jonah up and hurled him into the sea. Repentance was beginning to have its way in Jonah's heart. He did not resist. He surrendered to God's will and God's way. And with fearful, awe-inspiring suddenness, the sea ceased its tossing and churning and became calm! It was a miracle! This, among other things, is one of the unique characteristics of the book of Jonah.

- a. Jonah is the only minor prophet in whose career the miraculous plays a prominent role.
- b. Jonah is the only minor prophet whose major activity is on foreign soil.
- c. The only minor prophet who preaches exclusively to a foreign people.
- d. The book is the only latter prophet cast in narrative form.
- e. Jonah is the only Old Testament character represented as taking a trip on the Mediterranean.
- f. Jonah is also the only minor prophet mentioned by Jesus by name.
- g. Jonah is the only Old Testament character likened by the Lord to Himself.
- h. The book stresses universalism more than any other minor prophet.

v. 16-17 . . . THEY OFFERED A SACRIFICE UNTO JEHOVAH, AND MADE VOWS . . . AND JEHOVAH PREPARED A GREAT FISH TO SWALLOW UP JONAH, AND JONAH WAS IN THE BELLY OF THE FISH THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS. The sudden calming of the sea proved conclusively to the sailors that the storm had come on Jonah's account and that they had not shed innocent blood by casting him into the sea and that Jonah's god had been pleased with their actions. So they sacrificed. Perhaps they had retained an animal or two on board during the storm for just such an occasion. They not only worshipped Jonah's god then but made vows, presumably to do so at a later date also. Pusey thinks these heathen sailors were converted and became, "perhaps . . . the first preachers among the heathen, and their account of their own wonderful deliverance prepared the way for Jonah's mission to Nineveh." W. L. Banks in his book, "Jonah, The Reluctant Prophet," is skeptical and says, "Fear is a great inventor. Many things are done and many vows are made under stress and

strain which, when conditions become more favorable, are soon forgotten. This characteristic of human nature creates doubt in our minds that these men abandoned their own gods, to fully serve Jehovah, the God of Jonah and Israel." On the other hand, remember the conversion of a great heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, who experienced the mighty hand of God (cf. Dan. 4:28-37).

Be that as it may, the significant portion of this section is verse 17 concerning the great fish and the three days and three nights. First, let us take a look at the "fish story." The word in Hebrew is *dag gadol* ("fish, great"). *Dag* may be a fish of any species, including the whale (cf. Gen. 9:2; Num. 11:22; Neh. 13:16). The continuous debate over whether there are fish in the Mediterranean, or any other ocean, that could swallow a man is actually *beside the point* since it is said that the Lord prepared the fish. There are certain species of sharks in the Mediterranean capable of swallowing a man. K & D, Lange, Pusey and others have documented evidence that these sharks (*squalus carcharias*) have swallowed horses later found whole, inside them. In the year 1758, according to Muller, "a sailor fell overboard from a frigate in very stormy weather, into the Mediterranean Sea, and was immediately taken into the jaws of a great fish and disappeared. The captain, however, ordered a gun, which was standing on the deck, to be discharged at the shark, and the cannon-ball struck it, so that it vomited up again the sailor that it had swallowed, who was then taken up alive, and very little hurt . . ." The miracle is not so much the fact that there was a fish large enough to swallow a man but in the fact that the fish was at the right place at the right time and in the fact that Jonah survived for "three days and three nights." The event is unequivocally, a miracle. Besides, the issue is not taken to be decided on a basis of whether it is possible or not—but on a basis of did it actually happen or not—are there enough witnesses to the veracity of the book to establish it as a record of an actual event or not! See our Introduction to this book for proof of its historicity and veracity.

Now, let us deal with the phrase, "three days and three nights." Jesus, we know, used this incident to refer to His own death and resurrection as a sign (Matt. 12:40). Jesus' use of this incident form what is alleged to be a contradiction in view of the fact that Jesus, being crucified and buried late on Friday and resurrected on Sunday morning early could not have been in the tomb 72 hours. Lange says, "Three days and three nights is a Hebrew expression, which does not describe, with chronological exactness, the space of seventy-two hours, but corresponds to our mode of designating time by such

phrases as 'the day after to-morrow,' 'the day before yesterday.' (I Sam. 30:1; I Sam. 30:12; Esth. 4:16)." K & D say, "The three days and three nights are not to be regarded as fully three times twenty (four) hours, but are to be interpreted according to Hebrew usage, as signifying that Jonah was vomited up again on the third day after he had been swallowed (cf. Esth. 4:16 with v. 1 and Tob. 3:12, 13)." McGarvey, in "Jesus and Jonah," says, "It was the invariable custom of Hebrew writers to count a fraction of a year, or a day, at the beginning of a series and at the end of it, as each a year, or a day. This can be demonstrated by many examples . . . (I Kings 15:1, 2, 8, 9; 15:25, 28; 15:33; 16:6, 8, for years, and cf. Gen. 42:17-18; Esth. 4:16; 4:1; Acts 10:3, 7, 8, 9, 23, 24, 30; Mart. 27:63, 64 for days)." McGarvey points out that "After three days," and "on the third day," were simply equivalent colloquialisms of the Hebrew people (cf. Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34 with Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Lk. 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 46). If, then, Jesus could at one time say in strict compliance with Jewish usage, that he would rise *after three days*, He could with precisely the same meaning say that He would be in the grave *three days and three nights*. Neither assertion, says Mr. McGarvey, would be true according to modern usage, but both would be strictly true according to the usage of the Hebrews. For more study on this question see *The Gospel of John, Vol. II*, pg. 405-408, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press.

QUIZ

1. Where did Jonah get the idea that he should be cast into the sea?
2. Why didn't the seamen thus throw Jonah into the sea immediately?
3. What finally persuaded the seamen to throw him into the sea?
4. Make a list of the unique characteristics of the book of Jonah.
5. What did the sudden calming of the sea prove to the sailors?
6. Is the account of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish incredible? if not, why not?
7. What is the meaning of the phrase "three days and three nights?"

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING TO GOD— THE PRAYER OF JONAH

TEXT: 2:1-6

- 1 Then Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly.
- 2 And he said, I called by reason of mine affliction unto Jehovah, And he answered me; Out of the belly of Sheol cried I, And thou heardest my voice.

- 3 For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas, And the flood was round about me; All thy waves and thy billows passed over me.
- 4 And I said, I am cast out from before thine eyes; Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.
- 5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; The deep was round about me; The weeds were wrapped about my head.
- 6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed upon me for ever; Yet hast thou brought up my life from the pit, O Jehovah my God.

QUERIES

- a. How could Jonah pray while in the belly of the fish?
- b. Where is "Sheol?"
- c. What does Jonah mean by "the bottoms of the mountains?"

PARAPHRASE

Then Jonah turned his heart and mind to the Lord his God and prayed from his heart in the belly of this great fish. He prayed, It was my affliction which caused me to call upon the Lord, and the Lord heard me! When I was in the embrace of death and the very grave itself I cried unto the Lord and You, O Lord, heard my plea. You cast me down into the very depths of the sea and I was surrounded by the waters. The raging waves and billows you sent to arrest me, Lord, passed over me. Then I realized that I had been banished from Your protecting love and care because of my sin; yet in faith I look forward to the hope that I would once again come into Your presence to worship You in Your holy temple. Yes, I was so sure that the sea was my grave that I despaired even in my soul. I sank beneath the waves and death was very near. The waters closed above me; the seaweed wrapped itself around my head. I sank to the very bottom of the sea where the foundations of the mountains are found. The way back to the earth was barred to me as a door of escape is bolted; yes, O Lord, My God, you rescued my life and brought me up from the very grave itself!

SUMMARY

Jonah's "soul was sorrowful even unto death" (cf. Matt. 26:38) and he "despaired even of life itself" (cf. II Cor. 1:8). He was so close to death that he considered himself actually dead. Yet the Lord delivered him back to life.

COMMENT

According to the destructive "higher critics" of the Old Testament this book we know as the book of Jonah was written by an unknown composer who took legends and mythological fairy-tales and formed it into the present book of Jonah. In the course of time this composition is supposed to have received certain changes, the most notable of which was the inclusion of the "thanksgiving song" (2:3-10) with 2:2 as an introduction to this song. Those who believe that chapter 2 contains a psalm from a different source than the rest of the book of Jonah give the following arguments:

- a. In 2:1 it is said that Jonah prayed, but what actually follows is not a prayer but a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance. And furthermore, they say, this psalm which suggests its connection with Jonah's experiences. One critic was sure that verse 5 excluded the idea that Jonah was in the fish's belly, because "weeds do not grow in a whale's belly."
- b. The critics say, lastly, that the text reads smoothly *without* this psalm, if 2:10 be placed immediately after 2:1, this proves it is not a part of the original.

Dr. Edward J. Young, in *Introduction To The Old Testament*, pp. 280-282, gives a conclusive defense of the unity of the book of Jonah. We include here his defense of chapter 2:

- a. In the first place, if 2:2-9 be removed from the book of Jonah, the symmetry of the book is most certainly destroyed.
- b. There is no conflict between the statement that Jonah prayed, and a psalm of thanksgiving—for is not thanksgiving of the very essence of prayer??
- c. Of course weeds do not grow in whale's bellies, but this is *not* a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from a whale's belly, but of deliverance from drowning in the depths of the sea.
- d. The prayer *does not* take place *before* the deliverance when we realize Jonah was saved when he was swallowed by the great fish and that his prayer was made then.
- e. That there is nothing in the psalm which connects it with Jonah's experience is so absurd as to merit no answer!

There are some who explain the prayer as simply a fragmented collection of the book of Psalms interpolated here in Jonah's book by an unknown redactor (editor). Moeller makes the following comparisons:

*Jonah 2**Psalms*

3b	18:7; 120:1
4b	18:6; 30:4
5	42:8
6	31:23; 5:8
7	18:8; 69:2f
8	18:17; 30:4; 103:4
9	142:4; 143:4; 18:7; 5:8
10	88:3; 31:7; 26:7; 50:14, 23; 42:5; 116:17

This is no evidence, whatsoever, for an unknown redactor interpolating excerpts from the book of Psalms into the book of Jonah. It is evidence that Jonah, the prophet of God, was a student of the Hebrew Scriptures and had written the word of God upon his heart and when in extreme circumstances was able to lift himself up by having hidden this Word of God in his heart.

v. 1-2 THEN JONAH PRAYED . . . I CALLED BY REASON OF MINE APPLICATION UNTO JEHOVAH . . . AND HE ANSWERED ME . . . It was because of his affliction that Jonah was led to cry unto God. This is the purpose of chastening. Our Heavenly Father knows that we have need of chastening and of endurance (cf. Heb. 10:32-39; 12:3-11). We should rejoice when it comes (cf. James 1:2-4). It is a school wherein we are trained (cf. II Cor. 1:3-11). It is only when we see our own helplessness and hopelessness that we are able to turn to God (II Cor. 1:8-9). It is when we are *made* weak that we become strong (cf. II Cor. 12:7-10). The salvation of Jonah was the affliction the Lord placed upon him.

Prayer is "an act of worship which covers all the attitudes of the soul in its approach to God." Some think there are certain postures necessary for prayer but the Bible shows by example that men may pray in any posture; kneeling (I Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5); standing (Nehemiah 9:5; Lk. 18:13); bowing down upon the earth with face between the knees (I Kings 18:42); lying in a sick bed and turning the face to the wall (II Kings 20:2); falling prostrate upon the ground (Matt. 26:39); walking along or standing in public (Jn. 11:41-42; 12:28-28). Prayer is more an attitude than it is a formula or a ritual. Jonah could easily have prayed in the belly of the great fish without even opening his mouth. We are to "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17) and the only way this can be done is to be in an attitude of praise, thanksgiving, supplication and dependence upon God at all times whether, silent or aloud, whether lying down, sitting up or standing, wherever we may be.

Sheol is the Hebrew word usually translated in the Old Testament "hell." It is also translated "pit" or "grave." The context helps to determine the best translation. The etymology is uncertain. It may have been derived from a root word meaning "a hollow place." *Sheol* means "underworld," or "nether-world," and is equivalent to *Hades* in the New Testament. In fact, the Septuagint, or Greek Old Testament, uses the word *Hades* in Jonah 2:2. Jonah cried out from the very grave!

v. 3-4 . . . THOU DIDST CAST ME INTO THE DEPTH . . . THE FLOOD WAS ROUND ABOUT ME . . . I AM CAST OUT FROM BEFORE THINE EYES; YET I WILL LOOK AGAIN TOWARD THY HOLY TEMPLE. Jonah was as good as dead! He had resigned himself to it! As far as he was concerned there was no possibility of saving himself. And this is exactly where God wanted him! One of the great paradoxes of God is that we must die before we can live (cf. Jn. 12:20-26).

Jonah had first to realize his estrangement from the Father before he could in all humility and dependent faith turn to the Father for help. Jonah, the "Prodigal," recognized this when he said, "I am cast out from before thine eyes." But then Jonah's heart turned to God's Word for its "great and exceeding precious promises" and in faith cried out that he would, God willing, be restored to the presence of Jehovah.

v. 5-6 THE WATERS COMPASSED ME ABOUT, EVEN TO THE SOUL . . . THE WEEDS WERE WRAPPED ABOUT MY HEAD . . . BOTTOMS OF THE MOUNTAINS . . . EARTH . . . BARS CLOSED UPON ME . . . YET HAST THOU BROUGHT UP MY LIFE FROM THE PIT . . . The weeds are probably the reeds and grass, the vegetation on the very bottom of the sea. Jonah was down as far as one could go! The word translated *bottoms* is from a verb which means to "cut off," or to "shear". It signifies the extreme end. Jonah was at the very bottom of the sea where it seems as if the very foundations of the earth are to be found. That he lived through this experience is indeed a miracle when one considers the short time it takes to drown and the death that can come from extreme pressures of the oceanic depths. The "bars" of the earth had clanged into place and he would not be permitted access there now. Jonah thought of the earth as a walled city with its gate shut and locked with a bar, preventing him from ever again entering. From all outward appearances, and as far as he could determine, he would never again see the earth.

Yet the Lord did bring up his life. He was resurrected from the grave—saved out from death. Thus he became a sign to his generation and a type of the Messiah Who was a Sign to His generation and all

generations. We shall deal more with Jonah's typical relation to the Messiah later.

QUIZ

1. Show that chapter 2 is not an interpolation by an unknown editor.
2. Why is it possible that Jonah's words may be quotations of the Psalms?
3. What purpose does affliction serve?
4. What is Sheol?
5. How extreme was the condition of Jonah in the sea?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING TO GOD— THE PROMISE OF JONAH

TEXT: 2:7-9

- 7 When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Jehovah; And my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple.
- 8 They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy.
- 9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. What does Jonah mean by his "soul fainting within him?"
- b. Who are the "they" of verse 8?
- c. What had Jonah vowed that he felt obligated to pay?

PARAPHRASE

When I found no strength in myself to save myself, I remembered the promises and power of the Lord to save. Then I turned to God in prayer and my earnest prayer went to You, Lord, in Your holy temple. Salvation and deliverance are found only in Jehovah and those who worship false gods have turned their backs on the only hope they have for mercy. As for me, I will worship only You, O God! I will give thanks to you with my lips and by obediently keeping the vows and commitments I have determined in my heart to do. The only salvation is to be found in such a relationship to Jehovah!

SUMMARY

Jonah's experience leaves him with only one place to turn for salvation—the merciful promises of God. To Him Jonah turns pledging himself to keep the vows he made to God.

COMMENT

v. 7 . . . MY SOUL FAINTED WITHIN ME, I REMEMBERED JEHOVAH; . . . As we pointed out earlier, only when a man is convinced that he cannot save himself—that all other ways, systems and helps are insufficient for his needs—only then will he turn to God. It is the authoritative statement of God's Word that all men are lost and condemned in sin unless they believe and obey God's Word. The primary objective of Christians then is to convince men of the authority of God's Word, the Bible. This has to be done by presenting the empirical, historical evidences that the Bible is the Word of God. God, by providential acts upon the course of events, oftentimes brings men and women to know their impotency and insufficiency. Then they are ready to turn to Him, but if they do not accept the Bible as His word, how can they trust in the promises of it? Jonah knew the Lord—he knew the Word of the Lord was true. Now he realizes his insufficiency so he turns back to the promise of the Lord. He prays in his most extreme hour of need and finds the peace which passes understanding. Christians have an even surer "confidence" and are commanded to "come boldly" to the throne of grace (cf. Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-25).

v. 8 THEY THAT REGARD LYING VANITIES FORSAKE THEIR OWN MERCY. Jonah is here referring to the heathen who worship idols. When men refuse to have God in their knowledge they become vain in their reasoning (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; Eph. 2:1ff). The Bible speaks of the gods and idols of man's invention as "vain," (cf. Isa. 40:18-23; 41:21-24; 44:6-20; Acts 17:22-29, etc.). The word translated "lying" means, literally, "a vapor" or "a breath." "Vanity" means empty, void, worthless, useless. The gods men invent are dumb, speechless, powerless, useless, false and deceitful! This is also true of religious, theological, philosophical systems invented by men which do not conform to the revealed will of God in the Bible. When men worship or put their hope in such gods and systems they "cut off their noses to spite their faces." They willingly turn their backs on the only hope of mercy which is found exclusively in Jehovah God. We do not believe Jonah had specific reference to the heathen sailors with whom he had just parted company. The statement of verse 8 forms what is known in Hebrew poetry as an antithetical parallelism. That is, Jonah is stating his praise for Jehovah God in the negative. Jonah's reference to the nothingness of dead idols was calculated to heighten his praise of the living God! In verse 9 he makes the positive statement of his parallelism of praise.

v. 9 . . . SACRIFICE UNTO THEE WITH THE VOICE OF THANKS-GIVING . . . PAY THAT WHICH I HAVE VOWED . . . SALVATION IS OF JEHOVAH. The sacrifices with which God is most pleased, offered by Jonah here, are the fruit of lips given to praise Him and a life surrendered, committed to His service, (cf. *Psa.* 51:15-17; *Heb.* 13:15-16). Jonah's vow was not extraordinary or peculiar; it was common for Jews to make vows in time of need, with the expectation of keeping the promise after relief was granted. Vows were never regarded as a religious duty even in the O.T. (cf. *Deut.* 23:22). But when a vow was made God considered it binding (cf. *Deut.* 23:21-23; *Judg.* 11:35; *Eccl.* 5:4; *Psa.* 66:13). Vows *as such* are not required in the N.T. neither are they prohibited. Jesus mentions vows only to condemn the abuse of them (*Matt.* 15:4-6; *Mk.* 7:10-13; *Matt.* 23:16-22). But we most certainly must *surrender* and *commit* our entire being to the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. *Rom.* 12:1-2) and we must *confess with the mouth* that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father (cf. *Rom.* 10:9-10). If this is vowing then vow we must! The Hebrew word for "salvation" is the same word which we translated *Joshua* for it is a contraction of *Jehoshua* which means "Jehovah is salvation." The Greek rendering of *Joshua* is *Jesus*. Jonah now knew by experience that the help he needed could come only from the Lord!

QUIZ

1. What two things are necessary, oftentimes, before men will turn to the Lord?
2. Why are gods and systems of men "vain?"
3. With what type of sacrifices is God most pleased?
4. Should Christians make religious vows?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING TO GOD— THE PRESERVATION OF JONAH

TEXT: 2:10

- 10 And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

QUERIES

- a. How does God communicate with fish?
- b. Where did Jonah land?

PARAPHRASE

And the Lord commanded the fish to spit up Jonah on the beach and the fish obeyed the command of the Lord.

SUMMARY

Jonah is delivered with a second opportunity to carry out his commission from the Lord.

COMMENT

v. 10 . . . JEHOVAH SPAKE UNTO THE FISH, AND IT VOMITED OUT JONAH . . . God has set the whole creation, except man, to function through orderly laws and instincts imposed upon it by His will. Man He created in His own spiritual image with a will free to make moral choice. But God, impells by a certain divine and secret power, as Cyril says, animal and inanimate creation to do His will in a miraculous way when it serves His purpose to do so, (cf. Balaam's ass, Num. 22:21-30; the star of Bethlehem, Matt. 2:2, 9). The land upon which Jonah was "spewed out" is not known for certain but we assume it to be the coast of Palestine or Syria (K & D think it was near Joppa where he boarded the ship to run away).

QUIZ

1. Cite other incidents where God has imposed His will on animals to use them miraculously.
2. How long was Jonah's life preserved by God in the belly of this fish?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING WITH GOD— THE COMMISSION RENEWED

TEXT: 3:1-3

- 1 And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying,
- 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.
- 3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey.

QUERIES

- a. Why was Jonah now ready to go to Nineveh?
- b. What is the meaning of a ". . . city of three days' journey"?

JONAH
PARAPHRASE

And God's word came to Jonah a second time. God commanded Jonah, Arise and go to Nineveh. I warn you as I did before, Nineveh is a great metropolis, and you are to preach to its inhabitants the message that I alone shall give you to preach. So the converted Jonah arose and journeyed to Nineveh just as the Lord had commanded him. Now Nineveh was such a large metropolis that it would take a man three days to walk all the way across it.

SUMMARY

God gives Jonah another chance to surrender to His will for the prophet's life. Jonah obeys.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . THE WORD OF JEHOVAH CAME UNTO JONAH THE SECOND TIME . . . Jonah has had a conversion experience! He has been raised to a new life. Physically he had come to the point of no return—except by the power of God he had returned! Spiritually he had died to himself and was raised a new spiritual man. John Noble, the American who spent over ten years in Russian prison camps relates a similar conversion experience in his book, *"I Found God In Soviet Russia."*

Mr. Noble, when first imprisoned, was forced to go nine days without even the slightest morsel of food. Here is what he says: "With my last strength, I struggled onto my knees and earnestly asked the Lord simply to close my eyes this night and release me from my mortal suffering. I said, in effect, 'Dear Lord, I give up; I can't go on any longer. I have no way out but through Thee. Lord, close my eyes and take me to Thee, or if it be Thy will that I must go on, give me the strength to do so, and lend me Thy hand to guide me. My will is broken, Thy will be done. Amen.' I committed my soul entirely to the hands of the Lord. Unworthy of His grace though I was, I felt prepared to die. This time, I had not prayed that my will be done but that the Lord's will be done. I was completely submissive to that will . . . By committing my life to Christ without reservation, I had the amazing experience of being born again of the Spirit . . . It was the most wonderful, miraculous sensation I have ever experienced."

This is somewhat the same experience Jonah describes himself feeling in the belly of the great fish when he had no other place to turn than God. After his experience in the sea, he probably preached like one raised from the dead. Macaulay characterized Demosthenes' oratory as "reason made red hot by passion." Jonah's was "the Word of God

made red hot by conversion of the orator." The prophet had died, as it were, and been brought back to life again. It always requires an experience like Jonah's to make a good preacher!

So God called Jonah again to go to Nineveh. God would not suspend His concern for the souls of that great city just because one of His prophets disobeyed. Furthermore God's mercy and love is long-suffering toward the wayward prophet. God is rich in mercy—the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering . . . leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4) if we will but respond.

v. 2 . . . PREACH UNTO IT THE PREACHING THAT I BID THEE . . . What was the preaching that God bade Jonah preach? At the first command God told the prophet to "preach against" that wicked city. His task was to preach *against wickedness*. Then we learn from 3:4 that he cried, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." All this, of course, was to the end that the people would repent. This message of repentance still needs to be preached today. Jesus referred to Jonah's preaching comparing it to His message, for His message was, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." Peter on the day of Pentecost preached, "Repent and be immersed, everyone of you . . ." Paul, to the philosophers of Athens preached, ". . . now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent . . ." The reason these men preached repentance was they "preached . . . the preaching" that God bade them preach. This is still good advice for all preachers: preach only that which God commands. Preach His Word, from His Book. We live in an age in which society tends to dictate to the preacher, and social pressures and modern theological trends seek to obscure the propositional revelation of God, His Word, the Bible. Peter wrote, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). Men who do not declare from the pulpit, "Thus saith the Lord," are not fit to stand in that sacred spot.

v. 3 SO JONAH . . . WENT UNTO NINEVEH . . . AN EXCEEDING GREAT CITY, OF THREE DAYS' JOURNEY . . . This time Jonah went "according to the word of the Lord." There is no running away this time. There is not even any reluctance. He has learned his lesson . . . he has a new heart in the matter . . . he is a new man for God.

Because archeologists have not yet found evidence that Nineveh is as extensive a city as three days journey would seem to indicate, some scholars have accused this book of being historically inaccurate. But must we assume that we know all there is to know about the metropolis of Nineveh and pronounce the book of Jonah irrevocably inaccurate?! There are a number of possible answers to this alleged problem; (a) the statement could refer to the circumference of the city; (b) the

statement could mean that journeying leisurely, stopping to preach at likely spots, it would take three days to journey the length or breadth of the city; (c) or, more likely, it could mean that a journey across "greater" Nineveh, including its "suburbs" (of which we spoke on 1:2), would take three days. The city was "great," not because it impressed God by its size or fame, but because God was concerned with the "many" souls in it which were lost and because it would be an almost overwhelming task, in the eyes of Jonah, to preach against it.

QUIZ

1. How had Jonah changed? What experience had he undergone?
2. Why did God not cast Jonah off after one disobedience?
3. What did God bid Jonah preach? Is there a lesson for us in that?
4. Is the note about a city of "three day's journey" inaccurate?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING WITH GOD— THE CRY FOR REPENTANCE

TEXT: 3:4

- 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

QUERIES

- a. How far did Jonah go into the city in a day?
- b. Why did Jonah give a time limit of forty days?

PARAPHRASE

When Jonah began his day's journey into the city, he found a suitable place and a fitting opportunity for beginning his preaching, so he began to preach, saying, Forty days from now and this great city of Nineveh will be destroyed by Jehovah God!

SUMMARY

Jonah begins his "doom song" to Nineveh.

v. 4 . . . HE CRIED . . . YET FORTY DAYS, AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN. Jonah did not go into the city one full days' journey and then begin to preach. The text definitely indicates that he started on his first days' journey and then sometime during that beginning of the journey he began to preach. The word "overthrown" is from the

Hebrew word which means literally, "destroyed from the very foundations," and is the same word used in speaking of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Lange says of the forty days: "Forty days are here a round number, meaning after a short time, whose term Jonah measures by the period of the deluge." K & D say: "The respite granted is fixed at forty days, according to the number which, even as early as the flood, was taken as the measure for determining the delaying of visitation of God." What purpose God had in assigning exactly 40 days to Nineveh's period of probation it is idle to speculate. He most certainly would extend His grace long enough for all to hear the message and make response, but His grace would not be extended forever. Furthermore, Nineveh's cup of sin was running over—God's cup of wrath was filled to the brim and about to overflow. Nineveh had had many opportunities to know and repent and now their judgment was fixed and announced—if repentance did not come with haste, the sentence would be executed.

QUIZ

1. How far did Jonah go into the city before he began to preach?
2. Why did God assign the time of 40 days for repentance?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING WITH GOD— THE CONSEQUENCE OF REPENTANCE

TEXT: 3:5-10

- 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.
- 6 And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.
- 7 And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water;
- 8 but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from the violence that is in his hands.
- 9 Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

QUERIES

- a. How would the Ninevites know "God" and "to fast?"
- b. Why have the animals fast also?
- c. Does God change His mind (repent)?

PARAPHRASE

When Jonah preached what God said He was going to do to Nineveh, the people of Nineveh believed God. Then they decreed a certain period of abstinence from eating or drinking called a fast. At this time, as a sign of mourning over their sins, they dressed themselves in harsh, irritating garments of haircloth. Even men of luxury, ease and importance did these things, as well as the people of low estate. News of Jonah's preaching and the penitence of the people reached the king of Assyria and he was moved to repentance. He stepped down from his throne, took off his royal robes and dressed in haircloth and sat in ashes, a further act of humiliation to atone for his sins. And the king made an official proclamation, saying, Let no one, not even the animals, eat or drink any thing during this time of fasting. Let this be a time of national penitence. Let everyone, even the animals, be dressed in robes of haircloth manifesting our repentance, and let everyone cry mighty prayers of supplication for forgiveness unto Jehovah God. Let every man and woman stop doing the violent and wicked things they are doing and turn to doing good. Then it may be that Jehovah God will fulfill His promise to be merciful to those who repent and will withhold His fierce wrath—we do not wish to perish. And God took account of their works of repentance as they stopped their wickedness and turned to doing good and He was pleased. Just as He had already decreed from the beginning, God withheld the wrath He said He was going to visit upon Nineveh. Because they repented, God spared them.

SUMMARY

Nineveh's repentance is nationwide, in high and low places, and is manifest in cessation of wickedness as well as in religious acts.

COMMENT

v. 5 . . . AND THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED GOD; AND THEY PROCLAIMED A FAST . . . It is interesting to note that *belief came before repentance* in this case. In fact, it is a scriptural principle taught through-

out the Bible that belief must always precede repentance. How can a man be motivated to perform works of repentance if he does not believe that God is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (cf. Heb. 11:6). Too much of the time preachers are guilty of expecting nominal Christians to lead lives of repentance when their belief is only nominal! Conviction must come before conversion! Persuasion precedes penitence!

After assent comes action. Jonah uses the same word for "believed" that is used to describe Abraham's faith (Gen. 15:6; cp. Ex. 14:31; II Chron. 20:20). It is a word that signifies saying "yea and amen" to God's Word as it is revealed. A fast was declared by all the people of Nineveh. It was a national penitence. Men of fame and importance and wealth mourned their sins, as well as the poor and unknown. The sackcloth was a prickly, coarse garment woven of goats' hair. It was usually worn over other garments but sometimes next to the skin. It was designed to be irritating and afflicting to the flesh.

v. 6 . . . THE KING OF NINEVEH . . . COVERED HIM WITH SACKCLOTH . . . That the mighty king of the mightiest nation on earth would humble himself so is evidence of the tremendous impact of Jonah's work. Fasting is abstinence from food and drink. It is a form of afflicting or chastening the flesh and in this way chastening the soul. The second external sign of repentance was wearing sackcloth. The third sign was the use of ashes. All of these religious acts go back to the time of the patriarchs (cf. Gen. 37:34; Job. 16:15; II Sam. 13:19). Ashes upon the head signified man's recognition of his own insignificance (cf. Gen. 18:27) and was a sign of self-abasement.

It would be well to discuss here the question, in what respect was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites (Luke 11:30)? Jesus said there, "For even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation." The words in the original Greek are somewhat more expressive than the English version. The Lord and Jonah were not merely equally signs to the people among whom respectively they delivered the message of God, but they were "signs of the same kind (*kathos egeneto Ionas*), according as, or in the same manner as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be . . ."

In what respect, then, was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites? We are inclined to agree with Fairbairn, that "Jonah was not simply as the Lord's prophet to the Ninevites, but as himself a wonder in the earth; being one who had, in a manner, tasted of death, and yet had not seen corruption—who had been sent into Sheol because of sin, and now again returned to witness for righteousness among the living, and show them

the way of salvation." We believe that some way or another the people of Nineveh must have had evidence by eyewitnesses (other than Jonah himself) of Jonah's miraculous experience. Fairbairn, again, "Unquestionably if Jonah, in respect to that portion of his history, was appointed to be a sign to the Ninevites (of God's merciful dealing with him after his repentance); then as such, the thing wrought (the miracle) must have been open at least to their inquiries, and capable of being ascertained, so as to produce its due effect upon their minds." We cannot imagine the people of Nineveh (including the king himself) to be motivated to fasting and cessation of violence and wickedness on the mere cry of impending ruin by a stranger, of whom they were totally ignorant! By all the experiences we have had with motivating human belief and conduct we are compelled to suppose that before these Ninevites would make such a thorough-going response they would have investigated the credibility of Jonah's authoritativeness.

Jonah's being a sign of God's punishment of sin on the one hand and God's forgiveness of the sinner on the other hand peculiarly fitted him to be also a type, symbol, sign to a future generation of his own countrymen in respect to the history of the Messiah's work and kingdom. The Lord refers especially to Jonah's humiliation or punishment (being in Sheol for three days and nights) as being the sign like unto which He Himself would be a sign. Jonah, whom they justly revered as a true prophet, had been sent to the depths of Sheol, but the Ninevites did not stumble at his humiliating experience—they listened and obeyed his message. I will suffer a like humiliating experience. I am going in precisely the opposite direction you desire of the Messiah, Jesus tells the Jews of His generation, and you do not receive Me. This is why the Ninevites would stand up and condemn the Jews of Jesus' generation—they repented at Jonah's preaching. Jesus meant to tell them that they were looking in the wrong direction for an undoubted seal of his divine commission—the circumstances and nature of His Messianic work required that he should bear upon him the signs, not of heavenly splendor and power, but of profound humiliation, even to going down into Hades (death).

But there is another aspect to the sign of Jonah—that of his resurrection. And this is intended to be included in the similarity Jesus makes of Himself and Jonah. He was to become to the world the sign that Jonah was to Nineveh only when He exhibited the power of God at the resurrection.

There is manifestly a great difference between Christ and Jonah, as well as a similarity. Christ did what Jonah could not be said to do—

bore, in His humiliation and death, the burden of all men's guilt and condemnation, and by His resurrection justified all who will believe.

So the miracle of Jonah became a sign to his contemporaries of the wrath of God and the power of God and the love of God. He also typified the ultimate sign of God in Jesus Christ of the wrath of God upon all sin; the power of God over death; the love of God for penitent believers.

v. 7-8 AND HE MADE PROCLAMATION . . . LET NEITHER MAN NOR BEAST . . . TASTE ANY THING . . . LET THEM BE COVERED WITH SACKCLOTH . . . AND . . . CRY MIGHTILY UNTO GOD . . . TURN EVERY ONE FROM THE VIOLENCE THAT IS IN HIS HANDS. Why were animals involved? To show total repentance. The beasts were property and, as such, were considered a part of the person who owned them. Furthermore, animals live with men and are affected by the deeds of men (cf. our comments on Joel 1:18-20). Causing the animals to participate in the time of mourning and repentance is an ancient Asiatic custom. Herodotus relates that the Persians, when mourning for their general, Masistios, who had fallen in the battle at Platea, shaved off the hair from their horses, and adds, "Thus did the barbarians, in their way, mourn for the deceased Masistios." K & D say, "This custom originated in the idea that there is "a biotic rapport" between man and the larger domestic animals . . . the thought is that just as the animals which live with man are drawn into fellowship with his sin (Rom. 8:19-23), so their sufferings might also help to appease the wrath of God." It is evident that withholding food and water from the animals would cause them to groan and cry out to God. This "biotic rapport" is expressed in Joel 1:18ff. The king's order to put sackcloth on the animals shows how intense his desire for total repentance was. One of the most interesting things about the king's decree is that of everyone "turning from the violence that is in his hands." Their repentance was to be made manifest in ceasing to do evil and learning to do good (cf. Isa. 1:16-17; and our comments on Joel 2:12-13). Repentance means a change of life and a change of attitude.

v. 9-10 WHO KNOWETH WHETHER GOD WILL NOT TURN AND REPENT . . . AND GOD REPENTED. We come now to one of the most perplexing problems of the Bible. Does God repent? The words "who knoweth" are not so much a question as they are an expression of hope. The very fact that Jonah, a prophet of Jehovah God, had come to warn Nineveh was an indication there would be hope if they should repent. God *does not* repent or change His mind! His will is immutable (Heb. 6:17; 12:8; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Psa. 33:11, Prov.

19:21; Isa. 14:24; 46:9-10; I Sam. 5:29; Psa. 110:4; Ezek. 24:14; Zech. 8:14, etc.). On the other hand, many scriptures may be cited which speak of God repenting (cf. Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:14; II Sam. 24:16; Judg. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11, etc.).

In the first place, often in the O.T. we find human characteristics attributed to God. This is called anthropomorphism which means to describe God after the manner of men. For example, we see with our eyes, and since we know that God sees all things, therefore we say God has eyes. This manner of describing God is a condescension or accommodation to our finite incapability of understanding and describing the infinite. This holds true with regard to God *repenting*. God is not ignorant, weak, fallible. He does not make mistakes which He regrets. He does not change His mind. He knows all things and sees all things from the beginning to the end. But events may take place which appear, from man's viewpoint, to be changes in God's mind. When in Genesis 6:6-7 God is represented as repenting that He had made man, does this mean God suddenly decided He had made a mistake in creating man and now regrets it and wishes He had never done so? No! Whatever God does is right and good. When He made man He saw that it was good. But, being a God of love, He made man with a freedom of choice. What pained the heart of God was that man had made the wrong choice.

Man's freedom of choice brings us to the second point in this consideration. God's moral law is immutable and unchangeable. When man abides within the revealed will of God it is God's immutable decree that whatever happens to him will turn out for his blessing. When man, of his own free choice, insists upon rebelling against the will of God it is God's immutable decree that whatever happens to him shall turn out to his condemnation and judgment. The repentance is up to man—it is man's responsibility, yes, PRIVILEGE, to change, so long as God shall grant him life and opportunity to do so! Man may change, but God does not for He is perfect in all His ways. To say that God does not change is not to say that God does not act!

Fairbairn, in pointing out the pronouncement of God upon sin and then His compassion upon repentance, says, ". . . this manifests Him to be unalterably the same. Conducting his administration in righteousness, he must change his procedure toward men when their relation toward Him becomes changed . . . Abraham knew this principle of the Divine government when he said, "That be far from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that righteous should be as the wicked; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25) Ezekiel also, "Hear now, O Israel! Is not my way equal? are not your

ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquities and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." So when Nineveh repented and changed their minds and deeds, for God to have gone ahead and punish them would have displayed Him as a God indifferent to the very basic distinction between right and wrong.

It is in connection with this and other eternal principles of the Righteous, Holy, Just, Compassionate, Longsuffering God that the Bible says God changes not,

Someone will say, "If God does not change, why pray? Prayer is not to tell God what we need—He already knows that! Prayer is not to change the mind of God—He is unchangeable! Then what is prayer for? Prayer is both an inward and an outward manifestation of a dependent love for God. Prayer is an expression of relationship. That relationship is one of faith, trust, surrender, dependence, adoration, gratitude—of abiding in the will of one's Heavenly Father. This is why prayer is of the utmost necessity! Man, being free to choose which relationship he will have toward God, must choose the relationship of abiding in His will in order to receive the blessings God has already determined to give him (cf. I Jn. 5:14-15). God has anticipated our prayers before the foundation of the world. He has built the answer to our prayers into the very providential government and structure of the universe. He knows that we will pray and that we will pray in a spontaneous manner as a helpless child cries to his mother or father. God has put the universe together on a principle of personal relationships in which He answers prayer. Parents know how to answer petitions of children in anticipation. Even with their limited knowledge parents are able to anticipate the future to a certain degree. For example a mother, caring for the fevered little body of a sick child, provides the medicine, the drink of water and other comforts, before the night comes on, knowing that there will be a cry in the night. When the little one cries out in helpless dependence, the mother has planned the answer.

It is interesting to note in verse 10 that "God saw their works." It was not until the repentance of the Ninevites was manifested through works that their salvation was effected by God! Works are both necessary for salvation and a result of salvation. This is a very plain doctrine of both the Old and New Testaments. Even belief is said to be a "work" by the Lord Himself (cf. Jn. 6:29 and see comments in *The Gospel of John*, Vol. I, pg. 238, by Paul T. Butler—College Press).

QUIZ

1. What personal response of the Ninevites toward God preceded their repentance?
2. How did the Ninevites manifest their penitent attitude?
3. How was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites?
4. How was Jonah a sign to the Jews of Jesus' day?
5. Why did the king of Nineveh decree that the animals should wear sackcloth?
6. Does God repent? Explain!
7. Why pray?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD—THE DISPLEASURE OF JONAH

TEXT: 4:1-3

1. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.
2. And he prayed unto Jehovah, and said, I pray thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hastened to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil.
3. Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

QUERIES

- a. Why would Jonah be displeased that thousands of people were saved?
- b. Why would the graciousness of God lead him to flee to Tarshish?
- c. Why did he think it better to die than to live?

PARAPHRASE

But God's withholding of His wrath against Nineveh was very displeasing to Jonah. Jonah was grieved and vexed and prayed, saying, Lord! isn't this what I said back in Palestine before I ever came to Nineveh? This is exactly why I ran off toward Tarshish—I knew that You are gracious, merciful, longsuffering, overflowing in Your lovingkindness and that you would forgive and withhold Your punishment. On account of this, O Lord, I beg You, take my life. Because my mission is a failure, I would rather be dead than alive.

SUMMARY

Jonah feels his mission is a failure when Nineveh is not destroyed. He cannot go back and preach to his wicked countrymen with any forcefulness because God is merciful. Jonah would rather be dead.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . IT DISPLEASED JONAH EXCEEDINGLY . . . THEREFORE . . . TAKE . . . MY LIFE FROM ME . . . There are about as many different opinions as to the cause of Jonah's anger as there are commentators. We prefer Professor Fairbairn's evaluation. We just cannot bring ourselves to characterize Jonah as a man so full of hate that his primary vexation is due to a cold-blooded desire to see hundreds of thousands of heathen slain. Fairbairn says, "Jonah was disconcerted and downcast because the example of severity had been withheld, which he thought would operate so beneficially upon the minds of his countrymen and without which he seemed to have no means of attaining the great end and object of his life." Hugh Martin, in *The Prophet Jonah*, says, "In Jonah's judgement the sparing of Nineveh would eclipse the honor of God, destroy the credit of his ministry, and harden the hearts of his countrymen."

The people of Israel in Jonah's day were in a state of terrible degeneracy and profligacy. All the efforts of God, sending them prophets, had thus far failed to bring them to their senses and repentance. So the Lord, before abandoning them finally to their fate, sought once more to move them from their downward plunge, by working upon them through feelings of jealousy and shame while at the same time giving them an example of His mercy and lovingkindness when repentance is shown. For this purpose God did with Nineveh what He did not usually do with other heathen nations. Living in the age of ease, comfort, luxury, during national ascendancy of Jeroboam II when the people were almost totally libertine, Jonah preached in vain month after month, year after year. All the while his own countrymen and neighbors despised everything he was attempting to do on their behalf. It is no wonder Jonah, like Elijah of old, after waiting month after month for some fearful, sudden, decisive turning-point to come in the form of wrath from the Lord, would feel discouraged by the thought of the Lord's mercy. When he thought of this at his first call it would cause him to despair of any thing effectual being accomplished toward bringing his own countrymen to their senses. Then after his own experience in the sea monster's belly, he might stand in the midst of Nineveh and imagine that in forty days he would at last obtain the very example of the wrath of God upon sin

that he hoped would come and that he could take back to Israel and persuade them to turn from their sin.

It requires no stretch of the imagination, then, to see what a disappointment it was for him to see Nineveh spared, and the very weapon snatched from his hand by which he hoped to prevail against the sin of his countrymen. Jonah was not so much concerned with his own reputation nor so full of hate and vengeance that he would have taken some fiendish delight in the slaying of thousands of people; but he loved his own people so intensely, and was so firmly persuaded that an act of severity was required to shake them from their false security, he was grieved and frustrated. Instead of having the vantage point of a tremendous illustration of God's wrath upon sin he felt his whole purpose in life had been defeated and there was nothing left for him but to die.

Neither Jonah nor Elijah were right. Both of them were out of harmony with God's will. Both of them misunderstood God's plan and had only a partial view of His purposes and therefore made hasty, carnal judgements as to how God should govern. The lesson for us is that God's way is still the best; for He sees the end from the beginning, and directs all with infinite skill and unerring wisdom. If we *could* alter the plan of God it would not be for the better but for the worse. We must take the attitude of Habakkuk who, when he could not understand why God would use a heathen nation to punish the covenant people, said, "I will take my stand to watch, and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what he will say to me . . . behold . . . the righteous shall live by faith."

QUIZ

1. Why do you think Jonah was displeased with God's mercy on Nineveh?
2. What other prophet had the same concept of how God should govern?
3. What lesson should we learn from this?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD—THE DEMONSTRATION BY JEHOVAH

TEXT: 4:4-10

- 4 And Jehovah said, Doest thou well to be angry?
- 5 Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

- 6 And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd.
- 7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered.
- 8 And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.
- 9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.
- 10 And Jehovah said, Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

QUERIES

- a. Why does God ask Jonah twice if he does well to be angry?
- b. What kind of "booth" did Jonah prepare for himself and why?
- c. What is the lesson to be learned from the gourd?

PARAPHRASE

And God said to Jonah, Are you right in being grieved because I have spared Nineveh? But Jonah went out and built a little lean-to on the east side of the city and camped under its shade. He wanted to wait to see if God would not bring judgement upon Nineveh after all. And when the leaves of the little shelter withered in the heat, the Lord prepared a gourd vine to grow up quickly and spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head to shade him. Jonah was very happy that the vine was there to shade him from the hot sun. God also prepared a worm! And the next morning the worm killed the gourd vine and it withered and dried up and gave shade to Jonah no longer. So when the sun began to bear down in the heat of the day God also caused a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah and he grew so hot he became very weak to the point of fainting and actually wished to die. He said, Death is better than this! But God said again to Jonah, Are you right in being so grieved over the withering of the gourd? Jonah replied, Yes, I am right in being grieved enough to die. And God said, You are grieved in your soul over the gourd vine because you had need of it in the direst way. You cannot claim the gourd as your right because you did not create it, or plant it, or cultivate it. And the gourd vine is, at best, only a plant which has withered and died.

SUMMARY

Jonah succumbs to discouragement. God gives him an object lesson. God is about to show Jonah how inconsistent his thinking is.

COMMENT

v. 4-5 . . . DOEST THOU WELL TO BE ANGRY? . . . JONAH WENT OUT OF THE CITY . . . TILL HE MIGHT SEE WHAT WOULD BECOME OF THE CITY. God asks, Are you certain that your concept of how I should deal with the Ninevites is correct? are you certain that My dealing with them as I have is grievous? It would seem that God is giving Jonah opportunity to *think*, perhaps to pray, and learn a new lesson about God's purposes and ways. The Lord plants the idea in Jonah's heart that he may not be doing well in being grieved.

But Jonah could not yet believe that the Ninevites would be allowed to resume their former course of peace and prosperity without a strong demonstration of God's wrath. And, as we have said before, this lingering concept in the mind of Jonah was not due to any maliciousness or bloodthirstiness. Even when he knew the people had repented he might have considered some form of punishment still perfectly compatible with God's righteousness and justice. Many have still felt the consequences of their sins long after they have repented (cf. David, Moses, etc.). After all, Jonah took his revelation of God's nature from the Old Testament and not from the New. And there is a difference! Fairbairn says, "These considerations appear to me perfectly sufficient to account for a state of mind in Jonah such as might induce him, without any disobedience to the will of God, so far as that had yet been made known to him, to go and erect a booth at some distance from the city, where he might wait in anxious expectation to see what would become of it." All of Jonah's knowledge of how God dealt with sin, especially heathen wickedness, was learned from the O. T. What Jonah needed still to learn, and what God had not yet shown him, was the largeness of the mercy to be extended to Nineveh—that it amounted to an *entire remission* of the threatened penalty. To teach him this, to show him it was reasonable and just on the part of God, yea, even of urgent necessity in the best interests of those whom Jonah loved so dearly, his own countrymen, Jonah's temporary shelter from the burning sun was turned into a school of discipline.

This "booth" which Jonah built was a temporary, small, lean-to affair, built usually of palm leaves, or at other times with any type of leafy tree branch, which would afford shade from the searing desert sun.

v. 6-8 . . . JEHOVAH PREPARED A GOURD . . . JONAH WAS EXCEEDING GLAD . . . BUT GOD PREPARED A WORM . . . AND IT SMOTE THE GOURD, THAT IT WITHERED . . . GOD PREPARED A SULTRY EAST WIND . . . JONAH . . . FAINTED, AND REQUESTED . . . THAT HE MIGHT DIE . . . God knows exactly how to correct Jonah's mistaken concept of the Divine purpose for Nineveh's salvation. Jonah needed something that would graphically turn his thoughts from the channel they were in to ideas of God's purpose which had never entered his imagination. For this purpose God permitted him to go construct his frail booth near the city and to experience there for a time inconvenience and discomfort. Then suddenly God brought over Jonah, without any exertion on the part of Jonah at all, the shadow of a broad foliage by the growth of the gourd vine. Then, just as suddenly, God made him feel again, in an even more intense way, the scorching sun and parching wind, by causing a worm to destroy the gourd vine. Jonah suffered a mild sunstroke and fainted from the exposure and said he would have found death itself a happy release.

v. 9-10 . . . DOESST THOU WELL TO BE ANGRY FOR THE GOURD? . . . THOU HAST REGARD FOR THE GOURD, FOR WHICH THOU HAST NOT LABORED . . . God is leading him slowly but surely to an ever higher plan concerning the Divine behavior. In other circumstances it would have been a matter of little significance to Jonah what happened to the gourd vine. Situated as he was, however, depending for his comfort, and in a sense, also for his life on its ample foliage, its sudden destruction necessarily came upon him as a terrible tragedy—a calamity. This is exactly the relationship God would have him consider concerning Nineveh. Nineveh, a city that feared the name and obeyed the voice of God, God had need of it in this time of extreme necessity in the case of Israel. God's cause would suffer by its annihilation.

If there had been any hope of the people in Israel being still brought permanently to repentance by some great example of the wrath of God, God would have known it and brought it to pass. But this hope could no longer be entertained. Everything of this sort had already been tried with Israel and still their hearts waxed hard and cold.

QUIZ

1. Why did God allow Jonah to leave the city and sit and wait?
2. Why might Jonah still cling to the hope that the city would be destroyed?
3. What was God's purpose in shading Jonah with a gourd vine and then taking it away?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD—THE DECLARATION OF JEHOVAH

TEXT: 4:11

11 and should I not have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

QUERIES

- a. Why would God want to have regard for wicked Nineveh?
- b. What is the meaning, "cannot discern between right and left hand?"
- c. Why mention cattle?

PARAPHRASE

And God said, Should I not then be just as concerned for the preservation of Nineveh as you were for the gourd vine. You needed the vine and I have urgent need for Nineveh to be preserved. In addition to this there are more than 120,000 innocent children and dumb animals abiding in that city.

SUMMARY

God reveals to Jonah His purpose in sparing Nineveh.

COMMENT

v. 11 . . . SHOULD I NOT HAVE REGARD FOR NINEVEH . . . God must use other means than a demonstration of His wrath upon Nineveh if He is to bring any heartfelt repentance to the calloused Israelites of Jeroboam's day. *He must call their jealousy into action*, (cf. comments on 1:1-2). God seeks to arouse Israel, by the example of this heathen nation spared due to repentance, to the startling consideration that the favor of God was bestowed on those of every race who work righteousness—and *of the possibility* that the kingdom of heaven might be transplanted to a people more spiritually prepared to receive it! Yes, the Lord at this time peculiarly had *need* of Nineveh in its penitent state; "the cause of righteousness in the earth could ill afford to spare so singular a witness to the truth; the spiritual good of Israel itself in particular required it."

MESSENGER RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD

This singular demonstration of God's mercy and forgiveness and salvation would also furnish hope for the faithful remnant later in captivity. This concept which the Lord sought to impress even on Jonah personally in his own experience in the sea, and which was taught again in the experience of the gourd, provided for all the faithful among the future exiles a sure ground of consolation and hope. There would be hope for them even in what might seem to be despair and grief.

And so ends this remarkable history of a remarkable prophet of God. There are some significant lessons to be learned from this account.

1. Beware of letting our ideas of the results of God's work interfere with carrying out His present will for our lives.
2. Beware lest we belittle what can be or what is accomplished for God by our ideas of the significance or insignificance of the place of service.
3. Wherever and whenever God is pleased to manifest His grace and goodness it is our obligation and privilege to acknowledge and rejoice in that manifestation.
4. God's ways are not our ways. God does not change; man must change!

QUIZ

1. What was the ultimate purpose in sparing Nineveh?
2. What hope would the sparing of Nineveh give to the Israelites of the captivity?
3. How did God compare Jonah's grief for the gourd to His concern for Nineveh?

JONAH
EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Why would God send a prophet of Israel to a great heathen city like Nineveh?
2. Do you think the literal meaning of Jonah's name, "dove," has any symbolical significance concerning his mission?
3. Is there sufficient evidence to establish the historicity of the experience of Jonah? What is the evidence?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two.

1	2
Jeroboam II	capital of Assyria
Jonah	where Jonah was headed
Nineveh	coastal city of Palestine
Gath-hepher	the Pit
Tarshish	Jonah's home town
Joppa	king of Israel
Amittai	dove
Sheol	father of Jonah

MEMORIZATIONS

"Arise, go to _____, that great city, and _____ against it; for their _____ is come up before me."

"And God saw their _____, that they turned from their _____ way; and God _____ of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not."

CONTEMPLATIONS

1. Why would God be concerned with the wickedness of Nineveh?
2. Did Jonah really think he could get away from Jehovah by going to Tarshish?
3. Why did God cause the storm?
4. Were the heathen sailors really converted to God?
5. Is it possible for a man to survive being swallowed by a fish?
6. How did the fish transport Jonah to Nineveh, an inland city?
7. Why did Jonah attempt to run away? How did he explain it himself?
8. Why was Jonah angry when God did not destroy Nineveh?
10. How is Jonah a type of Christ?

SERMON FROM JONAH

"IN EVERY NATION"

SERMON ON JONAH

"Truly I perceive that God shows not partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Acts 10:34-35

INTRODUCTION

I. WHO WAS JONAH?

- A. His name means, literally, "a dove." He preached God's peace to the Ninevites
- B. Jonah was a citizen of the northern kingdom, Israel. He lived in Gath-heper in the days of Jeroboam II
- C. Israel was, in spite of its affluence, corrupt and decadent and ripe for the judgment of God
- D. Jonah was a prophet of God; sent by God to preach to Israel (II Kings 14:25); a contemporary perhaps of Elisha, Joel and Amos

II. WHAT WAS JONAH'S MISSION?

- A. Jonah was, we believe, to preach God's judgment upon the wickedness of Nineveh, and upon Nineveh's repentance and God's salvation, they became an object lesson for Israel, that, ". . . in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to Him."

B. THIS IS THE MESSAGE JONAH BRINGS TO US TODAY

1. God is no respecter of person
 2. He hates and will punish wickedness wherever it is found
 3. He loves and will reward righteousness wherever it is found
 4. This three-fold message is to be delivered to the whole world through preachers
- C. Jonah's experience became a prophetic type of the work of the Messiah in suffering death for sin—raised from the dead to bring salvation to the world

III. JONAH'S EXPERIENCE HAS ANOTHER LESSON FOR US

- A. God says "Go!"
- B. Man says "No!"
- C. The World, His Word can know

JONAH
DISCUSSION

I. GOD SAYS, "GO!"

A. Through His word (Revealed Commands)

1. God's word came to Jonah, how, we know not, probably directly
 - a. God's word had come to the Jews as a nation, earlier, that they were to be witnesses to the nations round about them of the one true God (cf. Deut. 26:19; 28:1, 9, 10)
 - b. But in Jonah's day the Israelites were so much like their heathen neighbors God commanded Jonah to go bring the nations to repentance as a lesson for Israel
 - c. Jonah was commanded to go into urban evangelism in a foreign country! Nineveh was about the size of St. Louis (600,000 pop.; approx. 18 sq. miles in size); its inhabitants noted for their cruelty against enemies, culturally sophisticated.
 - d. There was no doubt in Jonah's mind that God had called him. It was not an emotional experience Jonah had to wonder about.
 - e. GOD DID NOT LEAVE ANY PROPHET IN DOUBT WHEN HE CALLED THEM THROUGH HIS WORD! GOD'S COMMAND TO "GO" IS UNEQUIVOCALLY PLAIN AND IMPERATIVE!
2. God's word comes to every Christian whose heart is sensitive and fully surrendered to His will, saying, "Go!"
 - a. "Go . . . and make disciples of all nations . . ." Matt. 28:19-20
 - b. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," Mk. 16:16 ff
 - c. ". . . what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2:2
 - d. GOD'S COMMAND TO "GO" IS UNEQUIVOCALLY PLAIN AND IMPERATIVE IN THE N.T. Men today are called through the gospel . . . God does not single out individuals today and speak to them audibly as He did to Moses, Isaiah, etc. BUT ALL CHRISTIANS ARE ENTREATED TO "GO" SOMEWHERE WITH THE GOSPEL!

B. God says, "Go" Through His Ways

1. God said "Go" to Jonah through the storm, the testimony of the heathen sailors, the 3 days and nights in the belly of the great fish.

SERMON FROM JONAH

2. Sometimes God does not get our attention until He hits us between the eyes with the proverbial two-by-four of trial and tribulation.
 3. It was Paul's blindness on the Damascus road that called him to hear God's voice; it was Paul despairing of life that made him trust in God (II Cor. 1:3-11), and his thorn in the flesh that kept him from boasting (II Cor. 12:7-10).
 4. Alexander Campbell and other great Restoration preachers were called by God through trying experiences
 5. Wes Tuttle and wife directed to God's call to evangelize through tragedy in the family; Roy Rogers and his wife
 6. When such a call comes through providential working of God in our lives, whether we answer correctly or not depends upon whether we know, understand and are willing to acknowledge that God does call in such a way!
 7. Some recruits to specialized service find many trials in their way before they finally get to the place they have chosen to serve . . . BUT DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, THIS IS GOD CALLING YOU IN HIS OWN WAY!
- C. God says, "Go" Through His Whispers to your Conscience
1. In a report by W. A. Cunningham, Eastern Christian College a few years ago, listing a report from every country in the world, there are 35 countries which would welcome U.S. missionaries, many of them where no missionaries have yet gone!
 2. The longer we wait the more difficult it will be. Did you know that 19 of every 20 who become Christians do so before they reach the age of 25; after 55, only one in 300,000! YOUTH MUST BE WON!
 3. Did you know 40 million people die each year—HOW MANY ARE LOST TO AN ETERNAL HELL?! Will God require their blood at your hands? 80 people die every 60 seconds! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO SAVE THEM! ABOUT ONE HALF OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION HAVE NEVER HEARD OF JESUS!
 4. 1,000,000 Christians serve 100,000 churches of the 180,000,000 people in the U.S.; 27,000 missionaries work among the other 2.5 billion in the world; 91% of the population of the world has only 6% of the full-time workers for the Lord!

JONAH

5. WHAT DOES YOUR CONSCIENCE TELL YOU NOW! LISTEN TO IT! IT IS SAYING, "WOE IS ME IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL!"

II. MEN SAY, "NO!"

A. Men say, "Send someone else—not me!" Whether Jonah said, "Why me?" or not, we can only guess.

1. But whom else would God have sent in Jonah's day—Jero-boam II? the heathen sailors? THERE WAS ONLY ONE MAN FOR THE JOB, JONAH! JONAH PUT HIMSELF ON GOD'S LIST OF AVAILABLES WHEN HE ACCEPTED THE LORD AS HIS SAVIOUR!
2. Who else will God send today? The bartender? other non-Christians? nominal, worldly-minded Christians? JUST AS HE ASKED IN ISAIAH'S DAY, GOD ASKS TODAY, WHOM SHALL I SEND, WHO WILL GO FOR ME? The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are so few!
3. Even so, my friend, THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN FOR THE JOB, YOU! YOU PUT YOURSELF ON GOD'S AVAILABILITY LIST WHEN YOU ACCEPTED HIS SON AS YOUR LORD! Do not say, "Send someone else," YOU DECIDED TO "GO" FOR HIM WHEN YOU CAME UNTO HIM!
4. Young people who have had all the opportunities of Chris-tain training in their homes are the ones who cannot say, "Send someone else!"
5. Parents, whose children want to go, dare not say, "Send someone else."

B. Men say, "Don't send me there, send me somewhere else!" One thing is certain about Jonah, he did not want to go to Nineveh!

1. But God knew best—God knew Jonah and God knew Nineveh, and God knew that Nineveh would repent at the preaching of Jonah
2. It was a case of "running away from God."
3. Men, even Christian men, want to do everything else under the sun, but preach the gospel.
4. Men, even Christian men, want to go everywhere except the place they are best suited for and where God is evi-dently leading them
5. Why? Selfishness! Laziness! MANY WILL NEVER HEAR THE GOSPEL BECAUSE MEN DECIDE AGAINST GOING TO

SERMON FROM JONAH

THEM WHEN THE TASK APPEARS TOO DIFFICULT . . . THERE ARE NO CONVENIENCES THERE . . . THE PEOPLE WOULD BE UNRECEPTIVE

6. Peter said, "Don't send me to the Gentiles," but God sent him and a great victory was won!
 7. Paul said, "Don't send me to *Troas*," but God did and a great victory was won!
 8. God sent St. Patrick to Ireland as a slave-boy to prepare him for later missionary work there
 9. Christ said "Don't send me to the Cross," but God did, and your salvation was wrought
- C. Men say, "Don't send me now, send me some other time" Perhaps Jonah rationalized with himself, "If God would only wait, I would go to Nineveh some day!" BUT GOD SAID, NOW!
1. Moses said, "Wait, God, I'm not eloquent" But God said, NOW, MOSES!
 2. Jeremiah said, "Wait, God, I am but a youth," But God said, NOW, JEREMIAH!
 3. Esther said, "Wait, God, for a more opportuune time," But God said, NOW, ESTHER!
 4. GOD'S TIME IS ALWAYS NOW . . . GOD'S DAY IS ALWAYS TODAY
 5. This does not mean that we should forget preparation to preach the gospel . . . it does mean that we must go somewhere, everywhere opportunity permits, even while preparing for some particular field. WE CAN PREPARE AS WE GO AND WE CAN GO AS WE PREPARE!
 6. God will not wait—if you resist and refuse His call, you will be lost, like king Saul, or like Baalam, or the rich young ruler.

SAY "NO!" TO THE WORLD; SAY "NO!" TO SATAN'S ENTICING WHISPERS; SAY "NO!" TO SELF; BUT FOR THE SAKE OF MILLIONS OF LOST SOULS, DON'T SAY "NO!" TO GOD!

III. THE WORLD, HIS WORD CAN KNOW

A. Many will be Receptive:

1. Jonah probably reasoned on the docks of Joppa: "I have preached for years in Israel with no success in getting my own countrymen to repent, how does God expect me to reach foreigners!"

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2. But Jonah was in for a big surprise! The whole city received his message from the king down to the lowliest slave.
 3. Why? Probably two reasons: First, they were probably thoroughly disillusioned with their own sinful lives and ready for a message of hope; second, there was evidence in the person of Jonah himself of the truth of his message!
 4. Thousands upon thousands received the gospel in the first century for the same two basic reasons
 5. Thousands upon thousands are ready to receive the gospel today, I am convinced, because of the first reason, but they have not accepted it yet, because it has not yet been *evidentially* presented to them. Jonah did not play upon the emotions of the Ninevites—he appealed to the evidences available! Jonah knew why he believed and was able to tell the Ninevites why they should believe!
 6. Campus ministers are finding many disillusioned young people who want something solid, true, abiding, factual. This has been the experience of Roy Weece at University of Missouri; of Alan Bemo with Chinese students on Taiwan; of Gordon Souder in Canada—all over the world.
 7. There is a constant barrage of requests coming to Ozark Bible College, and of other Bible Colleges I'm sure, for trained young people, both men and women, to go to the far-flung limits of our globe. Requests from other missionaries; requests from the peoples of other nations.
- B. Many will Repent
1. “. . . the king arose from his throne, removed his robe, and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes . . .” and decreed that the whole city should do likewise
 2. “When God saw . . . how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it.”
 3. Almost whole cities repented when Paul preached
 4. Millions were saved from the apostate Roman church by the courageous preaching of Martin Luther
 5. Millions have been brought back to Biblical Christianity as a result of the faithful, sacrificial work of Restoration pioneers
 6. Thousands have been won to Christ just recently by dedicated young people; Joe Garman, graduate of OBC in

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Korean evangelistic crusades won thousands to Christ; the Reggie Thomas team in Africa including 4 OBC students) won thousands to Christ in just the summer months of school vacation.

7. Ted Hurlburt, in a very candid article about Bible College training, entitled "What About the Preacher Shortage?" Christian Standard, Feb. 3, 1968, writes: "Young people, the fields are white unto the harvest! The message of Christ will still be valid after the last 'hippie' has had his long hair cut and after any other new fad has lost its momentary popularity . . . Bible Colleges need more students—students longing to have their convictions of a saving Christ developed so as to effectively communicate His salvation to a dead, doomed, and damned world."

8. The Lord says to you as he did to Paul at Corinth: "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, for I am with you, . . . for I have many people in this city." Acts 18:9-10.

9. Yes, even the intelligentsia, the sophisticated-set, need the gospel and are willing to hear and repent

Joplin Globe, Dec. 2, 1967, "Pastor Preaches Gospel to Moonport Congregation." "After extensive intimate talks with members of his 'moonport' congregation . . . he concluded, 'from what they told me that they needed basic, simple' exposition of Christian doctrine. While they were highly educated in electronics, etc., . . . they were 'biblically and theologically illiterate.' They wanted help in understanding the 'person and nature of God' and in relating 'His teachings and purpose to their own daily lives . . .' After five years at the Cocoa Beach church . . . he says he has found that the gist of his message needs to be the straight 'good news of the gospel.' "

C. Many will reject

1. The Bible is a book of history. It is candid, frank, accurate and realistic. It is not a philosophical-idealistic book of theories
2. Nineveh repented, but Jonah's own people, Israel, went stupidly, blindly, rebelliously on its merry way to destruction.
3. This is what discouraged Jonah. Jonah was not a sadistic cold-blooded, monster whose consuming passion was to see innocent women and children slain by God. Fairbairn says, "Jonah was downcast because the example of severity had

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been withheld, which he thought would operate so beneficially upon the minds of his countrymen and without which he seemed to have no means to attaining the great end and object of his life."

All of God's efforts to bring Israel had failed thus far. Now God sought once more to move them from their downward plunge by working upon them through jealousy and shame while at the same time giving them an example of His mercy and love when repentance is shown. Jonah, like Elijah of old, was waiting for God to speak out of a whirlwind or with fire, but God spoke in a still small voice of forgiveness. The Jews expected Jesus to speak with judgment upon the Gentiles if He were the Messiah . . .

PREACHERS HAVE A REPUTATION OF THINKING THEY KNOW BETTER HOW TO DO THINGS THAN GOD DOES!

4. So God teaches Jonah a lesson with the gourd. Jonah was distressed when it died because he needed it for shade. So, God needed to save Nineveh as an example of what He would do for Israel if she repented. God's cause would suffer if Nineveh should be destroyed. **SO, IN SPITE OF ALL MAN CAN DO AND IN SPITE OF ALL GOD DOES, MANY WILL REJECT.** "Many are called, but few are chosen."
5. Isaiah was told, when he had asked, "How long, O Lord," "Until cities lie waste and without inhabitant . . ." Very few paid attention to Isaiah.
6. Jeremiah was so discouraged, he wished he had never been born, but there was a fire in his bones and he could not quit.
7. Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Peter and Paul . . . all had their moments of discouragement, their failures, their enemies, **BUT THEIR VICTORIES FAR OUTWEIGHED THEIR DEFEATS, AND THEY KNEW THAT ULTIMATE VICTORY WAS ASSURED!** They may lose a battle here and there but the war would be won!
8. Bill Junkins, former President of Midwest Christian College, writing about having left the ministry from discouragement and returning to the ministry wrote, "Love your calling as a ministry sent to you by the Lord himself. It is the highest calling on earth. It is an invitation and challenge to walk with God where God walked when he visited our planet as our loving, serving, suffering Savior."

SERMON FROM JONAH

CONCLUSION

I. JONAH, THE RELUCTANT PROPHET, TEACHES US:

- A. God Says, "Go!"
- B. Men say, "No!"
- C. The World, His Word Can Know

II. LET THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH THESE WORDS OF HIS:

- A. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14)
- B. "For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." (I Cor. 1:21)
- C. "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men . . . For the love of Christ constrains us . . . So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us . . ." (II Cor. 5:11, 14, 20)

MY FRIEND, THERE SIMPLY IS NO WAY FOR THE BILLIONS DOOMED TO AN ETERNAL HELL TO KNOW GOD AND BE SAVED, EXCEPT YOU BECOME A PREACHER AND TELL AS MANY AS YOU CAN!

THE WHITE MAN'S BOOK OF HEAVEN

In the fall of 1832 five Indians traveled to St. Louis—in search of the White Man's Book of Heaven. They had heard about it from explorers and traders. It took them seven months to reach their destination.

When they arrived they were received by General Clark and entertained for the winter. However, two others died during the winter months, leaving only two of the original five.

In the spring, when they were ready to leave, General Clark gave them a banquet. During the banquet one of them gave a farewell address. Finally, the two survivors started back to their tribe, but one perished on the way and only one of the five ever saw his tribe again. Following is the touching speech that was made at the banquet by the Indian who had traveled so far in search of the White Man's Book of Heaven, *only to be shown images and burning candles and never once a copy of the Bible.*

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"I came to you over the trail of many moons, from the setting sun. You were the friends of my fathers, who have all gone the long way. I came with an eye partly open for my people who sit in darkness. I go back blind to my blind people.

"I made my way to you with strong arms through many enemies and strange lands that I might carry much back to them. I go with both arms broken and empty. Two fathers came with us. They were the braves of many winters and wars. We leave them asleep here by your great water and wigwams.

"My people sent me for 'The White Man's Book of Heaven.' You took me to where they worship the great Spirit with candles, but the Book was not there. You showed me the images of the Great Spirit and the pictures of the good lands beyond, but the Book was not among them to tell us the way.

"I am going back to my people in the dark land. You make my feet heavy with gifts, and my moccasins will grow old with carrying them, and yet the Book is not among them. When I tell my poor, blind people, after the more snow, in the Big Council that I did not bring the Book, no word will be spoken by our old men or by our young braves. One by one they will rise up and go out in darkness and they will go a long path to other hunting grounds. No white man will go with them and no White Man's Book of Heaven will make the way plain. I have no more words."

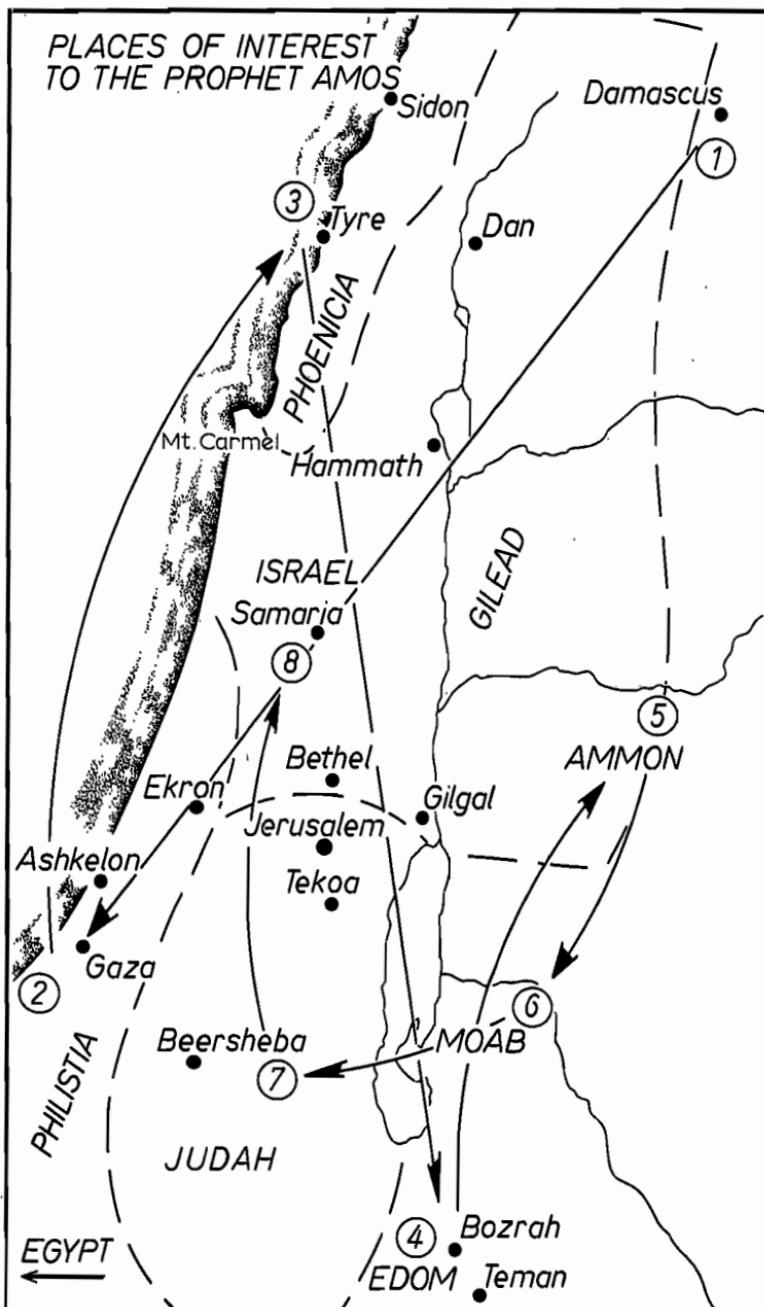
What a fearful catastrophe! What a terrible denunciation! Would to God there had been a Christian with a copy of the Bible, who could have met the need of the Indians, sent as they were by the Spirit of God. What, I wonder, will the people of St. Louis of that day have to say when they stand before God?

But now may God speak to our hearts, lest we, too, fail Him. May we do what we can to give The Book of Heaven to those who do not have it. Remember, a thousand tribes still wait in darkness and midnight gloom for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. How will we excuse ourselves if we, too, fail Him in this dark day and hour?



"But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel . . . and they shall afflict you" (Amos 6: 14). With the Assyrian campaigns into the west under their king, Shalmaneser III (859-824 B. C.)—whose commanding figure we see here—disaster loomed ahead for Israel and Judah. "I set out from Nineveh and crossed the Tigris" is how this monarch begins his account of his first campaign against Damascus. In the fighting which led up to the Battle of Karkar in 853 B. C. King Ahab of Israel, who took part in the Syrian coalition against Assyria, had his first encounter with Assyrian troops.

MINOR PROPHETS



AMOS

INTRODUCTION

Author: The name Amos, *hamos*, means literally, *Bearer, Burden* or *Heavy*. This may indeed be providential inasmuch as Amos bore a heavy burden for the Lord. Amos was a herdsman of an ugly, stunted, fine-wooled sheep called *noked* in Hebrew, but highly esteemed on account of their wool. He was a farmer. Certain seasons out of the year he migrated either into the coastal plain or to the Jordan valley to tend sycamore trees which in Palestine produce a sort of fruit that must be pierced to ripen. He lived in or near Tekoa. Tekoa is in a desolate region, too dry in the summer for raising grain. It is 2700 feet above sea level, and only 18 miles from that great "hole" known as the Dead Sea basin. Tekoa was a town which belonged to the tribe of Judah (cf. II Sam. 14:2; II Chron. 11:6; 20:20; Jer. 6:1). He would have lived a kind of life in practically the same region as the young David. Close to nature, out breathing the fresh clean air of the desert, where wild beasts lurked, often studying the wonders of God's creation by day and the stars by night. His occupation naturally carried him to the wool markets of the northern cities. There he would become acquainted with the life and religion of the people of his day. G. L. Robinson, in *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, says, ". . . he was both the product and representative of his age. Stern, fearless, self-contained, a man of granite-make, he possessed a powerful well-knit mind and a vivid imagination, and is one of the most arresting figures ever on the stage of Hebrew history." One only has to become familiar with Amos' writing to agree with that evaluation. Because his father's name is nowhere mentioned, it is inferred that he probably was from a poor and obscure family. Amos had no special profession (Ezekiel was a priest; Isaiah was a statesman and advisor to kings; so was Daniel) or formal preparation to preach, but being a shepherd he was almost a natural-born preacher! Amos did have a direct call from God (Amos 7:14-15) to go to the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and prophesy against Israel. In exactly what manner this call came we are not told. But accordingly, he went to Bethel, 12 miles north of Jerusalem, and there under the very shadow of the royal palace lifted up his voice in a vigorous and impassioned cry for justice.

Date: Amos settles the question of date with as much exactness as any book of the Old Testament. The book itself names Jeroboam II as the king under whom Amos prophesied in Bethel. Jeroboam was 14 years contemporary with Amaziah and 27 years contemporary with Uzziah, both kings of Judah. Another chronological peg is "two years before

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the earthquake" (1:1). However the date of this earthquake is uncertain. It is undoubtedly the same earthquake alluded to by Zechariah (Zech. 14:5). Josephus informs us (Ant. 9.10.4) that this earthquake took place in connection with Uzziah's trespass (reported in II Chron. 26:18-21). A total eclipse of the sun was supposed to have accompanied this quake (supposed to be referred to by Amos in 8:9), which astronomers have calculated as having taken place June 15, 763 B.C. This would fix the date of Amos' prophecy somewhere around 760 B.C. Jeroboam ruled 786-746 B.C.; Uzziah ruled 783-742 B.C. Amos was somewhere within those three decades—most likely 760 B.C. He prophesied somewhat earlier than Hosea, but still Hosea was a young contemporary of Amos. Amos was later than Joel. Both Amos and Hosea were older contemporaries of Isaiah.

Background: Robinson says, "This was the golden age of North Israel, the high water mark of their national prosperity." Unfortunately, though there was much prosperity, there was little wisdom and righteousness. Gluttonous feasting took the place of religious service. Greed permeated the whole society. Corruption of justice was a commonly accepted rule of life. Might became right! Land-grabbing became an everyday crime. The rich owners had bribed the legal machinery until they controlled it. The rich became richer and the poor became destitute. Men lived in haughty indifference to God and were "at ease in Zion. (6:1)" The love of luxury and indulgence prevailed much like it did in the decadent days of the Roman Empire. Religion lost all its vitality and became ritualistic, syncretistic, paganistic and had no bearing on morals or life at all. Insincerity and dishonesty, corruption and licentiousness, criminal extravagance and blind assurance took such a firm hold of the wealthy, arrogant upper-class that they became heathen in everything but name. No wonder the shepherd farmer prophet was outraged and shocked at the profligacy he saw—no wonder that the God of all holiness and righteousness spoke through him so bluntly and angrily! We need Amoses today by the hundreds to speak the warnings and promises of God in the New Testament to a profligate society which is world-wide!

Purpose and Theme: Amos has been called, "God's Angry Man." Lange says, ". . . we have a prophetic writing in nine chapters, containing chiefly threatenings against the kingdom of Israel . . . it begins with threats upon the surrounding heathen, and then, like a genuine prophetic book, concludes with the promise of a new deliverance for Israel . . ." We believe the best statement of the theme of Amos is "The Sovereignty of God Over All." This universal sovereignty of Jehovah—the responsi-

INTRODUCTION

bility of all men everywhere and all nations to morality and justice—is Amos' central doctrine. "The condemnation of the heathen nations implies that even the heathen possessed some knowledge of right, which carried with it a corresponding degree of moral responsibility," says Kirkpatrick. With the covenant people of both nations Amos goes to the root of the matter and deals with the attitude of the people's heart and will towards Jehovah. He wants them to know that their worship is vain—an abomination to the Lord—because their hands are stained by sin and their hearts are indifferent to the Law of God and the common dictates of social justice and morality. He has been called "The Prophet of Justice" and "The Prophet of Repentance and Judgement." Amos shows himself to be a true preacher proclaiming the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man! The book of Amos is one of the most helpful of the prophetic books. It is a practical work, for it points out sin clearly and exalts at the same time the purity of God. He shows that God is no respecter of persons. If Israelites sin against Him, He will condemn them as readily as other nations. He shows that God hates hypocrisy. He shows that there can never be a divorce between doctrine on the one hand and ethics on the other. The eschatology of Amos is of the simplest character. The picture of Israel's future which he draws in the concluding verses of the book is, like that of Joel (cf. Amos 9:13 with Joel 3:18), a picture of purely temporal blessing while the New Testament interpretation of it (Acts 15:12-21) shows it was intended to be ultimately fulfilled in a spiritual kingdom. Amos has no prediction of a personal Messiah, but he does connect the hope of the future for the covenant people with the house of David.

Sermonic outline of the book of Amos:

Theme: The Sovereignty of God & Responsibility of Man

- I Punishment Promised, Chapters 1-2
 - A The Heathen nations, 1:1—2:3
 - 1. Damascus 1:1-5
 - 2. Gaza and Tyre 1:6-10
 - 3. Edom and Ammon 1:11-15
 - 4. Moab 2:1-3
 - B. The covenant nations, 2:4—2:16
 - 1. Judah 2:4-5
 - 2. Israel 2:6-8
 - 3. Israel 2:9-12
 - 4. Israel 2:13-16

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II Penitence Promoted, Chapters 3-6

- A. Reason should call for repentance, 3:1—4:11
 - 1. The Lord does not roar vengeance without a cause, 3:1-8
 - 2. Their sins astonish even the heathen, 3:9-15
 - 3. The holiness of the Lord demands punishment for evil, 4:1-5
 - 4. Their past chastenings should make them think, 4:6-11
- B. Revelation should call for repentance, 4:12—5:13
 - 1. God has revealed His character and will, 4:12-13
 - 2. Hear God's word against you, 5:1-5
 - 3. The omnipotence and omniscience of God, 5:6-13
- C. Righteousness demands repentance, 5:14—6:14
 - 1. Hate evil and love good, 5:14-20
 - 2. Rid your religion of its hypocrisy, 5:21-27
 - 3. Luxury and ease leads to indolence, 5:1-8
 - 4. False pride turns righteousness to bitterness, 6:9-14

III Prophecies Presented, Chapters 7-9

- A. Causes of Judgment Prophesied, 7:1—8:6
 - 1. Out of line with God's standard (the plumbline) 7:1-9
 - 2. Corrupt Religious Leaders (Amaziah) 7:10-17
 - 3. God's Longsuffering Has Expired (basket of summer fruit) 8:1-6
- B. Description of Judgments Prophesied, 8:7—9:10
 - 1. A time of bitter mourning, 8:7-10
 - 2. A time of spiritual famine, 8:11-14
 - 3. Thorough and Inescapable 9:1-6
 - 4. A time of disruption and dispersion, 9:7-10
- C. Results of Judgment Prophesied, 9:11-15
 - 1. David's throne and dominion restored, 9:11-12
 - 2. Fruitfulness and prosperity restored, 9:13-14
 - 3. Security, peace and protection restored, 9:15

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—DAMASCUS

TEXT: 1:1-5

1. The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

2. And he said, Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.
3. Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:
4. but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.
5. And I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity into Kir, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why would God send a man from Judah to prophesy to Israel?
- b. How does Jehovah "roar" from Zion?
- c. Where is Kir?

PARAPHRASE

These are words of Amos who was a herdsman living in the village of Tekoa. One day, in a vision, God told him some of the things which were going to happen to the northern kingdom, Israel. This vision came to him at the time Uzziah was king of Judah, and while Jeroboam, (son of Joash), was king of Israel—two years before the great earthquake. Amos said, The Lord, like a ferocious lion, roars His warning from His dwelling place in Jerusalem, the city of Zion. The lush pasturelands wither from the top of Mount Carmel to the plains.

This the Lord's word: Because of sin after sin committed by Damascus I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Syrians crushed the prisoners of my people to death with iron threshing machines of war I will punish them. I will burn down the palaces of Hazael and Benhadad. I will tear down the defenses of the capital city Damascus and slaughter the inhabitants of Syria's major cities, even the potentates of these cities will I slaughter. Those who are left of Syria I will send into captivity into the land of Elam.

SUMMARY

The Lord roars His warnings like a lion from its lair. He begins with Damascus, or Syria. The heathen are responsible to God for their injustices and immoralities.

AMOS
COMMENT

v. 1. THE WORDS OF AMOS . . . OF TEKOA . . . CONCERNING ISRAEL . . . We do not know exactly why God chose a man of the southern kingdom, Judah, to send with His message to the northern kingdom, Israel. The fact that God's presence remained in the Temple which was in Jerusalem, the southern kingdom, may have had something to do with it. However, Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, prophet to Israel, was from Israel. All we need to know is that God selected the right man at the right time to do the right job. We have already discussed the date of Amos' prophecy and his place of birth in the Introduction of this book. It should be remembered that he preached his messages of denunciation and doom in an atmosphere of unprecedented material prosperity which was being accompanied by a widespread decay of moral values and a wicked oppression of the poor. Disaster seemed most unlikely. Amos and his message were extremely unpopular. Yet within a very few years four kings of Israel had been assassinated, then Hoshea was deposed and imprisoned and Israel ceased to be a nation in 722-721 B.C. at the Assyrian captivity. Though he was a shepherd, Amos is the author of the purest and most classical Hebrew in the entire Old Testament. His style is grave, measured, and rhetorical—Amos was an orator. He uses brief, uninvolved sentences. His vocabulary and style are conspicuously those of Semetic homeliness, especially of a man of the wilderness.

v. 2 JEHOVAH WILL ROAR FROM ZION . . . PASTURES SHALL MOURN . . . AND THE TOP OF CARMEL . . . WITHER . . . How often Amos had probably heard the wild lion of the mountainous regions around Tekoa roar its warning from its lair. The Hebrew people were very familiar with lions and many books in the Bible mention them. The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. A number of instances are mentioned where a man of Palestine killed a lion in a single-handed encounter (Judg. 14:5-8; I Sam. 17:36-37). See our comments on Joel 3:16 also. Zion is *tsiyon* in Hebrew and probably means *citadel*. It is the name of one of the hills or mountains on which Jerusalem stood. It is first mentioned in the O.T. as a Jebusite fortress (II Sam. 5:6-9), but David captured it and called it the city of David. It is used figuratively for the covenant people of God both of O.T. times and N.T. times (cf. Isa. 33:14; 34:8; 49:14, etc. for O.T. covenant people; cf. Heb. 12:22 for N.T. usage which also indicates some O.T. usage of Zion was prophetic of the N.T. church). In this case Zion means the city of God, Jerusalem (as evidenced by the parallelism

here), where God's presence dwells. It would be a subtle reminder to the northern kingdom that God was to be worshiped only at Jerusalem! (cf. Ex. 25:21-22; 29:42-43; 40:33-38; Num. 7:89; Lev. 1:1; I Kings 8:10-11).

Amos reveals that the Sovereign God will bring His judgment upon Israel first through a drought. God will wither the pasture land from the top of forest-crowned Mt. Carmel, the mountain at the mouth of the Kishon river, to the verdant plains of the lowlands. The shepherd's heart of Amos could picture no greater display of God's judgment than the burning and withering of the fresh green pasture lands so urgently necessary to the life of this farming, shepherding people. *Carmel* means "garden." Mt. Carmel was an especially verdant place for grazing sheep. Its perennial springs outlasted even the three years and six months of drought in Elijah's days (cf. I Kings 17 & 18). If this pasture-land should wither it would be manifestly at the command of God. Practically every prophet reveals Jehovah God as the Sovereign of nature—the Creator, Sustainer and User of Nature. He sustains nature under certain laws inviolable only until He deems it necessary to manipulate or contravene them to serve His omnipotent and omniscient purposes.

v. 3 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF DAMASCUS . . . FOR FOUR . . . I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT . . . THEY HAVE THRESHED GILEAD WITH THRESHING INSTRUMENTS OF IRON . . . K & D say, ". . . the numbers merely serve to denote the multiplicity of the sins, the exact number of which has no bearing upon the matter." It is a Hebrew idiom expressing fulness. J. B. Phillips, in *Four Prophets*, translates it, "Because of outrage after outrage committed by Damascus . . ." The Syrians have filled their cup of wickedness full to overflowing. God will not relent! He is going to punish them. Their one greatest sin has been to cruelly crush the Gileadites (a territory east of the Jordan allocated to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh) with iron threshing carts. Hazael the Syrian king did this when he conquered that territory during the reign of Jehu (II Kings 10:32-33; 13:7; cf. also II Sam. 12:31). The threshing cart was a sort of a cart with toothed iron wheels underneath, which was driven about to crush the straw in the threshing-floors after the grain had been beaten out. They have despoiled God's possession—they have violated, and that in the cruelest fashion, the most basic law of God—the sanctity of human life. But even worse, they have done despite to the covenant people of God (cf. our comments on Obadiah). To attack God's people is to attack God!

v. 4-5 . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE INTO THE HOUSE OF HAZAEL . . . BREAK THE BAR OF DAMASCUS . . . AND THE PEOPLE OF SYRIA SHALL

GO INTO CAPTIVITY INTO KIR . . . Hazael was the murderer of Benhadad I, to whom the prophet Elisha foretold that he would reign over Syria, and predicted the cruelties that he would practice towards Israel (II Kings 8:7ff). An inscription of Shalmaneser III states that Benhadad perished and "Hazael, a son of nobody, (meaning not of royal lineage), seized the throne." Shalmaneser III also records two attacks on Hazael in which he claims great victories for Assyria with severe damage to the Syrian countryside. Hazael reigned for at least 43 years and perhaps longer, and he oppressed Israel all the days of his reign. In 732 Tiglathpileser III subdued the city of Damascus and brought an end to the Aramaean state.

To break the bar of Damascus would mean to "break the bolt of the gate." Literally, to destroy the city's defenses and overcome it. To "cut off the inhabitant" is to slaughter him. Those who were not slaughtered, God would cause to be taken into captivity to Kir. Kir (cf. Isa. 22:6) the territory in ancient Elam east of the Persian Gulf, on the banks of the river *Kur*, from which, according to Amos 9:7, the Syrians originally emigrated. Many of the Syrians were taken captive in Tiglathpileser's conquest in 732 B.C.

Jehovah God, all-sovereign Creator of the universe, orders the migrations and national boundaries of the nations (Acts. 17:26), and cares for their welfare (Acts 14:15-18). He brought up the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir (Amos 9:7). He has the right and the power to punish them for their sins. And what are the sins of which they are guilty? As we have mentioned before, they are guilty of desecrating God's holy people. But in the main their sin is simply *inhumanity*. They have broken those most basic laws of God written on the heart and conscience of all mankind by which the relation of man to man and nation to nation ought to be governed. They are capable of exercising moral judgments. Therefore the violation of the natural laws of humanity written on their consciences demands punishment.

QUIZ

1. Why was Amos' message so unpopular in his day?
2. What is the figure of God "roaring" referring to?
3. Why be so specific that God's warning would come from Zion?
4. How does God use nature to serve His purposes?
5. How did the Syrians thresh the people of Gilead?
6. Who was Hazael and when did he live and what kind of a person was he?
7. What do we learn from God's message to the heathen here?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—GAZA AND TYRE

TEXT: 1:6-10

- 6 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Gaza, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole people, to deliver them up to Edom:
- 7 but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.
- 8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn my hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord Jehovah.
- 9 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions, of Tyre, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they delivered up the whole people to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:
- 10 but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

QUERIES

- a. Where are Gaza, Ashdod and Ekron, and for what does God hold them responsible?
- b. Where is Tyre?
- c. What is the "brotherly covenant?"

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Gaza, I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Philistines captured whole cities and areas of My holy land and people and sold every last one of them into slavery to the Edomites I will consume them in the fires of judgment. I will slaughter the inhabitants of the major cities of Philistia even the potentates of these cities I will slaughter. The very last people of the Philistine race I will cause to perish.

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Tyre, I will not leave her unpunished. Because of their slave-trade with Edom and because they forgot the peaceful alliances and behavior of My covenant people toward them, I will consume the cities and peoples of Phoenicia in the fires of judgment.

SUMMARY

Philistia and Phoenicia are "roared" at by the Lord. They have captured whole cities of the covenant people and sold them into slavery.

COMMENT

v. 6 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF GAZA . . . BECAUSE THEY CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE THE WHOLE PEOPLE . . . By mentioning most of the principal cities of Philistia, Amos means to include the whole nation under the judgment of God. The book of Judges mentions the Philistines as a major contender against the Hebrews for the possession of Palestine. When David united all Israel under his rule, he decisively defeated the Philistines in two major battles (II Sam. 5:17-25) and from this time on, the Philistine grip was broken until after the death of Solomon. Then at the division of the kingdom the Philistines reasserted the independence they had lost to David and captured whole cities selling the people into slavery. Sargon (722-705 B.C.) captured the Philistine cities, deported some of the inhabitants and set over them an Assyrian governor. The later struggles between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (Egypt and Syria), prophesied by Daniel 11, caused great suffering and devastation to the Philistine cities. This practically closes their history as strictly Philistinian. They continued in N.T. times as non-Jewish centers, becoming Hellenistic cities.

Amos has in mind such carrying away of captives as occurred in II Chron. 21:16 (cf. Joel 3:3-4). These Philistines captured whole cities and areas of Hebrew people and sold them to Edomites and to the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians probably sold them, in turn, to the Greeks (cf. Joel 3:6).

v. 7 . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE ON THE WALL OF GAZA . . . It could be that Amos meant literal fire would destroy these heathen cities since the destructive forces of fire have always been a major result of warfare in every age. But it most probably is a figure of the judgment of God. (cf. Matt. 3:12; John 15:6, etc.).

v. 8 . . . I WILL CUT OFF THE INHABITANT FROM ASHDOD . . . ASHKELON . . . EKRON . . . AND THE REMNANT OF THE PHILISTINES SHALL PERISH . . . Three more of the principal cities of Philistia are here mentioned, only Gath is left out, and this not because it was not to be judged. It is clear that God means the Philistines as a nation or race shall perish. And so it is true today, Philistia is no longer a nation and the Philistines are no longer a people. All of these cities were located in the plain of Philistia, a part of which is now known as the Gaza

Strip. Egypt and the Jews are still fighting over this territory. Its former glory and power has long since melted into the dust of antiquity . . . but the Word of God stands as firmly as ever today!

v. 9-10 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF TYRE . . . BECAUSE THEY DELIVERED UP THE WHOLE PEOPLE TO EDOM, AND REMEMBERED NOT THE BROTHERLY COVENANT . . . Tyre was the capital of Phoenicia. It was north of Mt. Carmel and south of Sidon. The people were seafaring people. Tyre was one of the principal seaports of that entire territory bounded by the Mediterranean coast. They imported and exported many different things among which were slaves—men, women and children often Hebrew captives of raids by the Philistines, and the Syrians. David and Solomon had entered into a friendly alliance with the king of Tyre (II Sam. 5:11; I Kings 5:15ff) but the people of Tyre of Amos' generation had forgotten that. Furthermore they were not mindful of the fact that no king of Israel or Judah had ever made war on Phoenicia. Their indifference and cruelty to the covenant people of God through their slave-trading was wholly unjustifiable and God announces that He will visit them with His judgment.

In 322 B.C. in the course of his conquest of the East, Alexander the Great appeared before Tyre. The island stronghold (where the people of the old city of Tyre had fled at the siege of Nebuchadnezzar almost 300 years earlier) closed her gates, and Alexander was forced to build a causeway, and after long months of frustration and vast penetration, take the city by costly storming. Alexander built the causeway out of the timbers and stones of the old city of Tyre by scraping its site "flat like the top of a rock." Tyre was broken, and the causeway still remains, a place, as Ezekiel foretold, on which fishermen might dry their nets (cf. Ezek. 26:5-14; 47:10; cf. also Isa. 23; Zech. 9). Tyre made a measure of political recovery and for a period functioned as a republic. She struck an early treaty with Rome, and her independence was respected until 20 B.C. when Augustus withdrew it. The remaining history of Tyre is without significance. The ancient city of Tyre on the mainland has never been rebuilt!

QUIZ

1. Tell of the history of Philistia. What of the people of Philistia today?
2. What does Amos mean by speaking of "fire" upon each of these cities?
3. Tell of the history of Tyre. What of the people of Tyre today?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—EDOM AND MOAB

TEXT: 1:11-15

- 11 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Edom, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:
- 12 but I will send a fire upon Teman, and it shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.
- 13 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the woman with child of Gilead, that they may enlarge their border:
- 14 but I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind;
- 15 and their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Who was the Edomite's brother whom he pursued with the sword?
- b. Did the Ammonites actually butcher pregnant women?
- c. Did the king of Ammon go away into captivity?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Edom, I will not leave him unpunished. Because these Edomites have chased their brethren, the Israelites, with the sword to make them prisoners and slaves, and because these Edomites were pitiless, relentless in their anger and continually full of wrath, I will consume the whole nation, from Teman in the north to Bozrah in the south, in the fires of My judgment.

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Ammon, I will not leave him unpunished. In their wars to extend the borders of their country these Ammonites committed cruel crimes, ripping open pregnant women with their swords. Because they have done these things I will consume them with the fire of My judgment and they shall go down with shouting and the battle will roar like a whirlwind in a mighty storm. Their king and princes will be taken captive into exile together, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

Edom and Ammon were related by blood to Israel yet they committed some of the most inhumane cruelties toward Israel. For these the Lord promises punishment.

COMMENT

v. 11-12. . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF EDOM . . . HE DID PURSUE HIS BROTHER WITH THE SWORD . . . CAST OFF ALL PITY . . . HIS ANGER DID TEAR PERPETUALLY . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON TEMAN . . . The Edomites were descendants of Esau, brother of Jacob (Israel). Edom became the relentless enemy of Israel constantly cultivating an implacable, mortal hatred towards the Israelites, which broke out into acts of cruelty at every possible opportunity. The Edomites were always busy raiding the cities and villages of Palestine, taking captives and using or selling them for slaves. God pronounces His judgment upon Teman and Bozrah which represent the extreme north and south, respectively, of the nation of Edom. Thus God says He will judge the whole nation. Be sure to refer to our comments on the book of Obadiah for Edom's relation to Israel.

v. 13-15 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF THE CHILDREN OF AMMON . . . THEY HAVE RIPPED UP WOMEN WITH CHILD OF GILEAD, THAT THEY MAY ENLARGE THEIR BORDER . . . BUT I WILL KINDLE A FIRE IN THE WALL OF RABBAH . . . AND THEIR KING SHALL GO INTO CAPTIVITY . . . The Ammonites (descendants of Ben-ammi) were related to the Moabites and Israelites through Lot (cf. Gen. 19:38). The Israelites were told by the Lord not to enter into battle with them as they journeyed toward the land of Promise (Deut. 2:19). Their nation was supposed to be just east of Moab stretching to the north as far as the Jabbok River and on the south to the hills of Edom but the Ammonites were continually trying to extend the borders of their land. They were a fierce people by nature, rebellious against Israel and idolatrous in their religious practices. They thrust out the right eye of all in Jabesh Gilead (1 Sam. 11:2). They were given to cruel atrocities (Jer. 40:14; 41:5-7; Amos 1:14). Though related to Israel, they refused to help them when asked (Deut. 23:4) and they joined with Moab in securing Balaam to curse them (Deut. 23:3-4). Later on in Israel's history they united with Sanballat to oppose the work of Nehemiah in restoring the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:10-19). The chief god of the fierce Ammon was Milchom, the principle of destruction, who was

appeased with sacrifices of living children, given to the fire to devour, (I Kings 11:7). Because of their sins and especially because they constantly opposed Israel, Ezekiel predicted their complete destruction (Ezek. 25:1-7). Their last stand seems to have been against Judas Maccabeus (I Macc. 5:6).

The occasion on which the Ammonites were guilty of ripping up pregnant women is not recorded in the O.T. They probably joined with Hazael (of whom it is also prophesied by Elisha, II Kings 8:12) when that Syrian king was at war with Israel. The Ammonites then would have availed themselves of the opportunity to widen their territory by conquering back the land which had been taken from them by Sihon, king of the Amorites, and was in turn taken possession of by the Israelites.

Greedy, heartless, inhuman rulers and peoples have committed the same (and often times worse) atrocities for the same aggrandizing purposes. And the same God who held the Ammonites accountable for their cruelties holds such nations today accountable with the same omniscient justice and holiness and power! Especially does God find it necessary to condemn those who make war on His saints!

QUIZ

1. Who were the Edomites and why did God hold them under condemnation?
2. Who were the Ammonites and why did God hold them under condemnation?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—MOAB

TEXT: 2:1-3

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Moab, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:
- 2 but I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet;
- 3 and I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Who were the Moabites?
- b. Why is God concerned that the king of Edom's bones were burned?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Moab, I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Moabites have in their proud arrogance burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime and have thus vented a depraved wrath upon one who at this time stands for Jehovah, I will consume Moab with the fire of My judgment and he shall die midst the shouting of warriors and blare of battle trumpets. I will slaughter Moab's king and other royal princes with him, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

For her unnatural hate and arrogance toward God, Moab will die as a nation.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF MOAB . . . BECAUSE HE BURNED THE BONES OF THE KING OF EDOM INTO LIME . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON MOAB . . . AND MOAB SHALL DIE WITH TUMULT . . . AND I WILL CUT OFF THE JUDGE . . . Moab was a son of Lot (as was Ammon) (cf. Gen. 19:38). Moses and the Israelites had a run-in with the Moabites in their journey to the land of Promise (cf. Num. 22-24). Balaam advised Balak to seduce the men of Israel by sending the Moabite girls into the camp of Israel (cf. Num. 31:16; 25:1-9). The Moabites oppressed Israel for 18 years (Judg. 3:12-14). When Israel repented God sent Ehud to deliver them from Moabite oppression. Ruth, the Moabite came to Israel with Naomi, married Boaz and became an ancestress of David and consequently an ancestress of Jesus Christ, the Son of David according to the flesh.

Along with Amos' death sentence upon Moab are those of Isaiah 15-16; Ezekiel 25:8-11; Jeremiah 48; Zephaniah 2:8-11. Isaiah 16:6 says, "We have heard of the pride of Moab, that he is very proud; even of his arrogancy, and his pride and his wrath." The death knell of Isaiah upon Moab is fulfilled by Shalmanezar of Assyria or by his successor Sargon. From then on a succession of world conquerors subdued and, in the process, annihilated Moab as a nation. The land of Moab was

bounded on the west by the Dead Sea, on the east by the desert, on the north by the Arnon, and on the south by Edom. It is about 3200 feet above the level of the sea, and is chiefly rolling, mountainous country

In Ezekiel 28:8-11 we are told that Moab and Seir are to be punished for likening the house of Judah to the other nations. Amos localizes his accusation against her by telling of an incident not recorded anywhere else in the O.T. K & D say, ". . . no doubt it was connected with the war referred to in II Kings 3, which Joram of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah waged against the Moabites in company with the king of Edom. Here the king of Edom was found on the side of the covenant people and when the king of Moab gained supremacy over Edom later, he burned the king of Edom's body until the bones turned into lime. It illustrates the depths of depravity to which a highly cultured people can descend if they reject the revelation of God (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). Pusey says, "The soul being, after death, beyond man's reach, the hatred, vented upon his remains, is a sort of impotent grasping at eternal vengeance. It wreaks on what it knows to be insensible, the hatred with which it would pursue, if it could, the living being who is beyond it . . . Hatred, which death cannot extinguish, is the beginning of the eternal hate in hell. With this hatred Moab hated the king of Edom, seemingly because he had been . . . on the side of the people of God. It was then sin against the love of God, and directed against God Himself." This reminds us of Wycliffe who was the first to translate the Bible into the English language. The Roman pope of that day excommunicated him and ordered that Wycliffe's bones be dug up, burned, and cast into the river.

Kerioth is probably the capital city of Moab. It is not to be confused with the Kerioth in the south of Judah (Josh. 15:25) and otherwise known as Hazor. Some say the city lay in what is now Jebel Druz, nearly south of Damascus and in high country. Some have thought that Moab had no king at this time since Amos mentions a "judge" as the potentate. But there is no notice in the history of that time of any other type of potentate than a monarch. "Judge" is probably nothing more than a rhetorical expression applied to the king and used simply for the sake of poetic variety.

QUIZ

1. Who were the Moabites and where was their country?
2. What is evidenced of their character in the burning of the king of Edom's bones?

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE COVENANT NATIONS—JUDAH

TEXT: 2:4-5

- 4 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Judah, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah, and have not kept his statutes, and their lies have caused them to err, after which their fathers did walk:
5 but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

QUERIES

- a. To what extent had Judah rejected the law of Jehovah?
- b. What "lies" caused them to err?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Judah, I will not leave her unpunished. Because they have spurned the law of Jehovah and have refused to keep His commandments, and because they have walked after lying idols just as their fathers did, I will send down upon them the fires of My judgment and this judgment shall consume even the great buildings of Jerusalem.

SUMMARY

Just as the heathen did not live up to their revelation, neither did Judah and although elected by God for a special mission they need not think God is a respecter of persons. They are to be judged for *indifference* to God's commandments and for idolatry.

COMMENT

v. 4-5 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF JUDAH . . . BECAUSE THEY HAVE REJECTED THE LAW OF JEHOVAH . . . AND THEIR LIES HAVE CAUSED THEM TO ERR . . . Amos may have been a shepherd and a farmer but he was a student of human nature and a master psychologist. His homiletical approach to the central application he made was excellent. In a series of concentric circles Amos denounced the sins

of men against Jehovah. Beginning with a great encircling movement that included Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab; he identified the rebellion against God with those outside God's special covenant. Then, shrinking to a smaller circle, a similar rebellion was placed squarely upon the shoulders of Judah. One can almost hear the people of the northern kingdom, Israel, giving ready "Amens" to Amos' preaching against their neighbors! Yes, there were many in Israel who probably still held grudges against Judah and so when Amos pointed out the sins of Judah they were in full agreement. Then after this announcement, Amos immediately thrust into the very heart of Israel the sword of the Spirit, the word of God's judgments against her! If it was true that the nations outside the covenant were accountable, if Judah, in the covenant were accountable, then it logically followed that Israel could not escape accountability.

We find Judah, not being judged for the wild excesses of the heathen, but for rejection of the law of God. Judah stood in greater responsibility than the heathen for she had been blessed to know the law of God, had been blessed with a succession of teachers and religious leaders to instruct her in the law and so her's was an even more heinous sin against God! Greater privilege brings greater responsibility (Lk. 12:48). Judah is not immune to judgment because they are God's elect. Indeed, their judgement is greater because they are His; and being His they chose to rebel against His law.

"Walking after" is the standard expression for idolatry. Their fathers before them "walked after" false gods. These false gods were impotent, dumb, vain and deceitful. So their "lies" are their "idols," (cf. Isa. 44:9-20)! The law of God embraces far more than just a legal codification of certain statutes. It included the totality of all instruction, civil, religious, moral—the total revelation of God. Instead they followed falsehood, deception, immorality and rebellion—an inevitable consequence of idolatry. Society is little better today, even in so-called Christian cultures. Men have deified science, philosophy, flesh, government and *self*. To worship any of these is hardly more intelligent than the idolatry of 2700 years ago. Rejection of divine revelation and substitution of any pantheon of gods—ancient or modern—brings the same inevitable consequences! Man without God becomes autonomous which leads inevitably to anarchy in society—both political and ethical. This is exactly what it led to in Judah (read the book of Jeremiah and II Kings) just before the awful judgment of God fell by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

QUIZ

1. How was Amos' preaching of the judgments of God a homiletical masterpiece?
2. Why was Judah held accountable to a greater degree than the heathen?
3. What were the "lies" Judah was caused to err in?
4. What is the inevitable result of rejecting divine revelation?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE COVENANT NATIONS—ISRAEL

TEXT: 2:6-8

- 6 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes;
- 7 they that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father go unto the same maiden, to profane my holy name:
- 8 and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been fined.

QUERIES

- a. How sell "the righteous for silver . . . needy for a pair of shoes?"
- b. How "pant after the dust of the earth . . . ?"
- c. What was involved in father and son going to the same harlot?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Israel, I will not leave her unpunished. Because they have for mere trifles given debtors over to their creditors as slaves; because they long eagerly to bring the poor into a state of misery and destitution that they scatter dust upon their heads; because father and son shamelessly and intentionally profane the name of God by committing incest when they both go in unto the same maiden; because they take the garments of the poor for which they have loaned the poor money and use them as bedding before the very altar of God at His feasts; because in the places they where they worship Jehovah they carouse with the wine bought with the fines they have taken from the poor they have prosecuted—because of all these sins I will not turn away from punishing Israel.

SUMMARY

Five specific charges Amos brings against Israel in this section. Every charge has to do with injustice against the poor.

COMMENT

v. 618 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF ISRAEL . . . SOLD . . . THE NEEDY FOR A PAIR OF SHOES . . . TURN ASIDE THE WAY OF THE MEEK . . . PROFANE MY HOLY NAME . . . IN THE HOUSE OF . . . GOD . . . DRINK . . . WINE . . . Now Amos lets loose all the stormy fury of God's anger where it is needed most imperatively! Israel is on the brink of disaster. God has called them time and time again. He has sent prophet after prophet—natural calamity after natural calamity, but unable to see through the veneer of a superficial prosperity (much like people today), Israel is "at ease in Bethel!"

"Selling the righteous for silver," refers to the judges who were bribed to pronounce a man guilty of some crime of which he was accused while in reality he was innocent of the accusation. "Selling the needy for a pair of shoes" does not mean that some slave was sold by someone else merely to obtain a pair of shoes; but some rich creditor would bribe a judge with a bribe as trifling as the price of a pair of shoes and the judge would then sentence the poor man in debt to become a slave to his creditor. This was done by perverting the statute in Lev. 25:39 (cf. also II Kings 4:1). The word translated "pant" means "to gasp, to long eagerly for." The greedy rich desired eagerly to bring the poor into such a state of poverty and misery as to cause the poor to scatter dust (a symbol of sorrow and distress, Josh. 7:6; Ezek. 27:30; Job 2:12; Lam. 2:10) upon their heads. To this end they seek to "bend" the way of the meek. They long to trap the poor and cast them headlong into destruction by placing stumbling-blocks in their path. For themselves the rich seek gold and silver and luxury; for others dust and ashes, poverty and sorrow!

Father and son seek the same maiden for fornication. Actually the law calls it incest (Lev. 18:7, 15; 20:11), a crime punishable by death. This was done not so much out of passion as it was in deliberate revolt against God's law. K & D put it, "in daring contempt of the commandments of God . . . the profanation of the holy name of God is represented as intentional, to bring out the daring character of the sin, and to show that it did not arise from weakness or ignorance, but was practiced with studious contempt of the holy God."

They literally defied God or man to punish them! Pusey says, "Men, satiated with ordinary sin seek incitement to sin, in its very horrors . . . Oppression of the poor, wronging the righteous, perverting the way of the meek, laid the soul open for any abomination." The truth of this has been exemplified in every generation (cf. Rom. 1:18ff) and is no less true in our own generation!

The rich men were taking the poor men's cloaks as collateral on loans. The cloak as a pledge was to be returned to the pledger before nightfall (Ex. 22:25) and a garment so taken was not to be slept upon (cf. Deut. 24:12-13). But the godless rich money lenders kept the cloaks of the poor and used them as blankets upon which they lay to rest at the feasts; and this they did by every altar, at sacrificial meals, in contempt of God and His law! Then, in further contempt of God and their fellow man they debauched themselves in drunken revelry, drinking wine they purchased from the fines collected from the poor; and this in the place where they claimed to worship God. Pusey sums it all up: "What hardheartedness to the willfully forgotten poor is compensated by a little churchgoing." They did all these things but they also went through certain religious rituals and so they eased their consciences. The nature of this conduct which is terrifying to anyone of moral conscience at all is its "intentional, daring, studious contempt of the holy God!" Most of it done in the name of religion and in the very buildings hallowed for worshipping the Deity! Is it any wonder that Amos was so vituperative and vitriolic in preaching the warnings of God to these indolent near-incorrigibles. There are centers of government and religion equally as corrupt today as in Amos' day. Let us know assuredly that God's wrath upon such rebellion has not changed. Amos' preaching is as contemporary as today's newspaper!

QUIZ

1. Why does Amos save Israel until last in announcing the warnings of God?
2. What is "selling the righteous for silver?"
3. What is "selling the needy for a pair of shoes?"
4. What is the meaning of "dust of the earth on the head of the poor?"
5. What is the nature of the sin in which father and son go into the same maiden?
6. What is wrong with some lying on clothes taken in pledge?
7. Could the preaching of Amos be used today? Where? How?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE COVENANT NATIONS—ISRAEL

TEXT: 2:9-12

- 9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.
- 10 Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.
- 11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah.
- 12 But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Phophesy not.

QUERIES

- a. Who were the Amorites and why refer to their height?
- b. Why mention the prophets and Nazirites?

PARAPHRASE

I remind you that it was I who cleared the promised land of the giant Amorites for you would not have been able to possess the land had I not done so. These Amorites, by your own admission, were too strong for you to overcome by yourself, yet I utterly exterminated this nation for you. I remind you that it was I who delivered you from your slavery in Egypt and sustained you forty years in the wilderness and gave you the land of the Amorite as your possession. I remind you that it was I who raised up some of your sons as My special messengers, prophets, who were empowered by My Spirit to reveal My word to you; and I raised up some of your sons to become Nazirites, especially holy men, to set before your eyes an example of your holy calling and to show you that I am able to give men the power to live holy lives. Is this not true, You children of the covenant? says the Lord. But instead of giving heed to these manifestations and examples of My holy will you held my word in contempt and caused the Nazirites to sin by tempting them to drink wine and you commanded My prophets to refrain from declaring My word!

SUMMARY

Amos makes a vivid contrast between the faithfulness of God toward Israel and Israel's unfaithful contempt of God's grace toward them.

COMMENT

v. 9 . . . DESTROYED I THE AMORITE BEFORE THEM . . . LIKE THE HEIGHT OF THE CEDARS . . . God delivered, led, sustained and fought for Israel. When Israel came to the borders of the Promised Land and sent men in to spy out the land the report came back that the people were as giants and the Israelites were like grasshoppers in comparison (cf. Num. 13:32-33) but God gave Israel victory and so completely overthrew the Amorites that they were eradicated. God removed them so thoroughly that they never were a nation again.

v. 10 ALSO I BROUGHT YOU UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND LED YOU FORTY YEARS . . . God nurtured Israel like a father and mother nurtures a child (cf. Hosea 11:1-4; Ezek. 16:4-8). When Israel was an unpitied, disorganized, unloved, nomadic tribe of slaves in Egypt, Jehovah God took them and pitied them, delivered them from their slavery, fed them, clothed them, protected them, gave them a Land, blessed them, and still they held Him in contempt. They forgot what they were before He blessed them! They took Him for granted! They became ungrateful, exactly as Moses warned them not to do (be sure to read the entire 8th chapter of Deuteronomy in this connection)! Ingratitude is, like its sister pride, one of the worst of sins!

v. 11-12 . . . I RAISED UP . . . PROPHETS . . . AND NAZIRITES . . . BUT YE GAVE THE NAZIRITES WINE TO DRINK . . . AND COMMANDED THE PROPHETS . . . PROPHECY NOT . . . Nothing demonstrated the grace of God so well as the fact that God raised up some men from among the covenant people to be His prophets, to deliver to the people the Light of Life, the Bread of Life, the Word of God. The patience and longsuffering of God waited upon the people through the prophets as He sent them to turn the prodigal nation from its rebellion, but the people would not! They commanded the prophets to cease their preaching (cf. Amos 7:12; I Kings 18:17; 19:1-3).

The verb *nazar* is used "to dedicate, consecrate, separate." The word *nazir*, translated Nazirite, is literally "one consecrated, devoted." This was the primary mission of the Nazirite—consecration—and to that end he dedicated himself either for life or for a brief period of time. Samson is an example of a man used by God in such a life. The pri-

mary concern of the Nazirite was to manifest his consecration to God by a particular manner of life, (cf. Num. 6:1-21). This life consisted of: (a) totally abstaining from products of the vine and all intoxicants; (b) refusing to cut their hair lest a man-made tool profane this god-given growth; (c) avoiding contact with the dead; and (d) declining unclean . . . food. So the Nazirite was given to the people to demonstrate by holy living what the prophet taught in precept. This does not mean, however, that the prophets themselves did not live godly lives—for they did. The Nazirite was to "set before the eyes of the people the object of their divine calling . . . to show them how the Lord wants them to be a holy people . . . also to show them how the Lord bestowed the power to carry out this object" (K & D). It was in the contempt and abuse of these gifts of grace that the ingratitude of Israel was shown in its worst light. Instead of listening to the prophets and living like the Nazirites and becoming the holy people God desired them to be, they tempted the Nazirites to break their vows and drink wine and they forbade the prophets to preach! Open, flagrant, impudent rebellion, this is sinning against knowledge, sinning "with a high hand," (cf. Num. 15:30-31); this is shaking the first against the Heavenly throne.

QUIZ

1. Why does Amos speak of the Amorites being as tall as cedars?
2. What should the people of Israel remember about their former condition?
3. What great sin were they guilty of?
4. What is a Nazirite? What purpose did he serve in the O.T. dispensation?
5. When one sins against the knowledge of God's will he has what kind of sin is it?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE COVENANT NATIONS—ISRAEL

TEXT: 2:13-16

- 13 Behold, I will press you in your place, as a cart presseth that is full of sheaves.
- 14 And flight shall perish from the swift; and the strong shall not strengthen his force; neither shall the mighty deliver himself;

- 15 neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself; neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself;
- 16 and he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. How will God "press them in their place, like a cart . . . full of sheaves?"
- b. What is the prophet telling the nation in vs. 14-16?

PARAPHRASE

Look, I am going to stop you in your tracks like a cart that is loaded too full of grain sheaves to move. The fastest runners will not have time to escape; the strength of the strong men will not avail; the great and influential will not escape; the long line of bowmen will give way; even the warriors mounted on horses shall be overcome! The bravest of the brave will only be able to make an ignominious escape by shedding his clothing by which the enemy might seize him!

SUMMARY

Israel will be paralyzed! None shall escape the judgement that is about to come.

COMMENT

v. 13 . . . PRESS YOU IN YOUR PLACE, AS A CART PRESSETH . . . FULL OF SHEAVES. Conjecture as to how this verse is to be interpreted is varied. Pusey says, "God bore His people, as the wain (cart) bears the sheaves . . . His longsuffering was, as it were, worn out by them . . . He was straitened under them, as the wain groans under the sheaves with which it is over-full." Laetsch says, "The threshing cart consisted of three or more rollers set in a heavy wooden frame surmounted by the driver's seat. These rollers were attached to wheels on the outside of the framework, and if either the wheels or the rollers were clogged by the sheaves of grain over which the sledge was drawn by oxen, the sledge was stopped from further progress until the obstructing sheaves had been removed." Lange says, "A more appropriate comparison is found in the pressure by which a threshing cart threshes the sheaves." K & D, say, "The comparison instituted here to the pressure of a cart filled with sheaves . . . the object of *press* is wanting, but may easily be supplied from the thought, namely, the ground over which the cart is driven."

We have chosen our own interpretation which we feel is warranted from the context. It would seem as if Amos is using the figure of a cart "stopped in its tracks" by being too full to pictorialize how God is going to "stop Israel in its tracks." Israel's military machinery, running smoothly under Jeroboam II (permitted by God), rolling on to victory, would suddenly be stopped by the Lord. Her facade of prosperity would be ripped from her. Disorder, confusion, panic, defeat, ruin, disaster was coming ever closer! Now she is "flying high"—soon she will be plunged into destruction!

v. 14-16 AND FLIGHT SHALL PERISH FROM THE SWIFT; . . . AND HE THAT IS COURAGEOUS AMONG THE MIGHTY SHALL FLEE AWAY NAKED IN THAT DAY . . . Now the prophet individualizes this national paralysis. The swiftest, strongest, bravest, ablest warriors will not be able to stand against God's judgment. The most courageous among the mighty will throw off his armor and his clothing and run for his life like a coward.

Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.), one of the greatest monarchs of antiquity, after capturing Samaria (capital of Israel), put on the throne as his vassal Hoshea, who had slain Pekah, king of Israel. With the death of Tiglath-pileser III, Hoshea decided to strike a blow for independence. Help was promised by the king of Egypt, but it did not come. Hoshea was made a prisoner, and the capital doomed to destruction, as the prophets foretold (Hos. 10:7-8; Isa. 28:1; Mic. 1:5-6). It was, however, only after a three years' siege that the city was captured. Before it fell, Shalmaneser had abdicated or died, and Sargon, who succeeded him, completed the conquest of the city and deported the inhabitants to Assyria (cf. II Kings 17-18). Not all of the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom were taken into captivity. The very poor, who would cause no trouble in the future, were left (II Kings 25:12). Intermarriage with the imported peoples resulted in the hybrid stock later known as the Samaritans. The Ten Tribes taken into captivity, sometimes called the Lost Tribes of Israel, must not be thought of as being absorbed by the peoples among whom they settled. Some undoubtedly were, but many others retained their Israelitish religion and traditions. Some became part of the Jewish dispersion, and others very likely returned with the exiles of Judah in 536 B.C. who were previously carried off into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in 606-586 B.C.

Israel, as a distinct nation, ceased to be, just as Amos and his prophet-successors warned. Any nation, no matter how blessed and privileged in the past, who contemptuously defies the laws of God and

shakes its fist at the throne of heaven must suffer the same annihilation!
Let all the nations of the earth take heed!

QUIZ

1. What does Amos intend Israel to see in the "cart pressed" down?
2. Would there not be some who would escape?
3. When did Israel's captivity come? Whom did God use to accomplish it? (cf. Isa. 10:5-19)
4. Is there a lesson to be learned by nations today from Israel?

PENITENCE PROMOTED—

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— THE LORD DOES NOT ROAR WITHOUT CAUSE

TEXT: 3:1-8

- 1 Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying,
- 2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.
- 3 Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?
- 4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?
- 5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all?
- 6 Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?
- 7 Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets.
- 8 The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?

QUERIES

- a. Doesn't God know any other people than Israelites?
- b. What is the message of the epigrams in verses 3-6?
- c. Does Jehovah reveal *every* thing He does to the prophets?

PARAPHRASE

Listen, you chosen people, to the indictment which the Lord brings against you—against all the covenant people which I brought up out of the land of Egypt! Be reasonable, and think: I chose you over all the other nations of the earth to grant special knowledge and privileges and you are unique in being blessed; it is logical, then, since you have openly defied Me and disobeyed Me that I should punish you with a special severity! Does not common sense tell you that when two people meet together at an appointed time and place there was a previous cause for such a meeting—an agreement to do so? Will a lion roar in the forest without cause—unless his prey is doomed? or will the young lion growl in his den if he has not taken his prey there for his feast? Does a bird ever get trapped unless someone places a trap there to catch it? or when you see a trap being sprung does it not indicate to you some cause behind its springing? What if the warning signal is blown on the trumpet in a city—will the people pay no attention to it and go on their way heedless? I have been blowing a warning trumpet in your ears over and over—do you not realize that the evils which have befallen you in the past were from Me as warnings? Most assuredly God will not visit His judgment upon anyone without first warning them by revealing it through His messengers. But I tell you truly, God has roared like a lion who is about to pounce on His prey—whoever does not fear is doomed! The Lord God has spoken! His prophet cannot remain silent—he must deliver the Lord's message!

SUMMARY

In a series of seven questions the Lord teaches a lesson in clear logical thinking in matters of sin and judgment, privilege and responsibility.

COMMENT

v. 1-2 HEAR THIS WORD . . . AGAINST THE WHOLE FAMILY WHICH I BROUGHT UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT . . . YOU ONLY HAVE I KNOWN . . . I WILL VISIT UPON YOU ALL YOUR INIQUITIES. God's indictment is against the whole covenant people. Judah has already been warned (2:4) that she will be judged. But for the moment this particular prophet is concerned with the northern kingdom, Israel. No other people on earth were, at that time, privileged to be the recipients of the grace of God and the oracles of God in such a measure as Israel. She was a favored nation in this respect. Much was given her, much was

expected! Romans 9, 10, 11 show in no uncertain terms that God's choice of Israel was not due to any necessary merit in the case of Israel whereby God owed it to them. Their special privilege came by the Divine sovereign choice of God. Their blessing was unmerited favor—grace! This unique distinction demanded from its very uniqueness a special obligation of reciprocal love and obedience on the part of Israel (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 4:5-8; 32:34; Psa. 147:19-20). With greater privilege comes more severe punishment if the obligations are despised (Lev. 26:14ff).

v. 3-6 SHALL TWO WALK TOGETHER, EXCEPT THEY HAVE AGREED?
... SHALL THE TRUMPET BE BLOWN IN A CITY, AND THE PEOPLE NOT BE AFRAID? SHALL EVIL BEFALL A CITY, AND JEHOVAH HATH NOT DONE IT? In a series of seven questions the Lord teaches a lesson in clear logical thinking in matters pertaining to sin-punishment relationships. Reason demands repentance! Verse 3 has often been quoted in treatises on "Unity." However, verse 3 has nothing to do with the subject of unity. It is simply an illustration of the universal law of cause and effect! Two people do not meet and walk together (effect) without previously making some appointment (cause) or arrangement to do so. Just so, says Amos, since every effect has its cause, your sin will cause God's judgment to come upon you due to the special relationship between you and God and even as God promised in His word.

These people of Israel had rationalized their sins so long they had lost the ability to see the very basic principle of cause and effect and to apply this to their relationship to God. But God is roaring like a lion—does a lion roar in the forest unless his victim is doomed? God does not roar without a cause any more than a lion does!

Birds caught in a snare logically demands that someone previously had set the snare. And when one sees a snare being sprung he must logically reason that something caused it to spring.

If a mighty blast of the warning trumpet is blown in the city do the people pay no attention to it? Do not all the disasters happening even now in your cities and villages sound a warning trumpet to you that God is beginning His judgment? How senseless and indifferent can this nation be? But, just like the unbelieving and scoffing today, Israel probably rationalized, "All these droughts, famines, disasters, wars are bound to happen in every country." But the prophet warns them, "Shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?" Local and national calamities *are not* due merely to natural causes, are not only the consequence of human mistakes, or faulty legislation, or political folly, or inadequate statesmanship. These and other matters may be secondary

or contributory causes. But the Prime Mover of this Universe is Jehovah God! He has done it (Isa. 45:1-7)! God is the author of both *weal and woe!* He does what He does from a just cause and for a just and merciful purpose. He does what He does from an omniscient sovereignty! The cause is man's sin, against which God has warned man time and again. The purpose is to warn man against rebelling against his Creator and to call the sinner to repentance, back to his God, the highest Good! Whatever the Lord does, whether tribulation or triumph, is good (Rom. 8:28) Incidentally, there is excellent manuscript evidence today that Romans 8:28 should be translated, "*God works all things together for good . . . etc.*," instead of "All things work together for good . . . etc." *This divine sovereignty working all things, weal and woe, together to serve His purposes, is one of the exhilarating thrusts of prophetic literature!*

v. 7-8 SURELY THE LORD . . . WILL DO NOTHING, EXCEPT HE REVEAL HIS SECRET UNTO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS . . . THE LORD . . . HATH SPOKEN; WHO CAN BUT PROPHECY? God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11-20); He is not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9); so He revealed His secret plans for the judgment of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous to His prophets (watchmen and shepherds) (Isa. 6; Jer. 1, etc.) and they revealed them to man as facts to be believed; commands to be obeyed; warnings to be heeded; promises to be enjoyed. In the sure word of prophecy we have a "light shining in a dark place," (II Pet. 1:16-21); in His word we have all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3-4); in His word we have doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, (II Tim. 3:16). So the Lord has roared; who is so insensible that he will not fear? God has spoken; how can God's messenger be silent? Even as Paul said, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel . . ." Necessity is laid upon every man called of God (and all Christians are called of God); the love of Christ should constrain every man (II Cor. 5:11-15) and knowing the fear of the Lord, we should persuade men! The Lord has spoken; who can but preach!

QUIZ

1. In what way did God "know" the covenant people?
2. What scriptures should they have known that promised severe punishment if they forgot His commandments?
3. What universal principle of reasoning is taught in verses 3-6?

4. Is God actually the author of woe? What scripture says so?
5. Why does God bring woe upon men?
6. In what way is God justified when He punishes men for their sins?
7. Why should men who know God's will speak to other men about it?

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— ISRAEL'S SINS ASTONISH EVEN THE HEATHEN

TEXT: 3:9-15

- 9 Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults are therein, and what oppression in the midst thereof.
- 10 For they know not to do right, saith Jehovah, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.
- 11 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: An adversary there shall be, even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be plundered.
- 12 Thus saith Jehovah: As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed.
- 13 Hear ye, and testify against the house of Jacob, saith the Lord Jehovah, the God of hosts.
- 14 For in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.
- 15 And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why "publish in the palaces" of the heathen the sins of Israel?
- b. Who will the "adversary" be?
- c. What are "winter and summer houses?"

PARAPHRASE

The Lord says to the prophets, Go to Ashdod, whom Israel regards as a godless heathen city, and go to Egypt where Israel saw and experienced the ungodliness of that people, and tell them to come and see

the overflowing excess of the sins and abominations of Israel. Tell these godless nations to come and be astonished at the godlessness of Israel where justice and righteousness is topsy-turvy. Israel does not even know how to do right. Her people are so eager to sin they pile one sin upon another in their palatial mansions like people storing up treasures. So, says the Lord, I will allow an enemy of Israel to surround her country and this enemy will bring upon Israel humiliating defeat and plundering and looting of Israel's treasures. Furthermore, all that will be left of Israel will be a few pieces like what a shepherd is able to gather up after a lion has taken one of his sheep for a meal. This is what will be left of all of Israel's luxurious trappings. Now, you heathen people, as you bear witness against Israel's profligacy, also listen to the judgment that the Great God of All The Universe is going to bring upon her. When I judge Israel I am going to especially overthrow her religion and show its impotence. I will completely tear down her altars at the very center of her religious worship in Bethel. I am going to make shambles out of all the ivory-inlaid palatial mansions—summer and winter houses—all these great houses shall come to an end, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

The heathen are called to testify that the sins of Israel are so great that the judgment God is about to bring will be more than just.

COMMENT

v. 9-10 PUBLISH YE . . . AT ASHDOD, AND IN . . . EGYPT . . . ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF SAMARIA, AND BEHOLD . . . TUMULTS . . . OPPRESSIONS . . . FOR THEY KNOW NOT TO DO RIGHT . . . K & D point out that these two heathen nations are called to "(1) see the acts of violence, and the abominations in the palaces of Samaria; and (2) . . . bear witness against Israel (ver. 13)." This, of course, implies that the sins of Israel are even worse than those of these heathen. Israel thought of the Philistines and the Egyptians as the worst of sinners. If such heathen as these are called to look upon the ungodliness of Israel, how great must have been her ungodliness! Everything was upside down. They were calling evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20). They had perverted every good thing into something evil. Justice and order were overthrown by open violence (shades of 20th century America)! When they refused to have God in their knowledge (Hosea 4:6; 5:15—6:3; 6:6; 7:1-7; 7:14-16), God gave them up (Rom. 1:18-32) and they became worse than the heathen—insensible

to practically everything that was right! They not only did not know how to do right they did not know they should do right! This is what disregard for the revelation of God leads to—idolatry, ignorance, licentiousness!

v. 11-12 . . . AN ADVERSARY THERE SHALL BE . . . THY PALACES SHALL BE PLUNDERED . . . AS THE SHEPHERD RESCUETH . . . TWO LEGS, OR A PIECE OF AN EAR, SO SHALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BE . . . Just who this enemy (adversary) will be God does not choose to announce through Amos. From prophets very nearly contemporary with Amos (Hosea, Isaiah), we learn that this enemy shall be Assyria. The enemy will surround their beautiful, luxurious country with all its ivory-inlaid palaces and mansions and tear it to pieces. Israel will be so completely destroyed that about all that will be left is a few pieces, like what is left of a sheep when a lion gets through with it! The rich, luxuriant pleasurable things the rich have gotten themselves by oppressing the poor will be taken away from them by the Assyrians. They will have nothing left!

v. 13-15 . . . TESTIFY AGAINST THE HOUSE OF JACOB . . . I WILL ALSO VISIT THE ALTARS OF BETH-EL; AND THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR SHALL BE CUT OFF . . . I WILL SMITE THE WINTER-HOUSE WITH THE SUMMER-HOUSE . . . Now the heathen are called to witness the punishment Jehovah is going to visit upon reprobate Israel. *Jacob* is a term used (cf. Hosea 10:11) along with Israel, Ephraim and Samaria, to signify the northern kingdom. It may be, however, as K & D say, "Jacob is the whole of Israel, of the twelve tribes, as in ver. 1; for Judah was also to learn a lesson from the destruction of Samaria." The smiting off of the horns of the altar signifies the complete destruction of the altar. It may also have this special significance: the four horns on the four corners of the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:2), to which the sacrificial blood was applied (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 4:25-34; 8:15), were symbolic of sure, reliable forgiveness and salvation. To these horns clung the guilty transgressors for safety (I Kings 1:50ff; 2:28-38; Ex. 21:14). So, even the symbols of salvation were to be torn off the altars of Bethel, which had neither God's permission nor promise, no right of existence, no authority to forgive sins, no power to save. Though nominally built in honor of Jehovah, they were tangible evidence of Israel's rebellion, an abomination in the eyes of the Lord. The Lord will strike down Bethel, the very heart of Israel's religion. He will wipe out this vain, idolatrous religion from the land. Together with the altar at Bethel, He will tear down the luxurious homes of the rich and great built by the blood, sweat and tears of the oppressed poor. They had built them-

selves winter-houses and summer-houses. Ahab's palace at Jezreel evidently was his summer home (I Kings 21:1; II Kings 9:30ff). These homes were expensive with walls and furniture inlaid with costly ivory. These wicked and powerful rich (their power was dependent upon their riches) will be stripped of the riches in which they so vainly trusted. They would be powerless, destitute, prisoners! How foolish men are to seek satisfaction, joy, power in the fleeting, temporal, vain *things* of this temporal existence. We are reminded of Solomon (Ecclesiastes) and the Foolish Farmer in Luke twelve!

QUIZ

1. What does the calling of the heathen nations point out concerning the extent of Israel's sin?
2. What happens to people when they refuse to have God in their knowledge?
3. What did Amos mean to say to Israel by the figure of a shepherd rescuing pieces of his sheep?
4. What did tearing off the horns of the altars of Bethel signify?
5. Why would the people of Israel especially feel the loss of their luxurious homes?

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S HOLINESS DEMANDS PUNISHMENT FOR EVIL

TEXT: 4:1-5

- 1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, that oppress the poor, that crush the needy, that say unto their lords, Bring, and let us drink.
- 2 The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your residue with fish-hooks.
- 3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight before her; and ye shall cast yourselves into Harmon, saith Jehovah.
- 4 Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days;
- 5 and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill-offerings and publish them: for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Who is Amos calling "kine" of Bashan?
- b. How would Israel be taken away "with hooks?"
- c. Is the prophet authorizing the people to transgress?

PARAPHRASE

Listen to Me, you fat cows of Bashan living in Israel—you sensuous women who encourage your husbands to rob and oppress the poor and crush the needy—you debauched women who nag your husbands to supply you with intoxicants: The Lord God affirms most certainly that by His holiness which cannot tolerate unrighteousness, He is bringing days of judgment upon you. Your enemies will come and violently tear you away from your place of comfort and ease just as a fisherman hooks a fish and takes it out of its natural habitat. You will be taken prisoner out of your city not through the gates because they will have been destroyed; no, you will go out through the great gaping holes in the walls of your city. And because of your sins you will have thrown yourselves into captivity toward Hermon. God ahead and sacrifice to idols at Bethel and Gilgal; if you offer slain sacrifices every morning, and tithe every three days you only multiply your apostasy from the living God. You have so completely perverted true religion that you think you can, by your excessive zeal in offering even leavened sacrifices and by legally commanding "freewill" offerings, continue on in your sins, fooling the Holy God. This is not because you don't know what God's holiness means, but because you love to do evil.

SUMMARY

God's holy nature, which they knew but refused to live up to, warns them of the impending judgment upon their unholiness.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . YE KINE OF BASHAN . . . THAT SAY UNTO THEIR LORDS, BRING, AND LET US DRINK. Most commentators feel that Amos is referring to the sensuous women of Israel when he calls them "cows of Bashan." Bashan was noted for its fat, sleek, cattle well-fed on Bashan's luxurious pasture lands (cf. Deut. 32:14; Micah 7:14; Num. 32). These indulgent women were pampered by their husbands (lord) who in turn had to oppress the poor and crush the needy to supply their wives with the means of debauchery, (cf. Amos 6:1-7). Compare Isa. 3:16ff and

32:9-13 for further description of the wantonness of the women of Israel. There are many "cows of Bashan" today in the world. Sensuous women who tempt their husbands to evil scheming in order that they may have the means to continue in their libertine living.

v. 2-3 THE LORD . . . HATH SWORN BY HIS HOLINESS . . . THEY SHALL TAKE YOU AWAY WITH HOOKS . . . YE SHALL CAST YOURSELVES INTO HARMON . . . These poor and needy have no recourse for justice. They are exploited even by the judges who should stand for justice. But the Lord, because He is holy, righteous, just, merciful, rises up as their Vindicator. The Perfect Holiness of Jehovah cannot tolerate evil (Psa. 5:4-5; 11:5), especially in a people whose call and blessing was that they should be a holy people! The rich of Israel were making no attempt to be holy in their living. We must be holy if we wish to be in communion with God (cf. Rom. 6:19; Heb. 12:14; Isa. 6:3; Col. 3:12; I Pet. 1:15-16; 2:5; II Pet. 3:11, etc.). We like the way John wrote it, "Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous," (I Jn. 3:7). There is the imputed holiness God gives us through what Christ accomplished on our behalf; on the other hand there is a holiness of living and thinking which we ourselves must work—motivated and energized, of course, by that holiness of His which He freely bestows upon us through the Gospel.

Because of their unholiness God would allow their enemy (the Assyrians) to come and violently "jerk" them out of their luxurious fish-bowl like a man who hooks a fish jerks it out of the water. They will be violently torn from their pleasant surroundings and caused to flounder and thresh in agony as a fish out of water. Amos is not referring to rings literally placed in the ears and noses of slaves, as was the custom then, but he is simply describing the sudden and awful change of circumstances that are about to come upon these debauched rich.

The gates of their cities will be so utterly destroyed and piled high with debris from war's destructive forces and their walls so completely torn down that the people will be marched off to captivity through the great gaping holes in the walls instead of the gates. These people of Israel, because of their sins, brought upon themselves this captivity. They are said to have cast themselves into this foreign land "Harmon" (which most translators believe is the territory beyond Mt. Hermon, or Damascus and beyond.)

v. 4-5 COME TO BETH-EL, AND TRANSGRESS; TO GILGAL, AND MULTIPLY TRANSGRESSION; . . . SACRIFICE EVERY MORNING . . . TITHES EVERY THREE DAYS . . . SACRIFICE THAT WHICH IS LEAVENED . . . PROCLAIM FREEWILL-OFFERINGS . . . FOR THIS PLEASETH YOU . . .

Amos uses the figure of speech called *irony* here to show Israel the folly of her sins. Irony is a "kind of ridicule which exposes the errors or faults of others by seeming to adopt, approve, or defend them . . ." Other examples of the use of irony in the Bible are Job. 12:2; I Kings 18:27; Eccl. 11:9; Judges 10:14; I Kings 22:15; I Cor. 4:8. Amos was *not* approving or authorizing the people to sin! He as much as says, "Go ahead and do the sins you are doing, you are only multiplying God's displeasure with you in so doing!" They were "presuming upon the forbearance and patience of God . . . and by their hard and impenitent heart *storing up* wrath for themselves . . ." (cf. Rom. 2:4-5).

They had so perverted true religion of Jehovah they thought that by their superabundance of offerings they could fool God into thinking they were righteous. They did not stop with offering sacrifices of unleavened cakes upon the altar; to make sure they offered an abundance they even offered some of the leavened cakes (forbidden by the Mosaic law) as well. Not only this but the offerings which were supposed to be motivated out of a purely spontaneous impulse (freewill-offerings) (cf. Lev. 22:18ff; Deut. 12:6) they forced from people by making laws regarding "freewill offerings!" This was entirely the wrong attitude toward the Holy One of Israel, for He looks not on the outward man but upon the heart! Isaiah just a few short years later brought scathing denunciation against such conduct (Isa. 1:1ff). Israel is less sensible than the ass or the ox! They do not know God! But this is not because God has not revealed Himself—not because they have no opportunity to know Him—not because He is unknowable! No; they love to have it so! This type of religion pleases them. It soothes their consciences. Men who do evil, hate the light and love the darkness, because their deeds are evil and if they should come to the light their deeds would be exposed—then they would see how utterly vain and foolish their deeds are (cf. Jn. 3:18-21). Any man who thinks God is pleased with a trust in forms and rituals is foolish. Of course, there are certain specific forms of doctrine which we are obliged, by the very nature God Himself (holy, loving, trustworthy, omnipotent) to perform. But our faith is not in the act or rite itself but in the Person who commanded it! Again, if we refuse to do the thing which God has clearly commanded in the New Testament, it simply shows we do not trust the Person who commanded it—we trust our own wisdom more! On the

other hand, a mere perfunctory repetition of rituals does not necessarily mean we trust God the Person either. Sooner or later, just how much we trust Him, love Him and want to be like Him shows up in our daily living! This was true of Israel then, and it is true of all men now. For a list of Old Testament saints who trusted God and what that trust led them to do, see Hebrews, the eleventh chapter.

QUIZ

1. What does the phrase "kine of Bashan" describe?
2. Where did their "lords" get the "drink" demanded by these "cows of Bashan?"
3. Why does the Lord swear by "His holiness" that they shall be judged?
4. Why would they "go out at the breaches?"
5. To what extent had these people perverted the worship of God?
6. Why is God not pleased with mere repetition of religious ritual?

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— CHASTENING IN THE PAST SHOULD MAKE THEM THINK

TEXT: 4:6-11

- 6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.
- 7 And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.
- 8 So two or three cities wandered into one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.
- 9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-trees hath the palmerworm devoured: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.
- 10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have made the stench of your camp to come up even into your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.

- 11 I have overthrown cities among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. What is "cleanness of teeth?"
- b. Is God still responsible for famine, drought, war, as in Amos' day?
- c. What does Amos mean that Israel was "a brand plucked out of the burning?"

PARAPHRASE

I have tried all means of turning you to me, yet you love to persist in your wickedness. I have brought famine and starvation upon this nation and yet you have not returned unto me, says the Lord. I have caused drought; I have withheld the latter rain (three months before the harvest) which is sorely needed for the proper maturing of the crops. On the other hand, in order to show you even more clearly that the sending and withholding of rain belongs to Me, I have caused it to rain here and there, upon one town and one field, and not upon others. This caused such drought that the people of the areas where it had not rained were forced fainting of thirst to stagger great distances for their supplies of water, and then couldn't get enough to supply their needs; yet you did not return unto me, says the Lord. I smote your grain crops with blight and dry-rot; I sent locusts to strip and devour your orchards; yet you have not returned unto Me, says the Lord. I have sent among you all the diseases of Egypt; I have caused your young men to be slain in wars; I have caused your war horses to be slain; I have caused the stench of the slain to come into your nostrils as a reminder of your sins; yet you have not returned unto me, says the Lord. I have brought you to the verge of complete destruction as when I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and you were left destitute of everything like brands plucked out of the fire; yet you did not return unto me, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

The prophet calls Israel's attention to past judgments of God in an attempt to get them to repent. These judgments took place at different times all during Israel's history. Amos has arranged them in climactic form.

COMMENT

v. 6 . . . I . . . HAVE GIVEN YOU CLEANNES OF TEETH . . . AND WANT OF BREAD . . . The phrase "cleanness of teeth," means lack of food as is evident from the parallel "want of bread." This is what God told the people through Moses in Deut. 28:47-57. This is fulfilled in II Kings 6:24-31. A mother eating the flesh of her own child is recorded also by Josephus in his account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Romans. God's judgments are sure! Not one word of His will fall to the ground unfulfilled! Yet Israel did not repent!

v. 7-8 . . . I . . . HAVE WITHHOLDEN RAIN FROM YOU . . . AND CAUSED IT TO RAIN UPON ONE CITY . . . AND . . . NOT UPON ANOTHER . . . TWO OR THREE CITIES WANDERED UNTO ONE CITY TO DRINK . . . AND WERE NOT SATISFIED . . . At times God withheld rain as a call for the people of Israel to repent (cf. Lev. 26:19-20; Deut. 28:23). The rains which were withheld in this particular case were the so-called "latter rains" (three months before harvest). These rains fall in the latter half of February and the first half of March and are of the greatest importance to the development of the grain crops. Thus when the drought came, the crops failed. This is a matter of record in I Kings 8:35-36; II Kings 17-18; Isa. 5-6; Jer. 14, etc. But in order to show man even more clearly that He uses natural forces and that their sending and withholding belong to Him, God caused it to rain on one village and another village, while at the same time other villages received no rain at all. Rivers and wells dried up in these latter areas and the people had to travel long distances for their water supply and even then could not get enough to satisfy their needs. The word "wander" comes from an original word which means literally "to stagger, to totter," and pictures the people staggering, almost fainting with thirst, as they go from village to village in search of water! Yet Israel did not see the hand of God in these tribulations—they felt no chastening—they heard no call to repentance!

v. 9 . . . SMITTEN YOU WITH BLASTING AND MILDEW . . . YOUR . . . VINEYARDS . . . HATH THE PALMERWORM DEVoured . . . Their grain fields were either burned up by the "blasting" hot and dry winds or they were rotted by mildew (cf. Gen. 41:6, 27; Deut. 28:22). Their gardens and orchards were gnawed and stripped bare by the locusts (cf. Joel 1:4; 2:25; Deut. 28:39).

v. 10 . . . SENT AMONG YOU THE PESTILENCE AFTER THE MANNER OF EGYPT . . . I HAVE MADE THE STENCH OF YOUR CAMP TO COME UP . . . INTO YOUR NOSTRILS . . . God sent among the people of Israel many diseases in epidemic form "after the manner" that He had done in the days of Moses to Egypt (cf. Lev. 26:25; Deut. 28:60; Isa. 10:24; Ezek. 20:30). The Roman historian Pliny has called Egypt, "the mother of contagious diseases," because of the many epidemics arising there even in his day. God sent wars upon Israel. Often times, in crowded, unsanitary military camps epidemics took their toll along with the slain of the battlefields so that sword and sickness decimated the ranks of Israel's young, virile men who were the hope of the nation. The slain warriors and the slain battle-horses sometimes filled the air with that sickening stench of rotting flesh which is at times unbearable. But even this horrible stench did not remind them of their sins! For a record of Israel's decimation in war see II Kings 8:12; 13:3, 7.

v. 11 I HAVE OVERTHROWN CITIES AMONG YOU, AS . . . SODOM AND GOMORRAH . . . YE WERE AS A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE BURNING . . . Amos mentions this last judgment of God, not because it is last chronologically, but because it furnishes the prophet with a literary vehicle called "climax." Amos' list of five judgments of the Lord are given in an emotional ascension whereby a climax is reached at the last. The Lord has also called Israel to repentance by sending destructions upon her cities similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Israel was brought to the verge of utter ruin and overthrow more than once and was only saved like a firebrand snatched at the last moment from the consuming flames of the fire (cf. Zech. 3:2). See II Kings 13:4, 7 for the devastation of the land (cf. Isa. 1:9 also).

Predicting the future was not, as many suppose it to have been, the primary function of the prophet. The supreme task of the prophet was to interpret the events of history in the light of the will and purpose of God. The prophets saw the hand of God in the events of daily life and this they saw by the divine leading of the Holy Spirit within them (I Pet. 1:10-12; II Pet. 1:16-21). They sought to answer the pressing questions confronted in man's struggle with the totality of life. How was God related to the turbulent events of the world in the time of Amos? What was the relationship between the calamities, the crises, and the disappointments in life to the will of God? These same questions are asked today and may be answered by the same principles proclaimed by these Spirit-filled prophets! A correlation of

history and the divine will is a crying, personal problem in every age. How does one relate the divine will and the wars, epidemics, tragedies, famines and other like calamities in the twentieth century? The prophets of Israel would give little support to the modern protest that "the church ought to preach the gospel and leave everything else alone." For the prophets, the message of God was so interwoven into the fabric of daily life that the two could not be separated.

The underlying principle of all prophetic literature is the fact that judgment in history has a redemptive purpose. It is intended to cause man to see his desperate need for God, and subsequently to turn to His fellowship and communion. In the use of these disasters as a form of judgment, one is confronted with the most important aspect of the entire problem of God's will and natural calamity. The most significant point to consider is not the ultimate or secondary source, a full explanation of the justice of such deeds, or even an attempt to exonerate God. The most important consideration is that of man's response to such catastrophe. Do acts of this kind lead to a new awareness of God's sovereignty? Do they result in a new committal on the part of man to God. This is the significant element! Such calamities serve to cause man to recognize his finitude in the face of an overwhelming disaster, thereby opening the way for repentance and communion with God. Let all men know that the point of emphasis should be placed ultimately, not upon reason, but upon response. As Amos did, so must modern man consider as of primary significance the nature of his response to catastrophe. The moral reason behind such events, while important, must remain inexplicable. We cannot explain them perfectly but we can act in the light of them.

In view of this, history should serve to make man aware of his own dependence. Catastrophe should draw man near to the heart of God in an ever deepening communion. May it never be said that the catastrophes of history failed to draw this generation nearer to God. May it never be said, "Yet you did not return to me."

For further study on this subject we refer you to our Special Study, "The Prophetic Philosophy of History," and comments on similar passages from the five prophetic books treated in this commentary. See also our notes on Joel 2:1-11 in this commentary.

Naturally, the question will be asked, what of the righteous who must suffer at the same time God's catastrophic natural disasters are occurring? There are at least three biblical principles by which we may understand the so-called "suffering of the righteous." In the first place,

all the righteousness of the righteous is purely relative. That is, all our righteousness is as filthy rags relative to God's perfect righteousness, therefore we deserve *more* suffering than we endure here on earth no matter how good we are. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and we are only accounted as righteous by the grace of God which we appreciate by faith. If God were only just—if He paid us in kind for our behaviour—we would suffer worse than we do! Secondly, for the true saint of God, in both O.T. and New Testament times, suffering, trial, tribulation all serve to strengthen and purify. The Hebrew epistle has a great deal to say about this second principle. One of the most significant passages is: "For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised" Heb. 10:36. Then, there is the passage in Hebrews 12:3-11, of course. (Consider also these passages: II Cor. 1:3-11; 12-7; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-19, etc.). Thirdly, if the innocent be caused to suffer and die with the guilty remember these words, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" Rev. 14:13; and, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" Psa. 116:15. Compare also II Cor. 4:16-18; II Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:21-24. We cannot understand, perhaps, but God has revealed enough of His governing principles that we should be able by faith to accept His sovereign will and look forward in hope to the consummation of all things. Why should the innocent baby of David and Bathsheba die because of their sin? Why should the man be born blind in order that the glory of God might be shown through him (Jn. 9)? Why should the faithful Jews be taken into captivity with the unfaithful ones? God has not told us all the "whys" but He has told us some of them—enough for us to make a response, a commitment in faith.

QUIZ

1. When did Israel suffer from famine and to what extent did they suffer?
2. When did Israel suffer from drought?
3. Why did God, even in drought times, cause it to rain in some places?
4. Why send pestilences "after the manner of Egypt?"
5. How was Israel "plucked out of the burning . . . ?"
6. How did Amos interpret or relate these disasters to the will of God?
7. What three principles explain, in part, the suffering of the righteous along with the wicked?

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S CHARACTER AND WILL REVEALED

TEXT: 4:12-13

- 12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.
- 13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth; Jehovah, the God of hosts, is his name.

QUERIES

- a. How is Israel to "prepare to meet" its God?
- b. Whose "thought" does Jehovah declare to man?

PARAPHRASE

On account of your impenitence, O Israel, I am about to visit you with great and terrible judgment. Therefore, now, while there is time, prepare to avert your doom by repenting when you meet your God in judgment. Remember, the One you are going to meet in judgment is Lord of all the universe; He is the One who created the mountains and the winds; He is the one who, through His prophets, reveals to men the thoughts and intents of their hearts and He judges by the secret thoughts of the heart as well as by the outward actions. He is the one who created, who sustains and who controls the universe. Jehovah, the Omnipotent and Omniscient One, is His name!

SUMMARY

Israel, in light of her past hard-heartedness, is warned to prepare to meet the Lord of the universe in judgment.

COMMENT

v. 12 . . . PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL . . . This is one of those electrifying phrases so characteristic of the prophets. It has been repeated over and over through the centuries by preachers, who, like Amos, and Paul the apostle after him, "knowing the terror of the Lord, would fain persuade men!" Due to Israel's past impenitence when called to repent by national disasters, the coming judgment, if impenitence persists, will be so terrible God does not even choose to delineate it. But this blunt, piercing statement is a last call of God to His "called

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE 4:12,13

out ones" to perfect themselves in holiness. He does not say to them "prepare to meet your doom" as if their doom were irrevocably sealed, but, "prepare (that is, get yourself ready by repenting) to avert your doom." We are reminded of Jesus' warnings (Mark 13:32-37, etc.). We are also reminded of the perverted, ignorant bliss of these people of Israel who said they were actually looking forward to the Day of Jehovah (cf. Amos 5:18ff). They were wilfully ignorant of their sin and thus blissfully ignorant of what the Day of Jehovah would mean when it came. For them, if they did not repent, they would meet their God in darkness, not light!

v. 13 . . . JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF HOSTS, IS HIS NAME . . . Israel is reminded that they are not dealing with one of the impotent gods of the nations of whom they had grown so fond. Idolatry (ancient or modern) is convenient! When one creates his own gods he may manipulate his god to serve his own purposes. One may shelve it, gag it, blindfold it and even destroy it at will. One need not fear it nor feel any responsibility to it. But with Jehovah it is as different as light is from dark! He is the omnipotent Creator; He is the omniscient Revealer; He is the beneficent Sustainer. God is the searcher of the heart (Jer. 17:10; Psa. 139:2). Israel is reminded that when they meet their God, and meet Him they surely will for He is not a weak, man-made god, unable to bring His word to pass, He will judge their innermost secret thoughts and intentions (cf. Heb. 4:12; I Sam. 16:7). He is Lord of the universe; He commands all the heavenly and earthly hosts (Psa. 103:20ff) and every creature and creation must reckon with Him! Let the nature of God call you to repentance, O Israel, both then and now!

QUIZ

1. What did Amos intend to say to Israel by "prepare to meet thy God . . .?"
2. What did the people of Israel think about the coming Day of Jehovah?
3. Why did Amos elaborate on the nature of God in this context?

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S WORD AGAINST ISRAEL

TEXT: 5:1-5

- 1 Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel.

- 2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is cast down upon her land; there is none to raise her up.
- 3 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: The city that went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went forth a hundred shall have ten left, to the house of Israel.
- 4 For thus saith Jehovah unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live;
- 5 but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.

QUERIES

- a. Who is "the virgin of Israel?"
- b. Why only 1/10th left in each city?
- c. Why is "Beer-sheba" mentioned in company with Bethel and Gilgal?

PARAPHRASE

Listen, O house of Israel, to this mournful funeral dirge which I have begun to chant over you! You were destined from the beginning to be kept inviolate from heathen invaders like a virgin is kept chaste, but you shall be ravaged and die a violent death and there will be none to save you. For the Lord God says, Every city of Israel which marches out to war will be so utterly destroyed that only a small remnant of people will survive in each city. Again, the Lord says unto Israel, There is still time—Seek Me and live; seek the idolatrous places and ways of Bethel and Gilgal, or make a pilgrimage to the idols at Beersheba, and you will go into captivity and become nothingness just as these idolatrous cities are to become!

SUMMARY

Amos wants to impress even more dramatically before Israel her headlong rush into ruin, destruction and captivity. He does so by setting before Israel Jehovah God as the Fountain head of life and the destiny of the centers of idolatry.

COMMENT

v. 1-2 . . . A LAMENTATION OVER YOU . . . THE VIRGIN OF ISRAEL IS FALLEN . . . Amos the prophet, on behalf of God, begins chanting Israel's funeral dirge. And this at the very apex of her prosperity! One

can surely visualize with what unpopularity Amos' preaching would be greeted in Israel! He is mocked, ridiculed and slandered as a preacher of "doom" and a pessimist. The phrase "virgin of Israel," is a "poetical personification of the population of a city or of a kingdom, as a daughter," with a further idea of being unconquerable expressed by the term "virgin." God had intended Israel's destiny to be one of separateness from the heathen world and as a result He would keep her inviolate from foreign invaders. Israel was to be pure, chaste, protected, untouched—but now she has played the harlot and she will be attacked, ravaged and brought to a violent end! For other figurative uses of "virgin" in this same sense see Isa. 47:1-2, etc. When God gives her up to be spoiled by foreign invaders there will be none to help her!

v. 3-5 . . . THE CITY THAT WENT FORTH A THOUSAND SHALL HAVE A HUNDRED LEFT . . . SEEK YE ME, AND YE SHALL LIVE . . . BUT SEEK NOT BETH-EL, NOR . . . GILGAL . . . BEER-SHEBA . . . Amos is not attempting to be mathematically precise when he predicts that only ten per cent of each city will be saved from total destruction, he is merely speaking figuratively (cf. Isa. 6:13) to say that only a very small remnant of the whole nation will be saved from utterly perishing. This was fulfilled exactly (cf. II Kings 17). Such total ruin would, of course, be the farthest thing from the minds of most of the people of Israel in these days of peace, luxury, prosperity and influence. Much like the people of the Roman empire just before its fall was the attitude of the people of Israel. We are fearful that there are many Americans who cannot see the danger signs in our generation—crime, government corruption, lewdness, selfishness, anarchy, and perversion of standards in almost every avenue of life from sex to art and music to law and order!

Yet God pleads with Israel once more. Seek Me, and live! Jehovah is the Spring of Life (cf. Jer. 2:13; Psa. 36: 10); He is longsuffering and does not take pleasure in the death of any of His creatures (cf. Ezek. 18:31-32; II Pet. 3:9). But Jehovah can only be sought and found through His revelation! They will not find Him at Bethel or Gilgal or Beersheba. These are centers of idolatry, false teaching, false worship; they will find there only ruin, destruction and captivity for that is what God has planned for these places! Beersheba, although in Judah the southern kingdom, is mentioned evidently because, being sacred to Jewish history (Gen. 21:33; 26:24; 46:1) it had been made into a place of idolatrous worship, to which people of the northern kingdom went on pilgrimages frequently.

Irresponsible conduct, whether within or without the religious structures of the day, cannot continue unabated without experiencing inevitable retribution. This is a moral law of the universe just as inevitable as any physical "law of nature!" If man will not hear the word of God warning of judgment in His revelation, it is only left for man to experience that judgment in history. Amos proclaimed that Israel was dead! The people did not know it, nor did they want to know it (7:10ff)! Although Israel continued to flourish for almost forty years after Amos' prophecy before national extinction came, yet, for all practical purposes, she was dead when Amos was preaching; thus he speaks of her future as if it were already present. Is it only extreme pessimism to say, "America is dead?" Could there be any parallel between Israel's condition and America's? If so, there must be a parallel looked for in their destinies! Perhaps it is not yet too late for America, even as it was not too late for Israel. Perhaps if America will seek Jehovah in His revelation—His word—she will find Him and live. Only let her not seek life in the many idols her people have made for there she will find only false teaching, false worship and death!

QUIZ

1. What is a "lamentation" and why did Amos begin one over Israel?
2. Why did he refer to Israel as a "fallen virgin?"
3. Why make a contrast between seeking Jehovah and Bethel, Gilgal or Beersheba?
4. Could there be a parallel between Israel's condition and America's?

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE AND OMNISCIENCE

TEXT: 5:6-13

- 6 Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour and there be none to quench it in Beth-el.
- 7 Ye who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth,
- 8 seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; (Jehovah is his name;)
- 9 that bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress.

- 10 They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.
- 11 Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.
- 12 For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins; ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate from their right.
- 13 Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time.

QUERIES

- a. What is turning justice to "wormwood"?
- b. What is turning the "shadow of death into the morning?"
- c. Why shall the prudent keep silence?

PARAPHRASE

Again I say to you, Israel, Seek the Lord and live or else He will leap like devouring fire through your nation and consume her, and none of the false gods of Bethel will be able to stop Him. You evil men who turn justice into a bitter pill for the poor and oppressed, righteousness is trampled into the dust by you; you had better seek the Great Creator, the Omnipotent One, who created the Seven Stars and the constellation Orion; He is omnipotent also in His government of the universe for He turns the deepest misery into prosperity and light or turns the bright day of prosperity into the dark night of adversity; He calls to the waters of the sea to pour themselves over the earth in terrible floods to judge the wicked and no strong man and no fortress can defy Him for He is the Omnipotent God, Jehovah! Any man who dares to stand for righteousness and justice is hated. You may have built great houses but you will not live in them; you may have planted pleasant vineyards but you will never enjoy even the first wine that is produced by them; all because you have oppressed the poor and unjustly extorted measurements of wheat from them as bribes for the evil judges. I am the Omniscient One and I know the multitude of your transgressions and the magnitude of your sins; you make war on those who want to be just, you pervert justice by taking bribes and you refuse to help those who are needy and seek redress of wrong. On account of this time of wide-spread moral corruption, the man who plays it smart will be silent since all speaking and warning brings persecution.

SUMMARY

God, through the prophet Amos, reveals the corruption of the Israelites thus displaying His omniscience and contrasts that with His omnipotence in creation and government. This adds force to the warning and the predictions of judgment.

COMMENT

v. 6 SEEK JEHOVAH, AND YE SHALL LIVE; LEST HE BREAK OUT LIKE FIRE . . . The prophet repeats his call to the people that Jehovah (which includes His Word for this is where He has revealed His person and His will) is their source of life. To turn to Him is the only alternative to inevitable destruction. If they do not seek Him (where He is supposed to be sought) He will "break out" like a fire, He will become a roaring inferno which will consume the whole nation of Israel (house of Joseph) and none of their false gods and false religious practices at Bethel will be able to stop the judgment; they are powerless, they are dumb (cf. Isa. 41:21-29; 44:6-20). He is omnipotent; He has the authority and power to grant life or He has the authority and power to take it away. Israel must choose the alternative course from the one she is now following if she would have life.

v. 7-9 YE . . . TURN JUSTICE TO WORMWOOD . . . SEEK HIM THAT MAKETH THE PLEIADES . . . AND . . . SHADOW OF DEATH INTO . . . MORNING . . . AND MAKETH THE DAY DARK WITH NIGHT . . . THAT CALLETH FOR THE WATERS OF THE SEA . . . THAT BRINGETH SUDDEN DESTRUCTION . . . Wormwood is a species of plant related to our western sagebrush. It was the oriental source of a much used oil obtained from the dried leaves and tops of the plant. Absinthe, a liqueur, the continuous use of which leads to mental deterioration and even death, derives its flavor from this oil (cf. Lam. 3:15, 19). The plant is a symbol of bitterness. The rich and powerful of Israel had perverted justice (that which is supposed to be sweet, pure, refreshing and vital) into bitterness and rotteness. They were wiping their feet on every semblance of right—they had trampled it down to the ground. It is difficult to imagine a society so corrupt. Yet history records other eras just as corrupt (e.g. last days of Roman empire; Dark Ages). In certain areas of our big cities justice is just as severely perverted. But again, the Lord appeals to the people on the basis of His omnipotence. Contrasted with their present condition of being in the darkness of sin, He, who made the starry heavens is able to turn their deepest misery into the glorious light of morning. He is also able to take what may appear to their sin-seared consciences as prosperity and turn it into a dark night

of adversity. This calls to our mind the sublime statement of God's sovereignty in Isaiah 45:5-7: "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I gird you, though you do not know me, that men may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the Lord, who do all these things." This passage is in a context where God, through Isaiah, is foretelling (by approximately 200 years before his birth) of the service Cyrus, future king of Persia, is going to render to God and His people! Blessing and curse both come from the Lord to serve His sovereign purposes—it is up to man to choose which he will have! Yes, He even commands the seas and the rivers and brings about the catastrophic floods with sudden destruction upon wickedness. Man will never build a fortress, a bomb shelter, or an underground command complex strong enough to withstand the hand of the Omnipotent God!

v. 10-12 THEY HATE HIM THAT REPROVETH IN THE GATE . . . YE HAVE BUILT HOUSES OF HEWN STONE, BUT YE SHALL NOT DWELL IN THEM . . . FOR I KNOW HOW MANIFOLD ARE YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS . . . Now the omniscience of the Lord is revealed. He is not blind and deaf! He knows both the multitude and the magnitude of their sins. They despise anyone who takes a stand for righteousness and justice. The only persons they like are those who trample and oppress the poor and demand bribes for judgments. This reminds us of the words of Jesus, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world . . . therefore the world hates you" (Jn. 15:19). "Birds of a feather, flock together!" From their "blood money" they have built magnificent plantations—great houses and rich vineyards. How many tears and moans of the starving went into the ill-gotten gain of the rich and influential one can only guess! They have built them, but they shall not dwell in them—they shall not enjoy the harvest of their vineyards. The Lord will fulfill His threat (Deut. 28:30; Micah 6:15; Zeph. 1:13), for He *knows* the arrogance and evil of the rich and He hears the groans and supplications of the oppressed.

There are two false concepts the people had of Jehovah God. First, they believed He could be worshiped apart from His own revelation of Himself. Second, they believed that their conduct toward their fellow man had no bearing on their relationship to God. These are *exactly* the two main concepts John the apostle deals with in his First epistle, (cf. I Jn. 2:3-4; 2:9-11; 3:11-18; 3:19-24; 4:1-6; 4:7-12; 4:20-21, etc.). We must seek God, that is we must learn about Him,

obey Him and worship Him, only as we are guided by His revelation of Himself in His delivered Word. At the same time we must love men as He loves them. To turn aside the needy manifests a hatred of God regardless of how many worship rituals we may observe!

v. 13 THEREFORE HE THAT IS PRUDENT SHALL KEEP SILENCE IN SUCH A TIME . . . It is difficult for us to understand this as a divine injunction. In the light of Amos' actions in not remaining silent and the many exhortations in both Old and New Testaments toward speaking the Word of God against social injustices, we prefer to understand this as another of Amos' rebukes couched in irony and sarcasm. Some men may never know the reality of the suffering of the oppressed and poor because of their failure to take time to consider it as a real problem. Others do not know of it because they have forced themselves to ignore it, not wanting to be troubled with "the other fellow's problem." Humanity can be sure of this: God knows it, and in the long stretch of history will act to bring it to an end. A society built on injustice and fed on the sufferings of the oppressed can never stand.

The social and political situation had so deteriorated in the day of Amos that the "smart" man would either join the "establishment" or keep quiet. The same situation prevails in every generation. It even drifts into the religious society. The advice comes constantly, "Don't get excited, don't get carried away, don't become a fanatic or preacher of doom. Keep your nose out of it. Play it cool—be wise—keep your mouth shut. It's just best not to get mixed up in any way with things going on in these evil times!" But there is one who will not keep silent. God will not keep silent, for He has spoken once for all in the New Testament on such injustice and He has warned His people to speak out against it also. He will continue to speak if voices will rise up in this generation who are wise enough that they will not keep silent like Amos (cf. also Ezek. 33:1-16). Human personality cannot be abused for personal gain without Divine retribution. Let us pray that our generation learns this lesson from God's Book before it has to experience God's judgment!

QUIZ

1. What two alternatives are offered to the people of Israel by Amos?
2. What was the omnipotent God able to do with their wretched condition, if they repented? If they did not repent, what then?
3. How does God use "weal and woe"? Quote scripture proof!
4. Why does the world hate those who stand for righteousness?
5. What two false concepts did Israel have concerning Jehovah God?
6. What did Amos mean by ". . . the prudent will keep silent"?

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— HATE EVIL AND LOVE GOD

TEXT: 5:14-20

- 14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say.
- 15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.
- 16 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the Lord: Wailing shall be in all the broad ways; and they shall say in all the streets, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful in lamentation to wailing.
- 17 And in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through the midst of thee, saith Jehovah.
- 18 Woe unto you that desire the day of Jehovah! Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not light.
- 19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.
- 20 Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

QUERIES

- a. How is "seek good," parallel with "seek Jehovah?"
- b. What is the meaning of "wailing shall be in all the broad ways?"
- c. Why "Woe" unto all those who "desire the day of Jehovah?"

PARAPHRASE

Search after and do that which is good and refrain from doing evil in order that you may live. Then the Lord God of Hosts will truly be your Helper, as you claim He is. Outward religious formality is not enough, you must have a heart that abhors evil and loves good which brings about the establishment of what is right and just in social relationships. Perhaps even yet the Lord God of Hosts will have mercy on the small remnant which remains after the great chastening takes place upon Israel. As I have said before, says the Lord God of Hosts, All admonition to return to Me appears to be useless, therefore, there will be weeping and moaning for the dead up and down the streets of every village and city, every farmer will also be wailing for the dead

and there will be so much death and destruction lamentations will be chanted to those who are professional wailers themselves. And in the vineyards, where one would expect to see rejoicing, there shall be wailing. Jehovah no longer "passes-over" Israel but will have passed through the land in judgment just as He did in Egypt in the days of Moses. Alas for you who rest your hope of deliverance from the heathen upon what you think the Great Day of Jehovah will be! You do not know what you are asking for when you pray for the Day of Jehovah to come for it will not be a day of deliverance for you for you are no better than the heathen. It will be for you as it is for the heathen, a day of misery, darkness and doom. There will be no escape from it. In that day every place is full of danger and death; neither in-doors nor out-of-doors is anyone safe. God will not let you escape! How can you expect the Righteous Jehovah to bring upon those who seek evil and not good any kind of a Day but inevitable and absolute destruction and darkness?

SUMMARY

For a small remnant, godly living may avert the destruction that is surely coming. But for the majority, whose conception of the Day of Jehovah is perverted, God's judgment is inevitable and absolute.

COMMENT

v. 14-15 SEEK GOD, AND NOT EVIL, THAT YE MAY LIVE . . . HATE THE EVIL, AND LOVE THE GOOD, AND ESTABLISH JUSTICE IN THE GATE . . . Social injustice and the abuse of human personality ultimately stems from the concept that religion and morality are separate. This is a Satanic dichotomy! God has never authorized such a division! But man has, ever since Eden, been deceived into thinking that religion and everyday living are two separate compartments of life. True God-revealed and God-centered religion is Life. Practically all the prophets had to deal with this false concept (cf. Isa. 1:1-20; Micah 6:1-6, etc.). In this realm man makes either one of two errors—he either substitutes religion for morals or he substitutes morals for religion. God teaches through the prophets that all morality finds its roots, its spiritual source and its compelling power over the consciences of men in the character of God Himself, and that is true religion (cf. James 1:27). To seek God is to seek good; to love God is to love good and, conversely, to hate evil because God hates evil. Elton Trueblood has described our modern predicament as a "cut-flower society." That is, we are attempting to maintain an ethic without a religion. The

solution in Amos' day was, even as in our day, restoration of the "old paths" (cf. Jer. 6:16-21) and regeneration, *not* revolution. Social injustice cannot be corrected by simply renovation and reorganization of the social structure. Social injustice can only be overcome by upgrading the ethics of all men and this can be done only by regeneration, recreating men in the image of God, and this is accomplished by true religion which in turn involves submission to the authority of God as revealed exclusively in the written word of God!

The people of Amos' day were claiming that Jehovah was with them and that they were with Jehovah, but Amos knew that as long as they continued in their present evil deeds and thoughts their claims on God were vain and false. Their only hope was to turn to God and righteousness. Many of the Israelites had already gone too far and had set their minds against God. Amos was speaking to those few who would still listen. God's mercy was still available for the few who would "hate evil and love good."

The prophets did not preach reformation, but restoration and regeneration! They were not political revolutionaries or civil rights advocates, *per se*. They were preaching to change individuals, to call each man to repent and turn to God's revealed will for their lives. Society will never be changed except as men are changed! And men will never be changed until they are united with God through His revelation which has now been made in His Incarnate Son!

v. 16-17 . . . WAILING SHALL BE IN ALL . . . THE STREETS . . . AND IN ALL VINEYARDS . . . FOR I WILL PASS THROUGH THE MIDST OF THEE, SAITH JEHOVAH, Unless the sin of Israel was corrected, and Amos seems to feel the situation is almost hopeless for the largest segment of the nation, national destruction would be inevitable. Amos portrays the coming time as one of nation-wide mourning. There will be mourning in the squares and plaza's, in every street of every city, in the fields of the farmers and lamentations will be changed to those who are professional wailers themselves. Alas! Israel is no longer God's special people—she has become as heathen and as rebellious as Egypt in the days of Moses. God will no longer "pass-over" Israel, but will "pass through her midst" as He did Egypt with the plagues!

v. 18-20 . . . THE DAY OF JEHOVAH . . . IT IS DARKNESS, AND NOT LIGHT . . . On the Day of Jehovah, see our Special Study seven, pages 84 to 90, "The Day of The Lord." The Jews, from the Messianic prophecies of the Totah (Law of Moses), had interpreted the destiny of their theocracy to be that of eventual world rulers. On some

great Day of the Lord they believed God would deliver his people from all heathen oppression and bondage and elevate them to the supreme place of power and influence among the nations. They looked forward to this great Day (Malachi 2:17—3:5) when the Lord would come suddenly to His temple, the Messiah would be a warrior king who would appear as a political champion and military hero to rally to his standard the Jews from every nation and lead them in a victorious onslaught against their enemies. Heathen oppressors would be annihilated and God's elect race would become the world's conquerors.

H. E. Dana, in *The New Testament World*, pages 128-139 describes in full the Messianic Hope of the Jews (or what the prophets call "the Day of the Lord"). The divine choice of Israel was to the end that Jehovah might have a people who would establish his name in all the earth and make his Law supreme. Therefore the national interests of Israel were one with the cause of Jehovah. To oppose or oppress the chosen people meant to defy Jehovah and to disdain his righteous demands. They were God's specially chosen representatives among the nations, and considered that they should be treated as such. But, on the contrary, they were despised by the Gentiles, ruthlessly seized and consigned to bondage by one despotic conqueror after another, to be buffeted and maltreated in the most humiliating fashion. To the devout Jewish religionist this could only mean that Jehovah was keenly incensed at the heathen nations and regarded them as his own defiant enemies. The coming Day of the Lord (Messianic age) must in the very nature of the case bring the consummate destruction of the incorrigible and the humble submission of those who yielded to the Jewish state.

The truth of the matter was, the Day of the Lord would be a day of deliverance—but only for the true Israel, those who were Jews inwardly and not Jews only outwardly—for the Day of the Lord of which Amos speaks is typical and prophetic of the climactic Day of the Lord, the coming of the Messiah. When the Day of the Lord came of which Amos was speaking, God delivered the faithful remnant through which He could someday present the Messiah, while at the same time He judged those who were unfaithful and had therefore cut themselves off from covenant relationship with Him. For the most of the people of Israel, then, the Day of the Lord was "darkness and not light." It was a time of inescapable crisis, a time of inevitable judgment, a time when man would be abandoned by every known source of aid. Amos uses an almost humorous figure of speech in verse 19 to describe the inescapability of God's judgment!

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE 5:18-20

Having known oppression during practically all of her existence it seems only natural that Israel would have longed for a time of deliverance. No doubt, people passionately spoke of the way in which life would be vindicated, once the day of the Lord was manifested. But they did not realize what they were hoping for. The Righteous God does not change! He must judge every man who sins! He must execute every rebel!

Has not every individual and generation been guilty of reliance upon national and religious heritages instead of personal relationship to God? Should we not have some second thoughts about how ready we are for the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord to come? If God were to come in the consummation of all the ages today would we be ready? "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away. But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is . . . And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13:31-37)

QUIZ

1. What did Isaiah and Micah have to say about the connection of religion and morality?
2. Why cannot the two be separated?
3. What is necessary in order to bring about true social justice?
4. What is the meaning of God "passing through the midst" of Israel?
5. What did Israel think the Day of Jehovah was?
6. What does Malachi say the Day of the Lord will be like?
7. How extensive may the Day of the Lord be?

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— RID RELIGION OF HYPOCRISY

TEXT: 5:21-27

- 21 I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
- 22 Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.
- 23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.
- 24 But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

- 25 Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
- 26 Yea, ye have borne the tabernacle of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of god, which ye made to yourselves.
- 27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, whose name is the God of hosts.

QUERIES

- a. How can God hate feasts He commanded in the Law?
- b. Why the command to "take away . . . the noise of thy songs"?
- c. What are the "shrines of their images"? the "star of their god"?

PARAPHRASE

I thoroughly hate and despise your hypocritical observations of My feasts and I abhor your fake solemn assemblies. Furthermore, all the burnt-offerings and meal-offerings you offer are unacceptable and I will pay no attention to all the peace-offerings you make. You may as well stop all your noisy psalm-singing because I am not listening to the religious music you are playing. Because your worship is mere hypocrisy My righteous judgment will pour out and roll over the land like a flood. Just as in the wilderness when you hypocritically made sacrifices and songs and worship to heathen idols and heavenly bodies and called it worship to Me, so you are doing now! Because of this I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

SUMMARY

God's threatened judgment will not be averted by all their worship because even their worship is hypocritical.

COMMENT

v. 21-23 I HATE, I DESPISE YOUR FEASTS . . . TAKE THOU AWAY FROM ME THE NOISE OF THY SONGS . . . Amos is not denouncing Mosaic revelation and legislation any more than any other prophet did. The prophets emphatically advocated that the people of their day return to purified practice of Law of Moses. The prophets commanded that the Law be observed! Just two examples should be sufficient here to show this (cf. Jer. 26:4-5; Malachi 4:4). For further information on this, see Special Study No. eight, pages 91, 92. The prophets did *not*

institute some "revolutionary or evolutionary" new religion devoid of the Mosaic legislation! They came to call the people back to keeping the pure Law of Moses from the heart. What Amos *is* denouncing, as is plain from the context, is the perverted, hypocritical, idolatrous forms of religious ceremony these Israelites were then practicing. He is merely denouncing what practically all the prophets before him and after him denounced (cf. Isa. 1:11ff; Jer. 7:1ff; 6:20ff; Mal. 1:8ff). God is not only not pleased with this syncretistic (mixture of heathen and Jewish worship) religion, He hates it—it is an abomination to Him and vain and useless as far as the worshipper is concerned! Every sacrifice or offering made aroused in the heart of the All-Righteous and Perfectly-Holy God a divine hatred. The chanting of their religious psalms and the playing upon the harps was a weariness to God which He commands to be stopped. So, it was not that God hated the very feasts, offerings and songs He Himself had commanded in the Law—these ceremonies in themselves were not wrong. It was the perverse and rebellious nature of the people performing them that made them offensive to God. The people were hypocrites ("play actors"). They were worshipping Jehovah only in pretense while their real affections were centered on their idols and images. They were neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith (cf. Matt: 23:16-36). This same principle is true of those who claim to be covenant people of God today! Religious ritual, no matter how scripturally accurate it may be, will not substitute for loving God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength, and loving one's neighbor as one's self. If this principle is truly adhered to one will certainly make every effort to be scripturally accurate in ritual.

v. 24 BUT LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN AS WATERS, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A MIGHTY STREAM. This passage is usually interpreted, "Let an overflowing justice and righteousness between men take the place of your hypocritical dealings and sacrifices and flood the land." K & D say, "Because the Lord has no pleasure in this hypocritical worship, the judgment shall pour like a flood over the land . . . *Mishpat* (justice) is not the justice to be practiced by men; for although Jehovah might promise that he would create righteousness in the nation, so that it would fill the land as it were like a flood, He only demands righteousness generally, and not actually in floods." They further state, "The verse is to be explained according to Isaiah 10:22, and threatens the flooding of the land with judgment and the punitive righteous of God." Lange says, "Such worship, instead of averting the judgment, rather provokes its full execution. It should pour over the land, like a flowing stream. It

is wrong to interpret the verse as an exhortation to the people to practice judgment and righteousness. The image of a flood of waters is much too strong for such a thought; it points rather to an act of God." In spite of the weight of this scholarship there are those who interpret this passage as a command to the people, e.g. Laetsch, ". . . let judgment, God's norm, His Law . . . run down as water, spreading throughout the country, and righteousness, good works demanded by the Law . . . fill the nation like a mighty stream . . ." We believe the view of K & D and Lange best represent a correct contextual interpretation.

v. 25-27 DID YE BRING UNTO ME SACRIFICES . . . IN THE WILDERNESS . . . YEA, YE HAVE BORNE THE TABERNACLE OF YOUR KING AND THE SHRINE OF YOUR IMAGES . . . THEREFORE WILL I CAUSE YOU TO GO INTO CAPTIVITY BEYOND DAMASCUS . . . Amos asks a rhetorical question, that is, he asks a question for which he is going to supply the answer and which answer is already well known by his audience. Did the nation bring God sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years? Indeed they did, and just like in Amos' day they were, for the most part, hypocritical sacrifices to heathen idols while they called it worship to Jehovah! The Northern Kingdom had from its very origin adopted the idolatrous worship of calves as its national religion (I Kings 12:26-28), a device of Jeroboam's own heart, and the history of the twelve tribes is a record of ever-repeated idolatry and rebellion against God. This tendency dated back to the early days of Israel's acceptance as God's covenant nation. It was only forty days after the solemn declaration of this covenant when Israel asked Aaron to make gods for them to go before them, and worshipped the golden calf (Ex. 32:1-6). She did not cease to worship idols even after God's longsuffering and the intercession of Moses kept them from being exterminated (Ex. 32:7—34:11). Forty years later Moses warns them (Deut. 9:6-24) against idolatry, and twice in particular against that special form of idolatry with which Amos charges them here: the worship of the host of heaven, of sun, moon, and stars (Deut. 4:19; 17:2-3). Star worship was one of the earliest and most widespread forms of idolatry in Israel. The false gods worshiped by Abraham's ancestors in Ur of the Chaldees (Joshua 24:2) were astral deities. The "images" which Rachel had taken from her father (Gen. 31:30ff), and which were later buried by Jacob (Gen. 35:2ff) were teraphim, small statuettes of Ishtar. In Egypt, Israel was exposed to the danger of various forms of idolatry, among them worship of the sun-god Ra (also called Amon). So, by ancestry, by environment in Egypt, by the proximity of the Amorites and other nations addicted

to star worship during the wilderness wandering, and by their rebellious spirit (Ex. 32:9; Deut. 9:6; Ps. 95:10-11), the Israelites were inclined to star worship.

In the wilderness Israel carried the tabernacle ("tent") wherein they had Sakkuth, the Assyrian-Babylonian god identified with Saturn, Him they regarded as their "Moloch" (their "king or god"). This has no reference to the tabernacle of God legislated by Moses. Israel aped the heathen festival processions in which their star gods were carried about. The names used by Amos in verse 26 (Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god) may be an ancient as the idols, or he may be calling these ancient idols by the names current at his time. The sin remains the same, star worship. Stephen, in his famous defense (Acts 7:41ff), quotes from Amos here and states that because Israel refused to acknowledge and serve the true God as He had revealed Himself to them, God surrendered them in divine judgment to their self-chosen ways which could end only in ruin and damnation. The generation of Amos' day, in mixing idolatry with sacrifices done in the name of Jehovah, was just like the contemporaries of Moses, practicing idolatry and all the while claiming to be worshippers of Jehovah.

But the judgment of God shall overwhelm them like a flood and carry them off into slavery and bondage to a land far beyond Damascus. The precise location of their captivity is not yet revealed—it is reserved for Hosea to be the first to mention Assyria as the exact location (Hos. 9:3; 10:6; 11:5). Hosea also has a great deal to say about Israel's worship of idols (3:1; 4:12-13; 4:17; 6:10; 7:16; 8:4-5; 10:5-6; etc.). Hosea paints an even worse picture of degradation in the land as a result of its idolatry than was painted by Amos! The terrible consequences of rebellion against God grew steadily worse—injustice, crime, immorality of all degrees soon led to complete anarchy in the land. In 722-721 B.C. the ten tribes of the Northern kingdom were subjugated by the Assyrian king and the people were deported to Assyria never to return as a nation (II Kings 17:1-6).

QUIZ

1. Did the prophets seek to abolish the law and institute a new type of religion?
2. Why were their feasts and sacrifices and worship services offensive to God?
3. What is the meaning of "let justice roll down as waters . . .?"
4. Did Israel worship idols in the wilderness? Explain!

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— LUXURY LEADS TO INDOLENCE

TEXT: 6:1-8

- 1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!
- 2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?
- 3 —ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;
- 4 that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;
- 5 that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David;
- 6 that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.
- 7 Therefore shall they now go captive with the first that go captive; and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away.
- 8 The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself, saith Jehovah, the God of hosts: I abhor the excellence of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

QUERIES

- a. Why refer the covenant people to Calneh, Hamath and Gath?
- b. What is "putting far away the evil day?"
- c. Is the use of musical instruments contrary to God's will?

PARAPHRASE

Alas, alas, for those who are lounging in luxury and false security in Jerusalem and Samaria; alas for those reknowned leaders of the reknowned nation of Israel, to whom all the people of Israel come for counsel. Go over to Calneh, Hamath and Gath and you will find that your land is just as prosperous and great as theirs. In spite of My blessing you and making you chief of the nations you have remained ungrateful and unmindful of My warnings. You insist that calamity will not come to you yet you bring the Day of Judgment nearer each day by your violent

deeds! You sprawl yourselves luxuriantly upon expensive couches and take for your gluttonous feasts only the choicest lambs and calves; you sing frivolous, nonsensical and lustful songs to the accompaniment of the harps; and, as David invented musical instruments to worship his God, you invent musical instruments to worship your god, your belly; you drink wine from sacrificial bowls of silver in adoration of your god, and, instead of being grieved for the spiritual downfall of the nation, with unbridled rejoicing you anoint one another with the most expensive oils and perfumes. On account of this, these sensual leaders of the people shall be the first ones taken into captivity where they shall no longer lounge in luxury for that will cease. The Lord Jehovah has sworn an immutable oath upon His own immutable Name, saying, I despise the false pride and glory of Israel and hate its luxurious homes. I will give up this land into the hands of its enemies including all the people and everything else in it.

SUMMARY

A false sense of pride and position has drugged Israel into a false feeling of security which in turn has led her to luxury, gluttony, indolence and lethargy. God promises judgment and captivity.

COMMENT

v. 1 **WOE TO THEM THAT ARE AT EASE IN ZION . . . AND . . . SECURE . . . IN . . . SAMARIA . . .** Amos directs his warning from God to the whole nation. Especially to the "notable" men—the reknowned leaders. These public leaders had allowed themselves to be lulled by luxury into a false ease and security. They, in turn, had counseled all the people who came to them that peace, prosperity and safety were the watchwords of the day (Jer. 6:14). They were confident that God would not allow anything bad to happen to the chief of nations (Jer. 7:4ff), after all, had not God chosen this nation above all the others (Jer. 2:3; Ex. 19:5; II Sam. 7:23ff; Amos 3:2). Prosperity is dangerous. It may be either blessing or curse, according to the way it is received by those to whom it may come. If the one who prospers receives it with thankfulness to God constantly aware of his dependence upon God and uses it to the glory of God it can be a wonderful blessing and a great source of joy. But if the one who prospers is ungrateful and makes his riches his whole aim in life he falls into a snare, into many hurtful lusts, and drowns in perdition (cf. I Tim. 6:6-10; Deut. 4:9; 6:10-12; 8:11-20; 32:15; Psa. 9:17; Prov. 1:32; 30:9; Jer. 3:21; Dan. 4:30; 5:20; Hosea 10:13; 13:6; Lk. 12:16-19).

v. 2-3 PASS YE UNTO CALNEH, AND SEE . . . ARE THEY BETTER THAN THESE KINGDOMS? Calneh was a city in the land of Babylonia (Calno of Isa. 10:9) one of the four cities founded by Nimrod (cf. Gen. 10:10). Hamath is one of the most ancient surviving cities on this earth located in upper Syria on the Orontes river. The "entrance of Hamath" (Num. 34:8) was to be the northern limit of Israel, but God left some of the Hivites there to be a test to the faithfulness of Israel (Judg. 3:3). Calneh and Hamath were two of the 19 city-states that rebelled against mighty King Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria (745-727 B.C.) and were subdued only after several campaigns and it is no wonder Amos calls it "Hamath the great." Gath was one of the five royal cities of Philistia (Josh. 13:3; Judg. 3:3; I Sam. 4:4, 16, 18), destroyed by Uzziah (II Chron. 26:6) with a history of greatness and influence in the days of Amos. Amos has selected these three rich, powerful, influential cities to compare Israel, in her greatness, to, and thus emphasize Israel's ingratitude! These three cities were powerful, yet none of them was better than Judah or Israel. In spite of God's blessing the once insignificant Hebrew nomads until their prosperity exceeded that of these three rich metropolises, this generation of Hebrews remained an ungrateful people, unmindful of the Rock that begat them (Deut. 32:6-18).

v. 3 —YE THAT PUT FAR AWAY THE EVIL DAY, AND CAUSE THE SEAT OF VIOLENCE TO COME NEAR . . . These people were just like those of a 150 years later in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel crying "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," (cf. Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 14:13; Ezek. 13:10, 16). How could Amos preach to them "hard times," when all was well—politically and economically? They refused even to think of hard times, judgment, retribution of God for their sins. But by their very acts of impenitence and refusing to see anything "wrong" with their excesses and injustices they were hastening the day of God's judgment upon them! They were ripening fast (as Amos later pictorializes with the basket of summer fruit). They were actually rotting. In just 40 years the northern kingdom would be overthrown completely by the Assyrians and as a nation it would disappear from the face of the earth.

v. 4-6 . . . THAT LIE UPON BEDS OF IVORY . . . EAT THE LAMBS OUT OF THE FLOCK . . . SING IDLE SONGS . . . INVENT . . . INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC . . . DRINK WINE IN BOWLS . . . BUT ARE NOT GRIEVED FOR THE AFFLICTION OF JOSEPH. We wish to quote extensively here from, *The Bible Commentary, The Minor Prophets*, by T. Laetsch, pub., Concordia, pp. 170-171:

“. . . In the homes of the rich were found all the conveniences and luxuries of the day. There were ‘beds,’ or divans, of ivory, richly decorated with ivory plaques and panels . . . on which Mr. Richman sprawled; luxuriant couches, on which the lady of the house stretched out her weary limbs after having returned from a stroll through the avenues of the city where she had exhibited her beauty, enhanced by many an artificial means (Isa. 3:18-23). The less fortunate sisters, the common rabble, the dames of the underworld, the flappers of 750 B.C., admired their richly attired sisters and ran to the next bazaar to buy some cheap bauble, some of the latest beauty helps, in order to look like their more favored sisters. In the elegant homes of the rich and in the temples of their idols (ch. 2:7, 8) riotous feasts and banquets were held. Only the most dainty meats were served, lambs selected from carefully tended flocks, calves from the midst of the stall (cp. Mal. 4:2), kept in special stalls, fed with special feed. At these banquets men and women idled away their time by “chanting” crooning to the sound of the ‘viol,’ the harp (v. 5). They also invented for themselves, not to God’s glory, instruments of music. The better such noisemakers suited the intention of their inventors, to affect the nerves, create excitement, stir up passions, the higher was the inventor honored. He was likened to David, who had introduced many musical instruments in the Temple service (I Chron. 23:5; II Chron. 29:25-26) . . . Amos, of course, uses these words in bitter irony. Such crooning, accompanied by jazzy instrumental music, was regarded as the highest ‘superart’ by the delighted audiences. The heads and bodies of the assembled guests were anointed with ‘the chief ointments,’ the finest and most expensive perfumeries, filling the ball with their intoxicating odors. The passions kindled by the voluptuous music and suggestive dress were nourished by the rich food and fanned into irrepressible ardor by large bowlfuls of wine freely making the rounds (v. 6). The term used here for ‘bowls’ in all other passages denotes ritual bowls used in the Temple for sprinkling the sacrificial blood upon the altar. Were they used at these banquets in the homes and the idol temples in order to give a semblance of piety to these orgiastic festivals, as the saying of grace before modern family dinners ending in drinking bouts? We are reminded of Belshazzar’s feasts (Dan. 5:1-5).”

The Arabic and Greek words translated "idle" mean literally, "to throw or strew many useless words about, to gossip," and this describes the singing at the banquets as frivolous nonsense. The sin is not, per se, in the use of instruments of music in religious worship (David was commanded to invent instruments of music to be used in God's temple in worshipping the One, True God), but the use of instruments to sing vain and idle songs in a perverted religious ceremony. As David made instruments of music to worship the true God, these idolators made instruments to accompany their stupid songs as they worshiped their god, the belly! Amos 6:5 cannot be used to condemn the use of an instrument in New Testament church worship—to do so is wresting the scriptures! It could be used to show God's displeasure with a great amount of the silly, nonsensical, and immoral music which has been invented today by those whose god is still their physical lusts!

The word used by Amos to describe the bowls out of which the gluttons drank their wine has special reference to the silver sacrificial bowls made by the tribe-princes at the consecration of the altar to Jehovah (Num. 7). Amos does this to show that the people in Moses' day manifested their zeal for Jehovah by so doing, and these people of Israel, of Amos' own times, showed just as much zeal for their god, the belly.

And the greater crime than all this gluttony and idolatry is, as Amos states in v. 6, "they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." They were blind, deaf and dumb to the spiritual rotteness then prevalent. They were not the least concerned that this nation whose destiny was holiness and truth was sick unto death with the leprosy of sin. The injustice, cruelty, decadence did not bother them. They were perfectly satisfied as long as they had food and drink and were rich enough to satisfy their desires.

v. 7-8 THEREFORE SHALL THEY NOW GO CAPTIVE WITH THE FIRST THAT GO CAPTIVE; AND THE REVELRY OF THEM THAT STRETCHED THEMSELVES SHALL PASS AWAY . . . THE LORD JEHOVAH HATH SWORN BY HIMSELF . . . Jehovah makes a solemn, terrible vow. Those who spent their time luxuriating and satisfying every selfish whim—who had no time for God—will be the first taken captive. They will be the first to be made slaves of a foreign despot. They will have no time henceforward for revelry. That will come to a sudden end. From that time onward they will be an enslaved people. God cannot make His vows any more emphatic than by swearing by His own name, for there

is nothing greater in existence than God. Since He has the authority and power to carry out His threats it is not at all evil for Him to swear by His own Holy Name. It is vain for man to swear by anything, either heaven or hell, or by the hairs on his head since he has no control over any of it (cf. Matt. 5:33-37; Jas. 5:12). Hebrews, in that glorious passage emphasizing how God demonstrated the immutability and finality of His promise-keeping, in 6:13-17 tells us that "God interposed Himself with an oath." We believe the interpretation of how God "interposed Himself" is found in II Cor. 5:19 where we are told, "God was *in* Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself . . ." and in II Cor. 1:20, ". . . For all the promises of God find their Yea in Him" (that is, in Christ). So, when God swears by Himself, rest assured, it is certain to come to pass!

QUIZ

1. Why was Amos against the "ease" those in Zion and Samaria were having?
2. Why refer the people of Israel to the cities of Calneh, Hamath and Gath?
3. What does Amos mean by saying they were "putting far away the evil day"?
4. What sort of society does Amos describe in verse 4-6?
5. May Amos 6:5 be used against the use of instruments in religious worship? Explain your answer!
6. Why condemn them because of their lack of grief for the affliction of Joseph?
7. How emphatic is the phrase "The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself" to be taken?

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— FALSE PRIDE TURNS RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BITTERNESS

TEXT: 6:9-14

- 9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.
- 10 And when a man's uncle shall take him up, even he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto

him that is in the innermost parts of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No; then shall he say, Hold thy peace; for we may not make mention of the name of Jehovah.

- 11 For, behold, Jehovah commandeth, and the great house shall be smitten with breaches, and the little house with clefts.
- 12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? that ye have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood;
- 13 ye that rejoice in a thing of nought, that say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?
- 14 For, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith Jehovah, the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entrance of Hamath unto the brook of the Arabah.

QUERIES

- a. Why should a man's "uncle" burn him and question him about anyone remaining in the house?
- b. Why could they not make mention of the name of Jehovah?
- c. What is the "thing of nought"?

PARAPHRASE

So thorough shall be My destruction of this nation then, even if there are ten in one house they will all perish. And when the kinsman comes to take care of the dead there will be such a multitude of dead corpses he will have to burn the bodies instead of burying them. This relative will call to see if there is one last living person who has gone way back in the very back of the house in order to save his life. If there is one the kinsman will ask, Is there anyone else besides yourself alive in this house? If the answer comes back, No, the kinsman shall then call, Keep quiet then, and do not even speak the name of God lest His attention be drawn towards this place and He smite this house until there is not one left alive! The perversion of righteousness into false pride can no more save you than horses can run on rocks or oxen can plow the sea. You have bragged that you have, by your own doing, built an invincible military power but I tell you that you are putting your hopes on that which is nothing in My sight. I am going to bring against you an enemy nation, says the Omnipotent God, which will crush you down throughout the whole length and breadth of this land of Promise.

SUMMARY

The judgment will be complete. False pride, a perversion of righteousness, will not save them from God's judgment.

COMMENT

v. 9-11. . . IF THERE REMAIN TEN . . . , THEY SHALL DIE EVEN HE THAT BURNETH HIM, . . . IS THERE YET ANY WITH THEE? . . . HOLD THY PEACE . . . THE GREAT HOUSE SHALL BE SMITTEN . . . AND THE LITTLE HOUSE . . . Jehovah is going to bring such destruction and death to Israel that even in the palaces of the rich and houses of the largest families where some may escape seige, famine and disease, even those who remain will die. Then where a near kinsman (Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32; II Kings 13:21) comes to inter the dead he will find so many corpses that he will be forced to burn them instead of bury them in order to quickly dispose of the possibility of contagion and stench. Only extreme emergencies made it necessary to burn a corpse, which in Israel was a penalty for extreme wickedness (cf. Lev. 20:14; 21:19; I Sam. 31:11-13). When this awful task is finished the kinsman calls, either to his helper or a survivor hiding in the farthest corner, Is anyone left alive. When the answer comes back, No! the kinsman hastens to warn the answerer not to mention the name of Jehovah (either in prayer or oath) lest the attention of Jehovah be drawn to this particular place and the one mentioning His name and he also be slain. Of course, God's attention is at all times everywhere present! He needs no such drawing of His attention. Whether the people of the northern kingdom had fallen to such superstitious regard for Jehovah by associating Him with heathen gods or not we are not told. Amos paints this picture in order to show the complete hopelessness and despair that will grip the hearts of those very few survivors when God's judgment begins to fall! Rich and poor alike have been guilty of turning away from Jehovah to serve their appetites and so the houses of the great and small will be destroyed alike!

v. 12-14 SHALL HORSES RUN UPON THE ROCK? . . . YE HAVE TURNED JUSTICE INTO GALL . . . YE THAT REJOICE IN A THING OF NOUGHT . . . I WILL RAISE UP AGAINST YOU A NATION . . . That they will be able to avert the judgment of God was as incongruous as their actions which were, in turn, as inconsistent as a horse running full speed upon rocks or as oxen plowing the sea. The fruit of their "righteousness" was wormwood, bitterness (see our comment on wormwood at 5:7).

Their "righteousness" was false righteousness which led to false pride. They perverted justice and proudly bragged of their military and economic power. But what they were putting their hopes in (military and economic power, and religious heritage) was "nothing"—vain and powerless. "Horns" symbolize military power. They forgot and denied that God had anything to do with their prosperity and boasted that they attained it by their own abilities. This God-denying pride is enmity against God. When man declares war on God there is nothing left for God to do but uphold His holiness and omnipotence. So God, as in this case, often uses secondary agents and agencies to carry out His will (cf. Isa. 10; 45; Jer. 27; Dan. 2:36ff; 4:19ff, etc.). Here, Israel is warned that God is going to raise up against them "a nation." We know that nation to be Assyria (Hosea was the first to mention this enemy of Israel by name). This nation crushed the Land of Promise (including both Israel and Judah) from north to south—from one end to the other which is where Hamath and the Arabah would be located—the extreme northern and southern boundaries of the whole land of promise, see II Kings 17. While Israel had more common sense than to run horses over rocks and plow seas with oxen—while they acted so responsibly in the common things of life, they exhibited such irresponsibility in the most significant areas of human conduct—righteousness and justice. So *the Lord caused* (as the original text emphasizes) a nation to rise up against this ungrateful, irresponsible, arrogant, sensual people. The message of Amos is still quite relevant and contemporary. Our society is almost a sister to that one in its ingratitude, irresponsibility, arrogance, sensuality. Amos was not able to call men back to God in his day, but he was willing to lay down his life if necessary to give God's call to repentance. Can prophets of today succeed where Amos did not? Time alone will tell!

QUIZ

1. What is the significance of "ten" remaining in the house?
2. Why does the near kinsman come to "burn" the bones?
3. Why does he tell the one answering him not to mention the name of Jehovah?
4. Why the figure of speech of horses running on rocks and oxen plowing the seas?
5. What was Israel rejoicing in that was called "nought"?
6. Whom did God raise up against Israel?
7. Why is the message of Amos so relevant? why is it so imperative?

PROPHECIES PRESENTED, CHAPTERS 7-9

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED—
NOT ALIGNED WITH GOD'S STANDARD

TEXT: 7:1-9

- 1 Thus the Lord, Jehovah showed me: and, behold, he formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.
- 2 And it came to pass that, when they made an end of eating the grass of the land, then, I said, O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small.
- 3 Jehovah repented concerning this: It shall not be, saith Jehovah.
- 4 Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, the Lord Jehovah called to contend by fire; and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land.
- 5 Then said I, O Lord Jehovah, cease, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small.
- 6 Jehovah repented concerning this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord Jehovah.
- 7 Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.
- 8 And Jehovah 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;
- 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.

QUERIES

- a. Why did God "show" in vision these judgments He was preparing?
- b. Why did God "repent" in two instances when Amos interceded?
- c. What is the message of the "plumbline"?

PARAPHRASE

This is what the Lord God showed me in a vision concerning the future: He had prepared a vast swarm of locusts to destroy all the main crop that sprang up after the first mowing, which went as taxes

to the king, so that none of the people had any grain. These locusts devoured every stalk of grain and blade of grass. Then I cried, O Lord God, forgive your people, I beg you, and do not send this judgment upon them. If you turn against Israel and so utterly destroy them, what hope is there? For Israel is so small! The Lord turned from this plan and did not fulfill the vision and told me: I will not do this. Then the Lord-God showed me a great burning-up by which He intended to judge the people; it dried up the deepest rivers, lakes and springs and would have devoured the land. Then I said, O Lord God, Stop, I pray, If you so utterly consume them, what hope is there? For Israel is so small! The Lord turned from this plan also and did not fulfill the vision and told me: I also will not do this. But then He showed me another vision: The Lord was standing beside a wall which supposedly had been built according to a plumbline and He was checking it with His plumbline to see if it was straight. And the Lord said to me, Amos, what do you see? I answered, A plumbline. Then the Lord said, I will test My people against My plumbline. I will no longer turn away from punishing them if they are out of line with My standard. The idol altars and temples of Israel will be destroyed; and I will destroy the dynasty of King Jeroboam with the sword.

SUMMARY

God will have patience for a time, and spare the land the plagues it deserves. But if there is no repentance by the people from this goodness of God, His forbearance will cease and the downfall will come.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . HE FORMED LOCUSTS . . . THEY MADE AN END OF EATING THE GRASS OF THE LAND . . . I SAID, O LORD . . . FORGIVE . . . JEHOVAH REPENTED CONCERNING THIS . . . Amos is given a vision of a future judgment God has planned for Israel. Amos sees it as if it had already happened. God prepared a vast swarm of locusts, as He did in the days of Joel, and they devoured all the grain and grass of the land. The first mowing of the grain and grass crops (at least the greater part of it) was claimed by the king (cf. I Sam. 8:12-15; I Kings 18:5-6) for feeding the army horses. If the second growing was destroyed by locusts everyone else would soon perish. There would be no grain or grass for human or animal consumption. K & D feel this and the succeeding vision of the "fire" should be interpreted symbolically. We must agree with Lange that a literal interpretation best fits the facts. Amos intercedes and God's plan calls for forbearance or goodness

which will lead men to repentance and thus God turns from immediate judgment. This, however, does not contradict the immutability of God's counsel. See our comments on Jonah 3:9 for a discussion of God repenting. We should like to quote Lange here:

"What was threatened was deserved, but still the punishment as destructive has not yet become a necessity. God can still spare. If the stroke did fall, there would be no unrighteousness in God, and also just as little, if it did not. How the case stands only He who is the searcher of hearts and the Judge of all the earth can certainly know. But men may and should presume that forbearance is possible, and therefore should intercede. Even this has its limits, and cannot be a duty under all circumstances, otherwise the conviction of a moral government of the world would grow weak."

What happens to man in his relationship to God depends upon man's response to God's immutable will. If man rebels against God's righteous and wise government then he will suffer the consequences already decreed and determined. If he repents he may avert those consequences because that salvation is also a part of God's unchanging government. On the other hand it is also a part of that sovereign purpose of God to lead men to repentance by showing them His forbearance and mercy and kindness for a period of time decreed and determined by Him. This is what Amos prayed for and what the Lord, having already purposed to do, granted. One of the functions of a prophet was, by demonstrating his faith and dependence upon God by prayers of intercession, to lead the people to a penitent, dependent attitude toward God (cf. Gen. 20:7; Ex. 32:11ff; Num. 14:13ff; I Sam. 7:8; Jer. 14:8ff; 15:1).

v. 4-6 . . . THE LORD . . . CALLED TO CONTEND BY FIRE . . . IT DEVoured THE GREAT DEEP . . . JEHOVAH REPENTED CONCERNING THIS . . . In a second vision of the future Amos is given to see a great "burning-up" where God is going to punish and try Israel by "fire" as it were. Most scholars agree that this is a drought. Such an intense drought as to dry up all the stream beds, the lakes, the deep springs and the deepest wells. All life would soon cease to exist in the land. K & D make this symbolic of God's judgment upon the heathen nations. The heathen nations, according to them, compose the "great deep" and God's judgment comes like a "fire" which devours the "great deep." This great judgment by God, after having consumed the nations, would also begin to consume Israel. So Amos prays and God relents. But again we must agree with Lange:

"How gratuitous is all this! Nothing of it is found in the visions themselves. What the prophet saw in the second vision is certainly not to occur; therefore the judgment upon the heathen, if it is contained there, is not to occur. Of a remnant remaining over, not a word is said."

In other words, God promises not to send this judgment. Now we know that the heathen nations were judged by God. If this is to be taken symbolically of their judgment and God promised not to do and yet did it, someone is wrong!

v. 7-9 . . . THE LORD STOOD BESIDE A WALL MADE BY A PLUMBLINE, WITH A PLUMBLINE IN HIS HAND . . . BEHOLD, I WILL SET A PLUMBLINE IN THE MIDST OF MY PEOPLE ISRAEL . . . Plumb-lines were used then just as they are now to build walls perpendicularly straight. They are a standard or a rule or a norm to follow. Now Amos sees God standing upon a wall which had been, in the beginning, made according to this standard or divine plumb-line. God is also holding along side this wall the divine plumb-line again and, behold, the wall is out of plumb. It veers away from the plumb-line. It is crooked and in danger of falling. It is ready to be condemned. God's revealed Word is the standard by which it is judged and it shows that Israel is no longer true to their covenant promise of loyal obedience (Ex. 19:7-8; 24:3-7). Instead, they make it their practice to be out of line with God's rule, disregarding His Law, which demands holiness, justice and righteousness. No more leniency will be shown to Israel. He will not again forgive Israel. God is a God of patience, and He does not come in judgment without a purpose. But this does not abrogate the fact that there is a point beyond which God, because of His own character, cannot go in dealing with man's sin.

To every man and to every nation there comes a time when the plumb-line of God's revealed Word has been set. Judgment moves on with its inevitable tread and nothing is left for man's degenerate condition but judgment. When justice is turned into poison and the fruit of righteousness becomes wormwood and light is turned into darkness it shows that that which God has raised up is out of plumb and the time for tearing down has come!

Does America, raised up straight and true, dare now to see what God's plumb-line indicates concerning her status? America with all her anarchy, licentiousness, materialism is leaning, nay, teetering dangerously out of plumb!

QUIZ

1. How would you summarize this whole section as to what it teaches?
2. What does it mean, "God repented?"
3. What is the judgment of "fire" mentioned in verse 4?
4. What picture does Amos get when he is shown the plumbline of God?
5. What is the plumbline of God?

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— CORRUPT RELIGIOUS LEADERS

TEXT: 7:10-17

- 10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el 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.
- 11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.
- 12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:
- 13 but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.
- 14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees:
- 15 and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.
- 16 Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac;
- 17 therefore thus saith Jehovah: Thy wife shall be a 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 thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

QUERIES

- a. Why was the land "not able to bear all Amos' words?"
- b. What did Amaziah mean, "flee . . . into . . . Judah and there eat bread?"
- c. What did Amos mean by saying he was not "a prophet's son?"

PARAPHRASE

Then Amaziah, the high priest at the sanctuary of the golden calf at Bethel, rushed a message to King Jeroboam which said: Amos has plotted a conspiracy against you and our nation. And he is preaching his treason right here in the religious center of the nation. The nation cannot survive his seditious words for it will soon lead to rebellion all across the land. Amos is saying you will be killed in war, O King, and all Israel will be taken far away into exile and slavery. When the King took no action against Amos, Amaziah sent orders, saying, Amos, get out of the land of Israel; go on home to your own land of Judah and earn your salary as a prophet there! Never again are you allowed to preach in Israel, and especially at Bethel, for it is the royal center of religion in Israel. Then Amos gave this reply to Amaziah: I am not a prophet by profession and simply for the livelihood involved—neither was I trained to become such a professional religionist. My livelihood was earned by herding sheep and dressing sycamore fruit trees. The Lord God Himself called me and told me to leave my flock and commissioned me to go and preach unto my kinsmen and countrymen in Israel. The Lord has commissioned me personally, I am no professional prophet preaching merely for the money as you falsely assume, Amaziah! Whoever forbids me to preach sets himself in opposition to the Lord God. Now therefore listen to this message to you from the Lord. You say, Do not prophesy against Israel—the Lord's reply is this: Because of your enmity to the word of the Lord your wife shall become a prostitute in this very city, and your sons and daughters will be slain violently, and your property will become the booty of an invader. You yourself will die in a heathen land, and the people of Israel will most definitely become slaves in exile, far away from their homeland.

SUMMARY

The daring announcement by Amos of the overthrow of the dynasty of Jeroboam excites the wrath of the high priest at Bethel. He relates the affair to the king. The king apparently does not intervene. The high priest then takes it upon himself to banish Amos from Israel. Amos announces the terrible wrath of God upon Amaziah and Israel.

COMMENT

v. 10-11 . . . AMAZIAH . . . SENT TO JEROBOAM . . . AMOS HATH CONSPIRED AGAINST THEE . . . Evidently Amos' preaching had met with some response among some of the people of Israel. The people were

responding or taking notice of the prophet's warnings enough to cause Amaziah, high priest of the golden calf worship at Bethel, to be concerned about rebellion. If the people had paid no attention to Amos' preaching, Amaziah would not have bothered the King with it. Amaziah sends an urgent appeal to the king that Amos be dealt with for what Amaziah says is a plot of conspiracy against the king's life and the nation. Amaziah very shrewdly does not even mention the main content of Amos' preaching; the apostasy of Israel, his pleas for repentance, etc. As a good politician he turns it into a threat against the king's life and unpatriotic sedition against the nation. This is the first show of the corruption in the heart of Israel's religious leader. He is not concerned with worshipping Jehovah God nor with righteousness; his only concern is that the status quo not be disrupted.

v. 12-13 . . . AMAZIAH SAID . . . FLEE UNTO JUDAH . . . AND THERE EAT BREAD, AND PROPHECY THERE . . . BUT NOT AGAIN ANY MORE AT BETH-EL . . . We can only conjecture as to whether Amaziah acted on authority from the king or on his own authority in banishing Amos from Israel. It seems that Amaziah was determined to get rid of this "trouble of Israel," king or no king! His command to Amos is to "flee" (get out of Israel, while the getting is good) to Judah, Amos' own country. Amaziah adds a nasty insinuation that if Amos expects to make any money at this preaching business it won't be in Israel. His insinuation is that Amos was only prophesying for the money or livelihood it brought. Furthermore, Amos' assault upon the very center of the calf worship of the northern kingdom jeopardized its independence. Jeroboam I realized in the very birth of the northern kingdom that if the people of Israel were allowed to return to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah in the temple they would soon move to dissolve the divided kingdoms and reunite them into one. His first move (I Kings 12:26ff) was to institute the calf worship as distinct from the worship in Jerusalem. Amos' attempt to overthrow this apostate religion threatened the very existence of the nation of Israel. Now we see the next indication of the corruptness of Amaziah's religious leadership. He was only a priest because of the livelihood—he was a hireling and insinuated that Amos was also. Amaziah was not a priest in order to serve the people as a minister of the word of God—he was a priest to be sustained and served by the ignorant and sensual worshippers of the calf. The corruption of his heart led the people of Israel in a corrupted religion. And this became a major cause of the judgment of God upon Israel.

v. 14-17 . . . I WAS NO PROPHET, NEITHER WAS I A PROPHET'S SON . . . HEAR THOU THE WORD OF JEHOVAH . . . THY WIFE SHALL BE A HARLOT . . . THY SONS AND DAUGHTERS SHALL FALL BY THE SWORD . . . THOU . . . SHALT DIE IN A LAND THAT IS UNCLEAN . . .

Calmly Amos repudiates the insinuation that he was in the business of prophesying for the sake of money. He was not a prophet by profession neither had he ever been trained to preach the Law of God as others had (see Special Study Eight "The Schools of The Prophets"). Professionally or vocationally Amos was a herdsman in the hills of Tekoa. He also dressed sycamore trees to provide his living. The sycamore tree of Palestine bore a kind of fruit that required piercing, nipping or scratching in order to ripen. K & D call it a "mulberry-fig" tree. He earned his living this way—he was not a hireling preacher like Amaziah. God took this honest-hearted, willing, God-fearing man from the flocks and commissioned him with a divine command to Go! tell my people! He was not sent by the religious leaders of Judah; no human had advised Amos what to preach. His commission and his message were both from Jehovah Himself. Who was Amaziah to forbid that this message should be preached? Who was Amos that he should disobey the Lord God, merely because a human priest, and an apostate one at that, did not like his message?

Whoever sought to oppose the message of Amos opposed the Most High God! Since Amaziah had rebelled against the word of God, God, through Amos, pronounces His judgment upon His enemy, Amaziah. Amaziah's wife was to become a common prostitute, selling her body and soul to other men. This is probably what she did because of the extreme conditions of privation and starvation during the siege of the cities of Israel just before the captivity. Amaziah's sons and daughters were to die violent deaths by the sword, either by murderers or soldiers in battle. His property, undoubtedly a large and rich estate, would become the booty of the invaders and be divided amongst heathen soldiers and conquerors. As for Amaziah himself, he would be taken captive with all the people of Israel and he would die in a heathen land, never again to see his beloved homeland. The encounter between Amos and Amaziah reminds us of the encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer. 38). God's word shall not return unto Him void but shall accomplish that which He purposes (Isa. 55:6-11).

Honeycutt in "*Amos And His Message*," has said, "In a day when the ministry tends toward a cold professionalism, the message of Amos carries a severe warning for the contemporary minister." The world will always need men of integrity who cannot be intimidated, coerced, or

threatened into silence at the very time when a prophetic voice is needed most. Here is to be found the acid test of preaching: Will a preacher speak for God in the face of adversity and hardship, even the threat of both job and life? Knudson has well observed: "Someone has said that there are two classes of preachers—the good preachers who have something to say, and the poor preachers who have to say something. But there is yet another and higher class. It consists of those who both have something to say, and who have to say it. Such are the prophets. Such a one was Amos." A poet has said it this way:

God give us men. The time demands
 Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and willing hands;
 Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
 Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
 Men who possess opinions and a will;
 Men who have honor; men who will not lie;
 Men who can stand before a demagogue
 And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;

Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
 In public duty and in private thinking!
 For while the rabble with their thumb-worn creeds,
 Their large professions and their little deeds
 Mingle in selfish strife; lo! Freedom weeps!
 Wrong rules the land, and waiting Justice sleeps.

by J. G. Holland

QUIZ

1. Why was Amaziah so excited about Amos' preaching?
2. Why would Amos' preaching at Bethel be particularly threatening to Israel?
3. What is a "son of the prophets?"
4. Name the specific judgments of God upon Amaziah and his family?
5. How does Amos furnish an example for preachers today?

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— GOD'S LONGSUFFERING HAS EXPIRED

TEXT: 8:1-6

- 1 Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, a basket of summer fruit.

- 2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said Jehovah unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.
- 3 And the songs of the temple shall be wailings in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah: the dead bodies shall be many; in every place shall they cast them forth with silence.
- 4 Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail,
- 5 saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit;
- 6 that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

QUERIES

- a. How does a "basket of summer fruit" symbolize the end of Israel?
- b. What is the meaning of "casting them forth with silence?"
- c. How will the ephah be made small and the shekel great?

PARAPHRASE

Then the Lord showed me a vision a basket full of ripe fruit. He asked me, What do you see, Amos? And I replied, I see a basket of summer-ripe fruit. Then the Lord God said to me, So are my people Israel ripe for destruction. I will not defer their punishment again. The songs of joy which the people sing at their riotous feasts in their temple will be turned into weeping and wailing. There will be dead bodies by the thousands where God has cast them down in many places; there will be a deathly silence as those living are overwhelmed at the terrible judgment of God. Listen to this, you who greedily plan to devour the poor man's possessions. You who sigh with impatience for the legal holidays and days of religious worship to be over and done with so you can get on with cheating the poor. You cheat and rob the poor by using short measures and raising prices; you cheat by weighing merchandise on rigged scales; you cheat by selling for grain the sweepings from the floor of your graneries. All this you do to make the poor man so poor he cannot even pay for a pair of shoes and then he is forced to become a slave to his creditors.

SUMMARY

Israel is ripe for destruction. Why? Because of her rebellion against Jehovah and His Law and all that is righteous and just. God's judgment will terrify!

COMMENT

v. 1-2 . . . BEHOLD, A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT . . . THE END IS COME UPON MY PEOPLE . . . The prophet is given another vision. What he sees is symbolic of Israel's future. He sees a basket filled with summer fruit. There can be no doubt as to what it symbolizes for God Himself has given the interpretation. Just as a basket of summer fruit indicates the reaper has gone through the vineyard and that the time for growing and developing has ended so God the reaper has passed through Israel and her time has ended (cf. Isa. 18:5; Jer. 24; Hosea 9:10; Joel 3:13; Micah 7:1; Nahum 3:12; Rev. 14:15, 18). "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved" (Jer. 8:20), could be written over the palaces and homes of Israel! Their last opportunity has come and gone according to the vision given to Amos. Most certainly there comes a time (known only to God, of course) when God's longsuffering runs out. His Spirit will not always strive with man (Gen. 6:3). It was revealed to Amos that this terrible moment was about to come to Israel.

v. 3 . . . THE SONGS OF THE TEMPLE SHALL BE WAILINGS IN THAT DAY . . . DEAD BODIES SHALL BE MANY . . . THEY CAST THEM FORTH WITH SILENCE. When that terrible day of the Lord shall come the songs of frivolous joy and merriment sung in their temples (plural in Israel) will be turned into howling shrieks of mourning; they will be weeping and wailing instead of laughing and singing. There will be cries of terror, fear; tears of mourning for the multitudes of dead bodies cast out in many places. Then after the first expressions of mourning there will come the awed silence born of the overwhelming severity of the judgment of God they experience (cf. Zeph. 1:7; Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:17). There will be the furtive whispers and glances as they literally feel the omnipotent wrath of God in their very presence.

v. 4-6 HEAR THIS . . . YE . . . THAT . . . SWALLOW UP THE NEEDY . . . SAYING, WHEN WILL THE NEW MOON BE GONE, THAT WE MAY SELL GRAIN . . . MAKING THE EPHAH SMALL . . . AND SELL THE REFUSE OF THE WHEAT? Israel is a nation of greedy profiteers, "Swallowing up the poor." The original text pictures the rich "panting" after the poor man and his possessions like a wild beast pants for its victim. The greedy rich harassed the poor and literally "stalked" them. The rich merchants and officials could barely wait while they punctiliously performed religious holidays until they could get back to cheating the poor and powerless. As far as the rich were concerned they only went through the motions of observing religious holidays for the sake of expediency. It helped them maintain control in governmental

affairs and gave them a show of being religious. That was as far as religion went in their lives. When they got to their houses of merchandise or judgment seats it was "do the other man before he has a chance to do you."

The *Chodesh* (the new moon) was a holiday on which all trade was suspended just as it was on the Sabbath (cf. II Kings 4:23; Isa. 1:13; Hos. 2:13). (For regulations concerning the Sabbath day see Exodus 20:9-10).

The *ephah* (in dry measure) is about $\frac{3}{5}$ of a bushel. The *shekel*, in Amos' day, was probably a hunk of crude, shapeless precious metal, heavy enough so as to approximate the value of the item purchased in actual weight. The buyer usually weighed his "money" to the seller. The Jewish *shekel* was such a weight (*shekel* literally means weight). Among the Jews the shekel was used for the temple tax, poll tax, and for redemption from the priesthood (Ex. 30:11-16; 13:13; Num. 3:44-51). Most historians believe that the earliest money pieces, as such, were struck about 700 B.C. in the small kingdom of Lydia in Asia Minor. So in Amos' day they were probably still using *shekels* as weights. In Jesus' day, of course, the shekel was struck in coin form and the value of a shekel then was worth about a day's wages. Now we can begin to see that if the greedy merchants made the ephah basket smaller than usual and increased the weight of the shekel over what it usually was then they were robbing the poor unmercifully. Not only that but they were using scales upon which to weigh grain that were "rigged." Furthermore, they were selling the chaff for wheat. The poor were being robbed so thoroughly that they did not even have enough to pay the very smallest debt (a pair of shoes). The poor debtor would either have to sell himself to his creditor (Lev. 25:39) or wait for the courts (which were also unjust) to hand him over to his creditor for enslavement.

Honeycutt says, "One of the most frighteningly disturbing events upon which an individual can contemplate is 'the end.' Whether it be the end of human existence as known in this life, the end of the cosmos as often stressed in some eschatological forecasts, or the end of an era of vitality for an institution; 'the end' is never a pleasant topic of conversation. Consideration of its reality is intensified in its sense of dread, however, when one comes to understand that 'the end' is not just a future event . . . Amos anticipated this when he spoke of the end as having already come upon Israel. The end of the nation had been so firmly fixed that he viewed it as already achieved. The nature of her character and her reaction to God had been such that Amos could speak of the end of Israel as a present reality."

When current political and religious structures and behaviours are examined, one often has this same feeling concerning the present reality of the end. The seeds of dissolution and destruction have been sown in both political and religious life and the end seems to be upon us now! It seems as though the end has already come!

In the case of Israel social injustice as a principle of life and conduct was cited as characteristic of a nation of whom it could be said "the end has come." We firmly believe that whether it be ancient Israel embroiled in the problems of the eighth century B.C. or contemporary America, the principle is the same. Social injustice as an accepted fact of life will bring about the destruction of any society, ancient or modern. The same is true of the manifestations of superficiality in religion.

QUIZ

1. How are we to interpret the figure of the basket of summer fruit? Why?
2. How severe will be the judgment of God upon Israel?
3. How were the rich cheating the poor?
4. Could Israel's destiny be a lesson for contemporary society? Why?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS PROPHESED—BITTER MOURNING

TEXT: 8:7-10

- 7 Jehovah hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.
- 8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River; and it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of Egypt.
- 9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.
- 10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sack cloth upon all lions; and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

QUERIES

- a. Why speak of the land "rising like the River?"
- b. Did the Lord actually cause the "sun to go down at noon?"
- c. Why and how is the Lord to bring "baldness upon every head?"

PARAPHRASE

Jehovah has sworn that just as surely as He is held up to be the pride and glory of Israel, He must punish Israel's inglorious sin. Every evil work she is guilty of will be punished for the Lord does not forget any sin not repented of. Yes, the whole nation will be shaken and there will be mourning everywhere. The judgment of the Lord will overwhelm the land like the River Nile at flood stage and the nation will rage like a flood with great trouble and destruction and then sink into nothingness. And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord, that I will cause Israel's "sun to go down at noon," that is, I will take away the sunlight of her prosperity and bring suddenly upon her the darkness of destruction right at the midday of her existence. And I will turn this nation upside down by turning your festivals into times of mourning and all your gay, frivolous songs will be turned into wailing, despairing cries of lamentation. I will cause the whole nation to put on their mourning clothes and shave their heads bald in mourning custom. Your mourning will be very great and very bitter—like the mourning of those whose only son has died.

SUMMARY

The Lord's judgment upon the unmitigated sin and rebellion of Israel will be very severe. The Lord is going to overwhelm the land with a flood of judgment. He is going to turn everything upside down.

COMMENT

v. 7-8 JEHOVAH HATH SWORN . . . THE LAND TREMBLE . . . IT SHALL RISE UP . . . LIKE THE RIVER . . . AND . . . BE TROUBLED AND SINK AGAIN . . . The scene changes. The "worm is turned." From a description of the sinful state of Israel, we are brought abruptly to a description of the Lord's terrible judgment. Jehovah is the pride of Jacob (Israel), (cf. I Sam. 15:29). Jehovah is the One in whom Israel gloried. And, as surely as Jehovah is the glory of Israel He is also her Judge. He must judge her sins. Leaving Israel's sins unpunished would be denying His glory. Amos paints, with figurative language, a terrifying picture of God's judgment. The nation will tremble with fear as the judgment of the Lord floods over it. The nation shall be troubled and rage within like the torrents of the flooding Nile River swelling over her banks, inundating and destroying everything in its path. Then Israel, subdued, will sink down. Some commentators think Amos is likening the behaviour of the earth's surface during earthquakes which God sent in judgment upon Israel to the rising and falling of the Nile. It would seem to us that what is to happen to Israel here is to cover

the entire length and breadth, or the whole population, and thus too extensive for a literal earthquake. We take his language to be figurative.

v. 9-10 . . . I WILL CAUSE THE SUN TO GO DOWN AT NOON . . . TURN YOUR FEASTS INTO MOURNING . . . BRING . . . BALDNESS UPON EVERY HEAD . . . AS A BITTER DAY. Since this would be such an extraordinary phenomenon if it happened literally, we would expect it to be historically noted by the prophet. Inasmuch as it is not we take it to be figurative. K & D say, ". . . to any man the sun sets at noon, when he is suddenly snatched away by death, in the very midst of his life. And this also applies to a nation when it is suddenly destroyed in the midst of its earthly prosperity." Jesus said, "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Jn. 9:4). Israel, at ease in Samaria and Bethel, riding on a wave of material and political well-being, was at the midday of her existence. It is doubtful that she enjoyed such prosperity even in the days of David and Solomon. But, when Israel thought it was noontime, God knew that her sun had set. God was about to turn this superficial brightness into what it really was, darkness, judgment, bitterness. Indeed, instead of the air of festivity and gaiety Jehovah was about to bring mourning, lamentation and bitterness. Their religious and social festivals would cease and their gay, suggestive, idle songs would be turned into doleful, sorrowful wailing. We have seen this happen in our own generation. The Great Third Reich of Adolph Hitler was turned from the bright sunlight of its midday into the blackness of utter defeat and destruction. The gay, martial songs and festivities of the early days of the Third Reich were turned into wailing and tears. Sackcloth was the dress of mourning. Baldness produced by shaving the head was done as a mark of mourning for the dead (cf. Lev. 21:5; Isa. 15:2; 22:12; Micah 1:16). Grief and mourning was to be so widespread as to be almost total. It would be very deep grief, like the grief of mother and father mourning the death of an only son. God's judgment would be long and bitter.

QUIZ

1. Why does the title, "the excellency of Jacob," mean that Jehovah must judge Israel for her sins?
2. Why is the language to be interpreted figuratively which speaks of "the land rising like the River . . . ?"
3. What is the meaning of the figure, "the sun to go down at noon . . . etc?"
4. What parallel to verse 10 have we witnessed in our own generation?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS PROPHESIED—SPIRITUAL FAMINE

TEXT: 8:11-14

- 11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah.
- 12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Jehovah, and shall not find it.
- 13 In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst.
- 14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, As thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, As the way of Beer-sheba liveth; they shall fall, and never rise up again.

QUERIES

- a. When did this "famine" of the words of Jehovah occur?
- b. Why would they "run to and fro" to seek the word of Jehovah?
- c. Who is the god of Dan?

PARAPHRASE

Listen, the time is coming very soon when I am going to send a spiritual famine upon this land. People will be starving to death for God's Word—not physical food. People will be dying of thirst for the living water. And they will stagger all over the earth, running hither and yon to find a consoling word from Jehovah but they will not find it. Even young women and young men in the vigor of youth, the strongest and best equipped to stand adversity will grow weak and pant for the living water of Jehovah's Word. Those who put their trust in the calf-gods of Israel like the one located at Dan and those who make pilgrimage to Beersheba to engage in idolatrous worship shall fall never to rise again!

SUMMARY

One aspect of God's judgment will be the spiritual famine resulting from Israel's rebellion. When the flood of judgment comes, however, the people will desperately seek for the bread of life, the word of God. Their impotent gods and worship will not supply them with the food they need.

COMMENT

v, 11-12 . . . I WILL SEND A FAMINE IN THE LAND . . . OF HEARING THE WORDS OF JEHOVAH . . . THEY SHALL WANDER FROM SEA TO SEA . . . AND SHALL NOT FIND IT. They had forbidden God's true prophets to bring to them the Word of the Lord (Amos 2:12). They refused to know His Word (cf. Isa. 1:3; II Chron. 15:3; Jer. 5:4). Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, describes the spiritual poverty of the nation in its death throes. He writes, ". . . the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land . . . My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children," (cf. Hos. 4:1, 6). This famine of the word of Jehovah began when Israel rejected the law and grew worse until God took them into captivity where they had no prophets to declare to them His word, (cf. Ezek. 3:26; 7:26). God turned away from Israel when He took them to the land of the Assyrians and caused the word of prophecy to cease. Chrysostom says, "God did not speak to them through the prophets; He breathed not upon them the Spirit through which they spake. He did not appear to them, but is silent and hidden. There was silence, enmity between God and man."

In death, destruction and in exile from the land of their fathers, crushed by their oppressors, hearing only of gods more cruel than the heathen who make them, they will "run to and fro," they will suffer a famine of truth, they will hunger and thirst for the God of Israel and some word from Him of His care for them and His fulfillment of the covenant made by Him, but they shall not find it. Hosea tells how the people of Israel, just before their downfall, sought revelation from idols, "My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God" (Hos. 4:12). Jerome writes, "Such is the present condition of the Jews. They roam in restless vagrancy about the world and seek the word of God; but they find it not, because they have killed the incarnate Word revealed in the written word."

To those of Amos' day and to those in every generation who reject the Word of God for some other philosophy, the message is the same. Inevitably, there will come the time when a word from God will be sought for like starving men seek for food. One writer warns, "Try to imagine all the influence of religion taken out of your life. In trouble, sickness, loneliness, failure, try to imagine yourself cut off from God.

This is what Amos prophesies . . ." Think of the nations, Russia—China, etc. which have rejected the word of God and remember how desperately hungry some within those enslaved lands are for the word of the Lord. In Moscow when Gene Dulin was asked to preach at the Russian Easter Sunday afternoon service, the minister said, "Give a powerful sermon on the resurrection!" Think of the ignorance, poverty and backwardness of the many nations where there has been a famine of the word of God or where His word has been kept secret by heretical priests and churches. Think of our own country where men are running to and fro preaching one panacea after another which are all doomed to failure because in large segments of this land there is a famine of the word of God!

v. 13-14 . . . FAIR VIRGINS AND THE YOUNG MEN FAINT FOR THIRST . . . THEY THAT SWEAR BY THE SIN OF SAMARIA . . . SHALL FALL, AND NEVER RISE AGAIN. Even young women and young men, in the vigor of youth, the best equipped to withstand these adverse conditions, will grow weak and hunger and thirst for some voice of authority and promise of help from Jehovah. It is true even today! Thousands and thousands of young people across our land, disillusioned and starved to death on the garbage of the contemporary intellectualism are "running to and fro" seeking a voice of authority, a sane standard of conduct, a life which consists of more than "things." But, because the "intelligentsia" of our world have, for the most part, rejected the word of the Lord, our young people "faint for thirst."

In Israel, in Amos' day, the people were swearing by (putting their trust in) the golden calf which they worshipped at Dan and Bethel. They believed that all their prosperity, like that of their heathen neighbors, was due to their worship of these idols and other idolatrous forms of worship made toward Jehovah at Beersheba. In our day, we are no better! Israel worshipped the golden calf only because she was sure her prosperity came through this. We worship science because we are sure our prosperity comes through it. Anthony Standen, in his book, *Science Is A Sacred Cow*, says, "What with scientists who are so deep in science that they cannot see it, non-scientists who are too overawed to express an opinion, hardly anyone is able to recognize science for what it is, the great Sacred Cow of our time." Yes, we have rejected the Word of God which reveals to us the True Source of both material and spiritual well-being, for our own Sacred Cow—science! We have our own Bethels, Dans, and Beershebas—our own priests and our own oracles. And if we continue to worship there and seek guidance there, WE SHALL FALL, AND NEVER RISE AGAIN!

QUIZ

1. What were the conditions of Israel in relation to spiritual knowledge of God in the days of Amos and Hosea?
2. When did God take His word away from Israel finally and completely?
3. Is the prophecy, "they shall not find it" still being fulfilled in the unconverted Jews today?
4. How does this section of Amos have relevance for our generation today?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS
PROPHESED—THOROUGH
AND INESCAPABLE

TEXT: 9:1-6

- 1 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar; and he said, Smite the capitals, that the thresholds may shake; and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the Sword: there shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape.
- 2 Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall my hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down.
- 3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and it shall bite them.
- 4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.
- 5 For the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, is he that toucheth the land and melteth, and all that dwell therein shall mourn; and it shall rise up wholly like the River, and shall sink again, like the River of Egypt;
- 9 it is he that buildeth his chambers in the heavens, and hath founded his vault upon the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; Jehovah is his name.

QUERIES

- a. Why does the Lord specify the smiting of the "capitals"?
- b. How may it be said that the Lord brings evil upon anyone?
- c. What is the Lord's "vault" upon earth?

PARAPHRASE

And I saw in a vision the Lord standing beside the idolatrous altar at Bethel to judge Israel. And He gave orders, saying, Smash the tops of the pillars and shake the temple until the pillars crumble and the roof crashes down upon the people below. Those who may escape this destruction will be caught and slain with the sword. Though they might be able to dig into Sheol, the place of departed spirits, My hand will reach there and find them; though they climb up to heaven in their attempt to escape Me, I will bring them down from there. Let them try to hide in the rocks atop Mount Carmel and I will search them out and capture them. Even if they could hide in the bottom of the sea, I could simply send the sea-serpent after them to bite and destroy them. And even though they think that by willingly going into captivity they may be safe from My judgment, I will see to it that many of them are killed there by the sword and that they receive judgment and not good. For the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the One who is judging, is the One who has but to touch the earth and it dissolves and all its people mourn, while the whole earth rises like the Nile, and sinks like the floods of Egypt. The sphere of this God's existence or His habitation is in the invisible heavens above the visible heavens as well as here on the earth. He is the same God who controls by His almighty power the waters of the sea, calling them up to pour out upon the face of the earth. Jehovah is this God's name.

SUMMARY

The judgment and destruction of Israel is inevitable, thorough and inescapable. This is because of the nature of her God—omniscient and omnipotent.

COMMENT

v. 1 I SAW THE LORD STANDING BESIDE THE ALTAR: AND HE SAID, SMITE . . . We must agree with Lange and Pusey, against K & D, that the "altar" here is the altar Jeroboam set up at Bethel. It would symbolize all the idolatry of which Israel was guilty and which God is about to judge and punish. The whole context and intent of Amos' ministry demands this interpretation. It is not possible in the light of the prophet's ministry that this is the altar at Jerusalem. God is giving Amos a vision of the thoroughness and inescapability of His judgment upon Israel and so it is pictured as being in progress. God commands, Smash the pillars! "Capitals" are really the crowns or

tops of the pillars in the idolatrous temple there at Bethel and other locations. These pillars were probably imitations of those in the true sanctuary at Jerusalem and so the Israelite temple was struck from above and made to collapse in total destruction upon the heads of those worshipping the golden calf. Should any succeed in escaping the crash of the building, even these God would slay with the sword. The point is, none shall escape who justly deserve the Lord's judgment.

The manner in which the Lord addresses Amos, saying, Smite . . . reminds us of God's commission to Jeremiah in Jer. 1:9-10 . . . "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." In a sense Amos did "Smite the pillars," even as Jeremiah "pulled down" kingdoms by foretelling the judgment of the Lord. The Lord's word of judgment is so absolutely certain to come to pass that when it is spoken it is as much as accomplished then.

v. 2-4 THOUGH THEY DIG INTO SHEOL . . . CLIMB UP TO HEAVEN . . . HIDE . . . IN THE TOP OF CARMEL . . . HID . . . IN THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA . . . GO INTO CAPTIVITY . . . THENCE WILL I COMMAND . . . AND . . . SLAY THEM . . . These verses sound very much like David's Psalm 139, praising God for His allseeing providence. It is not unlikely to suppose that Amos may have accommodated this Psalm in expressing the message God wanted him to give to Israel. However, it is not necessary to assume that he *must* have done so. In either instance it would not deny the infallibility of Amos' message. Such phrasing and figurative language is simply natural to the Hebrew expression to picture the omnipotence of God. There is simply no escape for the impenitent, in this world or any other, when God's judgment time has come. Sheol is the O.T. name for the place of departed souls, corresponding to the N.T. word Hades. The word occurs 65 times in the Hebrew OT and is rendered in the King James Version 31 times "hell," 31 times "grave," and 3 times "pit." This difference in translation is due to the fact that "hell" is ordinarily thought of as a place of punishment, while "grave" is substituted when the reference is to the souls of good men. In the American Standard Version no attempt is made to translate the word—it is merely transliterated into "Sheol." Psalms 16:10, quoted by Peter as a Messianic prophecy shows that Hades is the N.T. synonym for the O.T. Sheol. The reference to Mt. Carmel is made because it is a point on the extreme western boundary, immediately next to the Great Sea. As one writer has stated it, "Whoever hides himself there, must

know of no other secure refuge in all the land beside. And if there be no security there, nothing is left but the sea." The "serpent" is the one named Leviathan (cf. Isa. 27:1). Amos describes the people in their misery and terror as going willingly, gladly, into captivity before their enemies like a flock of sheep to escape judgment. Captivity, at least seemed safe. Yet, here too, God would command the swords of their enemies to slay them.

It is the omnipotent God who brings judgment. Judgment is never simply the action of humanity or nature alone. It arises out of the character of the holy God and finds expression through His control of time and history. God is the God of history, and history is the history of God. As such, history reflects God's action and ultimate control; it is not dominated solely by economic, social, or political forces. When judgment falls, let God be seen!

v. 5-6 FOR THE LORD . . . TOUCHETH THE LAND AND IT MELTETH . . . HE . . . BUILDETH HIS CHAMBERS IN THE HEAVENS . . . Now Amos substantiates all that he has promised before. The thoroughness and inescapability of the judgment which Amos prophesies is certain because of the nature and character of Jehovah of Hosts. He speaks and it comes to pass, He commands and the earth stands forth. He has no need to exert anything more than a mere touch and the earth melts! The word "chambers" means literally, "places to which one has to ascend, upper chambers, stories." K & D say, "The heaven in which God builds His stories, is the heaven of clouds; and the vault, according to Gen. 1:7, is the firmament of heaven, which divided the water above the firmament from the water beneath it. Consequently the upper rooms of God are the waters above the firmament, in or out of which God builds His stories (Psa. 104:3), i.e. the cloud-tower above the horizon of the earth, which is raised above it like a vault." "Vault" means literally, "arch." It probably refers to the firmament, or the visible heavens, which seems to span the earth like an arch. We believe Amos is simply picturing God's omnipresence. He dwells everywhere. He is high above everything that man can see or imagine. Not only so, but He is in absolute control of the forces of nature. Even in our own self-sophisticated age of science and technology the sea, the rain, the weather all remain uncontrolled by man yet mysteriously under universal laws which defy human comprehension and analyzation. What with all our advances we still are at the mercy of the sea and floods. Jehovah commands the entire universe and uses it to bring judgment upon His enemies and blessing to His friends.

QUIZ

1. Where was the Lord standing when Amos saw Him?
1. What are the "capitals" God commanded to be smashed?
3. Where is Sheol?
4. What is the "serpent" of the sea?
5. Where are the "chambers" which God builds in the heavens?
6. What is the "vault" upon the earth?
7. What is Amos' purpose in all his figurative language?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS
PROPHESED—DISRUPTION
AND DISPERSION

TEXT: 9:7-10

- 7 Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith Jehovah. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?
- 8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; save that I will not utterly destroy the houses of Jacob, saith Jehovah.
- 9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least kernel fall upon the earth.
- 10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, The evil shall not overtake nor meet us.

QUERIES

- a. Why does God compare Israel to the Philistines and Syrians?
- b. What part of the house of Jacob will Jehovah not destroy?
- c. How will God "sift" Israel like "grain in a sieve?"

PARAPHRASE

What makes you think, O Israel, that you are any better in My eyes than the Philistines and the Syrians? Just because I brought you from Egypt and put in you this land is no reason to think that I will overlook your sin anymore than I do not overlook the sin of these other nations which I also established in their lands. I am no respecter

of person for I am offended with sin in every man. I am fully aware of the sinfulness of the kingdom of Israel, and I will wipe that kingdom off the face of the earth. No, I will not totally destroy the entire house of Jacob for a very few are still righteous and god-fearing people; and I will save that remnant. But I am going to give the command and the house of Israel will be disrupted and dispersed among all the nations like grain is shaken and sifted in a sieve. The solid, good grain remains but the trash falls to the ground. So it shall be with Israel. All those sinful, complacent people who say, Evil shall not come upon us, will die violently by the sword. The righteous shall be saved.

SUMMARY

God warns a complacent people that He is no respecter of person. The wicked shall die for their sins. The good shall be saved. God is going to obliterate the kingdom of Israel from the face of the earth.

COMMENT

v. 7-8 ARE YE NOT AS THE CHILDREN OF THE ETHIOPIANS UNTO ME, O CHILDREN OF ISRAEL . . . BEHOLD THE EYES OF THE LORD . . . ARE UPON THE SINFUL KINGDOM . . . " . . . children of the Ethiopians" is also translated "sons of the Cushites," Ham's posterity. This should pierce the pride of the Israelite as nothing else would do—to liken them to the heathen. It certainly was intended to destroy the veneer of complacency with which they had deluded themselves. The bringing of Israel out of Egypt in a special way avails no more than the bringing of the Syrians and Philistines out of their former dwelling places. God did it all. With God it is not where you came from and what you were that counts—it is what you are now and what you are becoming that counts! The sinful of Israel were depending upon their past heritage and special treatment by God. Jesus had to deal with the same complacency and pride with the Pharisees (cf. Jn. 8:31ff). This trust in themselves—"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," (Acts 10:34-35; cf. Rom. 10:12; Mt. 5:45). Special treatment is no license to sin! God is offended by sin in any people, and especially so in a people whom He has chosen and blessed above others! His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom!

Caphtor is probably Crete or perhaps refers to all the islands of the Aegean Sea. Kir is in the general direction of Elam (today it is Iran).

For other details on the nations see our comments on Amos chapters one and two.

The word of Jehovah is that the kingdom of Israel, as a kingdom, will be totally obliterated from the face of the earth. The fulfillment of this is found in II Kings 17. That does not mean, of course, that God has violated His covenant with Jacob (named Israel). God has kept His covenant, even in judgment and destruction of the sinner. Man, the sinner, has *not* kept his covenant. Those few righteous of the northern kingdom who did keep God's covenant terms were to become (with the righteous of Judah's dispersed) the seed of the messianic nation through which God was going to ultimately fulfill His covenant. Amos is gradually leading into the glorious climax of his prophecy in which he paints word pictures with figurative language of the future blessings of the Messianic age when God shall have fulfilled His promises in Christ and the Church.

v. 9-10 . . . WILL SIFT THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AMONG ALL THE NATIONS . . . YET SHALL NOT THE LEAST KERNEL FALL UPON THE EARTH . . . ALL THE SINNERS OF MY PEOPLE SHALL DIE . . . The heritage of Israel did not grant immunity from judgment, and physical descent from Jacob did not guarantee exemption from accountability. Love is neither blind, nor is it weak. Consequently, as Honeycutt observes, the wrath in God's love and the love in God's wrath should be equally recognized. Remember that one of the backgrounds upon which the prophets are to be read and interpreted is "Judgment-Redemption." Judgment is never the last word in God's scheme. There is a redemptive emphasis which is a result of judgment in history.

Verse 9 definitely refers to the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes of Israel which occurred about 722-721 B.C. The Assyrian emperor transported the Jews and scattered them from one city to another in the vast Assyrian empire. He also imported foreigners into the former territory of Israel. These married the few poor and insignificant Jews left behind in Israel and became the Samaritans. The kingdom of Israel was never to be established again. But there is that righteous remnant still within this rotten nation. Not one of those shall "fall upon the earth." This will be the holy seed-grain out of which the Lord will form a new and holy people (Christians—the Church) and kingdom of God over which the "son-king" in Isaiah 9 and 11 will reign. K & D likens the Gentile nations among whom the northern kingdom (and later the southern kingdom) was dispersed unto the

sieve—"Such a sieve are the nations of the world, through which Israel is purged from its chaff, i.e. from its ungodly members. It is true that among those of Judah who returned from the Babylonian captivity with Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah were some of the ten tribes of Israel.

Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) has left records of the fall of the northern kingdom. Many of the Israelites were deported to Upper Mesopotamia and Media and lost their identity there. Many of the people of Israel lost their national identity through assimilation during the centuries following their deportation. Others made their way southward to Judah, and remnants of them appear among the later Jews. Those who lost their identity are often referred to as the "ten lost tribes of Israel." This is not altogether accurate. From the establishment of the Church until time shall cease, however, all Jews, as well as Gentiles, must appropriate the promises of God through Jesus Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek. We shall amplify this in our next section.

QUIZ

1. Is God a respecter of person? Prove it!
2. When God destroyed Israel did He fail to keep His covenant?
3. Who are the "kernels" which shall not fall to the ground?
4. What finally happened to the kingdom of Israel and all its people?
5. Are there "ten lost tribes of Israel today?"

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— DAVID'S THRONE AND DOMINION RESTORED

TEXT: 9:11-12

- 11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old;
- 12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations that are called by my name, saith Jehovah that doeth this.

QUERIES

- a. What is the "tabernacle of David" and why is it fallen?
- b. How and when will God raise it up and rebuild it?
- c. How will the covenant people "possess" all the nations?

PARAPHRASE

When I have thoroughly sifted and purged the covenant people through captivity and prepared them for the coming of the Messiah I will establish again the Messianic throne which I began in David and promised to perpetuate through his lineage. I will raise up the throne of David from the ruins into which it has fallen and restore it until it far exceeds its former glory. This new Davidic kingdom will conquer in spiritual warfare many people from the former enemies of God's covenant nation. All from the many Gentile nations who become worshippers of Jehovah God will become citizens of this new Davidic kingdom.

SUMMARY

Out of the purging process of captivity God will bring about the fulfillment of His covenant of redemption through the revived lineage of David.

COMMENT

v. 11 . . . I WILL RAISE UP THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID. . . That this has its fulfillment in the establishment and ongoing of the Church cannot be questioned! All one has to do is turn to Acts 15:12-21 to find that Holy Spirit inspired apostles have confirmed such fulfillment. There can be no argument with the authoritative pronouncements of the New Testament when it specifically states the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. The passage in Acts 15:12-21 is one of those "key passages" referred to in our introductory study entitled "Interpreting The Prophets." This passage from Amos (9:11-12) is not the only prophet quoted by James in Acts 15:12-21, but it *is* quoted as having its fulfillment in the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles and their reception into the Church which is the restored kingdom of David, Christ, the son of David, reigning upon that throne. We take the liberty of quoting extensively just here from "*New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecies*," by James D. Bales, pub. The Harding College Press, pages 150, 151, 152, 153, 167, 168:

"James did not say that he was quoting Amos. It is true that much is found in Amos, but it is not true that the context permits one to think that he is quoting Amos and adding to what Amos or any of the prophets said, when he said: After this I will return.

"James expressly said that he was not referring to only one prophet. 'And to this agree the words of the prophets.' (Acts 15:15). *James was using words from the prophets, plural, and not from a prophet, singular.*

"Why, then, when one fails to find all that James said in one of the prophets, such as Amos, must one conclude that James has added something to what one prophet said. James stated that he was using the words of more than one prophet.

". . . we can take written words of the prophets, and the ideas expressed in those written words, and put them together to say just what James said. And James evidently put together written words for he said that he was giving written words of the prophets which applied to the taking out of a people from the Gentiles for God's name. And the places from whence we take these words will be from passages which deal with the same theme. This is the judgment of God on Israel for her sins, and then the gathering of the children of Israel into His favor—at least the gathering of those who would accept Him. In Jeremiah 12 God describes His forsaking of 'mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.' (12:7). After a time of punishment He said, 'And it shall come to pass, *after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, the Lord liveth; as they taught my people to swear to Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.*' (Jer. 12:15-17). Amos speaks of the same thing. He speaks of the Lord's destroying the sinful kingdom, except that He would not utterly destroy them (9:8-10). Then he stated that He would raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, etc. (9:11-12). They were, just as Jeremiah said, to be planted on their land after he had brought them out of captivity (9:14-15).

"Jeremiah and James use almost identical words. 'After that I have plucked them out I will return,' God said through Jeremiah (12:15). 'After this I will return,' God said through James in referring to what was written in the words of the

prophets (Acts 15:15). God said, in other words, that after He had visited punishment on the house of Israel, that He would return and rebuild the tabernacle of David. It was *after this*—after his punishments on Israel which were stated by Old Testament prophets—that God would rebuild the tabernacle of David. It was not after the new covenant days, and the calling of the Gentiles, that God would rebuild David's tabernacle. And this having been done—God having punished them for the sins which such as Amos and Jeremiah denounced them for—God was now rebuilding David's tabernacle.

"There are words of the prophets written, other than those of Jeremiah and Amos, which show that the Gentiles were to seek the Lord . . . (Isa. 11:10). Words of prophets which James quoted stated that the tabernacle of David was to be rebuilt in the future (future from the time that the prophets spoke) that the Gentiles might seek the Lord (Acts 15:16-17). Christ is that root of Jesse and today the Gentiles seek Him. Paul showed this when he proved from Old Testament prophecies that the Gentiles were to receive mercy of God, and he showed that these promises applied to the present dispensation of mercy. *So Paul proved by Old Testament prophecies the same thing that James proved.* (cf. Rom. 15:8-9). Paul then quotes at least four Old Testament statements to show that God had planned to extend mercy, which was being extended during the gospel dispensation, to the Gentiles. And the fourth quotation is as follows: 'And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.' Paul went on to say that he was 'the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sacrificed by the Holy Spirit.' (Rom. 15:12, 16). Christ, then, is the root of Jesse whom the Gentiles seek in this present age. But Isaiah said that it was to be 'in that day.' (Isa. 11:10), . . . the context is applied by the premillennialists to a future dispensation. Yet, the Gentiles now seek the root of Jesse. They were to seek Him "in that day." So evidently that day has come. *Thus Paul and James agree, and agree with the prophets, that the present dispensation is the one in which the prophets had prophesied that the Gentiles would seek the Lord.*"

Mr. Bales also gives an excellent treatment of the phrase "tabernacle of David." We shall quote briefly from his work but suggest that our readers purchase a copy of his book here quoted for detailed study:

"The rebuilding of the tabernacle of David was evidently not a rebuilding of the Mosaical system, but the restoration of a king to David's throne. And that Christ is now on David's throne we have shown in another chapter. The Mosaical system will not be rebuilt. Its mediator, Moses, has now been replaced by Christ (Deut. 18:15-17; Acts 3:22-26). The old Covenant was to pass away, and it has passed away (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:5-10, 16). Its sacrifices have ceased for the Lamb of God has been offered once for all to bear the sins of the world."

Thus we believe that this "key" passage in Amos 9:11-12, as interpreted by Spirit-borne apostles in Acts 15:15-16, along with the multitudes of other such prophecies as compared with the New Testament teaching that the covenant made to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ, proves that the Old Testament prophets were speaking of the Messianic kingdom—the church of Christ—not some dispensation or millenium which is to follow the age in which we are now living. Of course, the consummation of all that God promised in His covenant with Abraham and has potentially accomplished in Christ, will all be realized when Christ comes the second time, "not to deal with sin," (not to give another opportunity for the salvation of the Jews or anyone else), and when all the ages will be over and time shall become eternity and He shall make a new heaven and a new earth.

v. 12 . . . THAT THEY MAY POSSESS THE REMNANT OF EDOM . . . Connected as it is to what has gone before, this phrase is, of course, fulfilled in the establishment of the church and the evangelization of the Gentiles just as the preceding prophecy is so fulfilled. See our comments on Obadiah, verse 20-21 for further study. The Old Testament prophecies most certainly did not have their ultimate future fulfillment in the mere literal restoration of the Jews to a portion of land. Listen to John P. Milton in "*Prophecy Interpreted*," pages 14, 15, 71, 72, 73:

"The prediction of Amos, 'that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name' (Amos 9:12), implies the conquest of Edom and other Gentile nations and their incorporation by force into the national Israel; which could be one way of sharing the blessing of

the covenant, at the same time as it indicated the victory of God and of His people over their enemies. The imagery fits the historically contemporaneous situation. *But* there are other Old Testament prophecies, such as in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 which have already dropped the imagery of physical conquest in favor of the more spiritual one of a voluntary seeking of the Lord in response to invitation, and have thus prepared the way for the New Testament use of the Amos passage in Acts 15:17 . . . "

There are too many people today who believe that unless God fulfills in a literal way, by restoring the physical Jewish nation to a physical Palestine, the covenant He made with Abraham, that God is not faithful to His word. Mr. Milton continues:

"God is faithful to His word, but He can get along without us if we are faithless. That is both the glory and the tragedy of Israel. That which God set out to do through Abraham as His servant and through Israel as His people He has fulfilled, and is fulfilling now, through Christ and the Christian Church. It couldn't be made any clearer than it is in Acts 3:17-26. Read it in your Bible. And notice, it does not say a word about the land of Palestine, or even about Israel as a nation, but drives straight to the heart of the promise of blessing.

"We must learn to distinguish between that which is the very essence of a promise, or its central idea, and that which belongs to the temporary forms of which God made use in bringing the promise to fulfillment. We must learn to distinguish, too, between the eternal and the transient in prophecy. The possession of the land by Israel was an essential stage in the working out of God's covenant of blessing for all men. So was the call of Abraham and the history of the people of Israel. But nowhere in the New Testament is there the slightest indication that these are of the essence of the new covenant. The 'central idea' in the Old Testament promise which is fulfilled in Christ is not the promise of a bit of territory on earth. If the New Testament is right in what it says, even the patriarchs saw more clearly than to set their hopes on an earthly Canaan: they looked for a better country, a heavenly one:

And, again:

"When Amos says, . . . (9:11-12), James in Acts 15:15-18 puts it . . . The difference is significant. The prophet uses what to him must have been a perfectly natural picture of covenant fulfillment in the form of a national conquest of an ancient enemy. It is as if he visualized the incorporation of Edom in Israel as a result of conquest; in this way the blessing of God's covenant would be shared also by them. The New Testament uses the picture of the Gentiles seeking the God of Israel and a share in the blessings of His people. See Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4. What is the nature of those blessings? A careful study of the covenant will make it clear that even in the case of Israel they were essentially spiritual. Should it then be too difficult to see that when Amos speaks of the mountains dripping sweet wine he may be concerned with more than material prosperity; and that its ultimate reference is to 'every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places of Christ? It belongs to the progressiveness of revelation to bring out the meaning latent in the original promise in and through the fulfillment. The 'times-coloring' disappears . . . and the spiritual reality remains, only more clearly discerned as befits the fulfillment. Which is the more important to stress, the promise of the land or of the blessing? Which is the 'central idea' in the covenant promise?"

This leads us to a consideration of the next section of Amos which describes in highly figurative and "times-coloring" language the future glory and prosperity (spiritual) of the Messianic kingdom (tabernacle of David).

QUIZ

1. How may we be sure of the interpretation and fulfillment of this prophecy?
2. How many prophets did James quote in Acts 15:15-17 besides Amos?
3. What is the "tabernacle of David?"
4. How many more times is Christ coming to the world? What is He coming for?
5. Who is to possess the "remnant of Edom, and all the nations...?"
7. How does prophecy in Amos connect with Obadiah's prophecy?

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— FRUITFULNESS AND PROSPERITY RESTORED

TEXT: 9:13-14

- 13 Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.
- 14 And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

QUERIES

- a. What is the meaning of "the plowman shall overtake the reaper?"
- b. When did God "bring back the captivity of . . . Israel?"

PARAPHRASE

Lo: The days are coming, says the Lord, when there shall be one unceasing inpouring of spiritual harvest in the resurrected dynasty of David. It will be as if a plowman followed right on top of the reaper to prepare the field immediately for another crop! Or, it will be as if those who tread the grapes would have such a large harvest they would be treading the grapes right into the time normally set aside for re-seeding the vineyards! Such shall be the abundance and super-abundance in this spiritual harvest of blessings, that it shall be as though the hills of Palestine are dissolving themselves in the rich streams of mercy and grace which they pour down. I will restore the fortunes of my covenant people. I will sustain them materially that they may serve Me to accomplish the restoration of David's throne and the super-abundance of spiritual blessings.

SUMMARY

Jehovah, through Amos, continues speaking of the great purpose a purged and chastened people are to serve—the restoration of David's throne and fulfillment of the covenant in spiritual blessings.

COMMENT

v. 13 . . . THE PLOWMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER . . . The prophet takes a phrase from the Law (Lev. 26:5) to describe a super-abundant harvest which is so wholly beyond the natural as to be supernatural. He is, therefore, speaking of the consequences of the restoration of the throne of David, i.e. the reigning of Jesus Christ upon that throne and the establishment of the church. Pusey says, "All this is beyond nature, and so, the more in harmony with what went before, the establishment of a kingdom of grace, in which the heathen should have the name of God called upon them . . . There shall be one unceasing inpouring of riches; no break in the heavenly husbandry; labor shall at once yield fruit; the harvest shall but encourage fresh labor. The end shall come swiftly on the beginning; the end shall not close the past only, but issue forth anew. Such is the character of the roils of the Gospel." Compare the words of Jesus in John 4:35-38! This restored dynasty of David has a glorious future filled with fruitfulness and prosperity! Just as the "raising up of the tabernacle of David" refers to the Gospel age, so this, in the same context, is explained by Paul in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places of Christ . . ." It should be very evident that the prophet is not speaking literally when we are told that "the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt." Pusey, again, "Such shall be the abundance and super-abundance of blessing, that it shall be as though the hills dissolved themselves in the rich streams which they poured down . . . Everything, heretofore barren and unfruitful, should overflow with spiritual blessing. The mountains and hills of Judea, with their terraced sides clad with the vine were a natural symbol of fruitfulness to the Jews, but they themselves could not think that natural fruitfulness was meant under this imagery. It would have been a hyperbole as to things of nature; but what, in natural things, is a hyperbole, is but a faint shadow of the joys and rich delights and glad fruitfulness of grace."

v. 14 AND I WILL BRING BACK THE CAPTIVITY OF MY PEOPLE ISRAEL . . . The Revised Standard Version translates this phrase, "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel . . ." K & D says this, "That this phrase is not used here to denote the return of the people from captivity, but the turning of misfortune and misery into prosperity and salvation, is evident from the context; for Israel cannot be brought back out of captivity *after* it has already taken possession of the Gen-

tiles." (v. 12) K & D interpret verse 14 thus: "As . . . the territory of the re-erected kingdom of David . . . will receive the blessing of the greatest fertility, so will the citizens of this kingdom, be no more visited with calamity and judgment, but enjoy the rich beneficent fruits of their labor in blessed and unbroken peace." It is possible, though the context (as K & D say) does not seem to favor it, that Amos is using what Milton terms "shortened perspective" (see our introductory study of principles and interpretation) here. In other words, it may be that Amos is speaking of what God is going to do historically in restoring the Jews to Palestine in the time of Cyrus (536 B.C.) but that out of that shall come the future blessings in the Son of David, the Messiah. It could be that Amos' perspective is so shortened that the beginning of God's work in the restoration from the captivity is blended right into the eschatological fulfillment of it in the "last days" (the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the Christian age). We must remind ourselves again and again that the prophets spoke primarily for their contemporaries. Whatever they would wish to convey of God's ultimate blessings in fulfilling His covenant the prophets would have to couch in contemporary historical developments and contemporary modes of expression. So God promises here to restore, bless and sustain where He had formerly disrupted, dispersed and judged.

QUIZ

1. How is verse 13 to be interpreted—literally or figuratively? Explain your reasons.
2. What is the RSV translation of the first phrase of v. 14?
3. What reasoning does K & D give to agree with the RSV translation?
4. What do we mean by "shortened perspective?"
5. Why is it necessary to remember that the prophets spoke for their contemporaries?

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— SECURITY-PEACE-PROTECTION RESTORED

TEXT: 9:15

- 15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God.

QUERIES

- a. When did God "plant" them upon their land?
- b. Were the Jews ever again plucked up out of their land?

PARAPHRASE

And I, the Lord God, will establish, sustain and protect this new kingdom of David. The citizens of this kingdom will be guarded by Me and no one shall ever pluck them out of their inheritance which I have given them, says the Lord thy God.

SUMMARY

God is the builder, sustainer and protector of the Messianic kingdom. Its citizens are safe and secure.

COMMENT

v. 15 . . . I WILL PLANT THEM . . . AND THEY SHALL NO MORE BE PLUCKED UP . . . This, of course, is within the context of what we have been discussing—the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant by the restoring of the Davidic throne with the attendant blessings as a consequence of that restoration. Here the emphasis is on the victory, peace and security that will come when David's throne is raised up. We want to share with our readers certain comments here from Lange:

" . . . God will magnify Israel by establishing a new condition of prosperity . . . directly mediated through the action of the judgment. This judgment . . . operates . . . in a purifying direction . . . the divine grace shows itself in this, that after the destruction of the ungodly elements, first and chiefly in the ten tribes, but also in Judah, there arises a single but prosperous and powerful kingdom of Israel under the legitimate monarchy, which attracts to itself all the elements spared and refined by the judgment, including those which belonged to the existing ten tribes . . ."

Again, Lange says:

"The threatening, as well as the promises of prophecy, find their complete fulfillment first in the New Testament, yet not in the literal Israel, but in the people of God represented by Israel in so far as it is apostate.

"A certain fulfillment was no doubt experienced in the restoration accomplished by the Jews who returned from ex-

ile. But this was by no means 'the Messianic salvation,' the consummation of God's kingdom in Israel . . . The Messiah came in the person of Jesus Christ.

"What therefore was promised to Israel passes over by virtue of the new covenant to all who belong to Israel through faith in Christ and form the people of God. And we are not at all to expect a literal fulfillment of these engagements to a national Israel, and in the shape of temporal blessings on the stand-point of the Old Testament. For, if we did, it would follow that there must be a literal possession of the 'remnant of Edom.' But the boldest realist will hardly conclude that in the future Edom will again exist alongside of Israel.

"We may here appropriate in substance the observations of Keil, who says that 'the raising up of David's fallen hut commenced with the coming of Christ and the founding of the Christian Church by the Apostles—(as to which we refer, e.g., only to Luke 1:32, 33, where Jesus is represented as the restorer of David's throne, and one whose kingdom shall have no end).—and the possession of Edom and of all the other nations upon whom the Lord reveals his name, took its rise in the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven set up by Christ . . . The land which will flow with streams of divine blessing is not Palestine, but the domain of the Christian Church . . . The people which cultivate this land is the Christian Church, so far as it stands in living faith and produces the fruits of the Holy Spirit.'

"And—we may add—so far as the Jews are converted to Christ and incorporated into the Christian community, there is 'a bringing back of the captives.' Still this 'bringing back' is not limited to Israel after the flesh. Its fulfillment is to be sought more generally in the freedom which Christ has brought, in consequence of which believers in Him are no longer prisoners under the control of an alien power. They 'possess the glorious liberty of the children of God,' through their enjoyment of communion with God.

". . . this promise for the people of God first began to be fulfilled at the appearing of the Messiah and in the domain of the Christian Church. Its complete fulfillment is to be expected at the *parousia* of Christ; and then the spiritual blessing, the spiritual power and greatness, the spiritual freedom which the people of God now enjoy, will obtain a corresponding outward sensible manifestation."

The promise of God that in Messianic days He would establish a kingdom so securely that it would never be conquered or "plucked up," is found in a number of places in the prophets (cf. Jer. 24:6; 31:28; Isa. 60:21; Ezek. 37:25). One should read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 37 to get the full impact of prophetic expression. Notice in Ezek. 37:24-28 that the resurrected dynasty of David is central! Isaiah spoke gloriously of the peace and victory that was to come when God's covenant would be fulfilled (cf. Isa. 25:1—26:6).

Old Testament prophecies were viewed by New Testament authority to have been fulfilled in spirit. Yet, the attendant physical phenomena were not recorded. Obviously they did not accompany the fulfillment of the principle, or real content of the prophecy. This does not invalidate the prophetic ministry of the prophets. Rather *it illustrates that the physical descriptions were literary devices used to express a truth that otherwise would have defied description.*

Pre-millennial literalism in seeking physical fulfillment in a physical Jewish nation misses the whole point of the prophetic message and, in our opinion, is completely out of harmony with plain, unequivocal New Testament teaching as to its fulfillment. Lange finds it worthy of note that a Hebrew with the background and hopes such as James would have failed to see a literal fulfillment of these closing words of Amos. Lange says, ". . . it is remarkable that James, who was so pronounced a representative of the Judaistic tendency, should regard such a promise as we have in Amos, as fulfilled, so far as regards its meaning, in the appearance of Christ and the spiritual blessings thence resulting, without even once referring it to the second coming of the Saviour. Even he therefore is a patron of the so-called spiritual interpretation of the prophecies; and if the theological explanation here finds itself in agreement with a disciple of the Lord, and him a man of strong Jewish-Christian feeling, that is a proof that it is on the right track, and has so much the more reason for disowning the doctrine of a future glorification of the national Israel as guaranteed by the prophets."

This last verse of Amos reminds of Jesus who said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (Jn. 10:27-29). It also reminds of Romans 8:31-39—read this passage again. The peace, security, fruitfulness, blessing which we find in Christ, God planned ages and ages ago and revealed it to the minds and

hearts of stalwart men of God like Amos to deliver to those who would take comfort in it. Those men, in turn, master artists all, each in his own way, splashed in variegated hues, now bold and arresting, now shaded and peaceful, using hyperbole, simile, metaphor and parable as their paints, one glorious picture after another of God's holiness and love working for man's redemption in every historical event.

We would like to know more about this great spokesman of God. But here our association ends until it is renewed, we trust, in that day when what he preached and predicted shall be consummated. Amos, man of holy conscience, unselfish motives, unshakable courage and uncompromising conviction was not a prophet by profession or training. He was a simple rustic, a shepherd, whom God charged with delivering to his countrymen the Lord's message of judgment, repentance and redemption. He received "a divers portion" of the message of God and communicated it in "divers manners." Every Christian today, even the least in the kingdom, is greater than Amos in the sense that God has spoken to the Christian in these last days Son-wise. The least the Christian can do is seek to exemplify Amos' holy conscience, unselfish motives, unshakable courage and uncompromising conviction.

QUIZ

1. What is the emphasis in v. 15 as it is connected with the whole context?
2. How are we to interpret the whole passage? Where is it fulfilled?
3. Where else in the O.T. prophets is the principle of v. 15 found?
4. What is remarkable about the fact that James interprets the context as fulfilled in Christ?
5. Where in the N.T. do we find the principle of security, peace and victory pronounced?
6. How should Amos, the man, become an example for the Christian?

A M O S

EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Summarize in one paragraph, the philosophy of history as taught by the Old Testament prophets.
2. Describe in detail, the circumstances of the times in which Amos took God's message to Israel.
3. What is generally accepted as the theme of the book of Amos?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two.

1	2
Uzziah	a synonym for Israel
Carmel	the high priest of Israel
Tekoa	king of Judah
Gaza	center of worship in Israel
Damascus	capital of Syria
Ammon	city of Philistia
Moab	Amos' home town
Amaziah	mountain in Israel
Tabernacle of David	city of Philistia
Bethel	Messianic prophecy
Nazirites	heathen nation east of Jordan
Ashdod	heathen nation east of Jordan
Jacob	Jewish sect

MEMORIZATIONS

" . . . because I will do this unto thee, _____ to meet thy _____, O Israel."

"Seek _____, and not _____, that ye may live; and so _____, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say."

"But let _____ roll down as _____, and _____ as a mighty stream."

"Woe to them that are at _____ in Zion, and to them that are _____ in the mountain of Samaria . . ."

"In that day I will rise up the _____ of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its _____ and I will _____ it as in the days of old;"

EXAMINATION
CONTEMPLATIONS

1. What was Amos' occupation? What did he mean he was "not the son of a prophet?"
2. What was the birthplace of Amos and what type of life did he lead?
3. Why did God direct Amos to pronounce judgment upon the many heathen nations surrounding the chosen people? What is the lesson in this for today?
4. What kind of living were the people engaging in according to Amos' description?
5. Why is Amos called the prophet of "social justice?"
6. What was the religious condition of the northern kingdom in Amos' day?
7. What opposition did Amos meet in his preaching in Israel?
8. Does the book of Amos teach against the use of musical instruments in the worship of God?
9. Where is the Messianic prophecy recorded in the book of Amos? Where is it repeated in the New Testament?
10. What does the N.T. interpretation of Amos' prophecy teach concerning the Messianic kingdom?

REVOLUTION OR REGENERATION

Amos 5:24

INTRODUCTION

I. MAN'S REDEMPTION, TRANSFORMATION, REGENERATION IS TO BE ACTED OUT OR EXPRESSED IN SOCIAL RELATIONS

A. God created man; He created this world order

1. He has not abdicated His sovereignty over this order
2. He maintains His sovereignty and moral government by holding the world responsible to His revealed Will

B. All men and nations are responsible to God for moral uprightness and just social behavior

1. The O.T. prophets spoke principles and guidelines for social relations which are as relevant today as they were 2500 years ago . . .
2. These same principles are amplified and confirmed by Jesus Christ and His apostles

II. GOD'S WORD JUDGES EVERY HUMAN CULTURE AND INSTITUTION

A. The U.S.S.R AND CHINA are as much "under God" as the U.S.A., because God is infinite, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. HE TRANSCENDS ALL POWERS AS WELL AS ALL THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN ABILITIES, INSTITUTIONS AND NATIONS. HE IS THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE

1. Cf. Amos 1-2; Isaiah 13-23; Jer., Ezek., ect. Daniel
2. "It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me . . ." Jer. 27:5

III. PRIVILEGE BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY

A. If God expected so much of Israel and Judah in Amos' day in social justice because they were witnesses of the One True God,

B. How much more does he require of U.S.A. since we have so long had the glorious gospel and providential grace of God in material means?!

SERMON FROM AMOS

IV. GOD'S WAY OF BRINGING ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

- A. He did not call upon Israel to send a Senate Investigation Committee to discover the causes and recommend cures for the nations problem—HE REVEALED IT . . . SIN WAS THE CAUSE . . . REPENTANCE THE CURE
- B. He did not send a Ph.D., an URBANOLOGIST, SOCIOLOGIST, OR SHEEPHERDER AND FRUITPICKER TO SIMPLY DECLARE WITH CONVICTION AND CLARITY THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD!
- C. God did not call upon Israel's government to provide a massive welfare war on poverty, to pass a sword-control bill. He called upon them to obey the Divine Law
 1. Amos did not preach civil disobedience to the poor, he preached obedience to God to all
 2. Israel did not need a great politician, organizer, economist, legislator . . . SHE NEEDED A GREAT PREACHER, A HEARLD OF THE TRUTH, A CONSCIENCE-STABBING CRYER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, A WARRIOR OF THE FAITH!

SO THIS MAN AMOS, NOT A PROFESSIONAL CLERGYMAN, NOT A SIGN-CARRYING RIOTER, NOT AN ORGANIZER OF MARCHES . . . BUT A MAN ALL ALONE, WHO BELIEVED GOD AND HAD THE COURAGE TO PREACH GOD'S MESSAGE, HAS A RELEVANT MESSAGE FOR OUR SOCIETY TODAY!

DISCUSSION

I. THE SOCIAL SICKNESS OF ISRAEL'S DECADENT SOCIETY CLOSELY PARALLELS THAT OF OUR OWN

- A. "They have forgotten how to do right, says the Lord. They maintain their palaces by the fruit of violence and robbery." Phillips, Amos 3:10
 1. Violence and crime in our world is at an appalling level!
 2. 15 yr. olds commit more serious crimes than any other age group; 1/6 boy is referred to the juvenile court; in 1965 more than 2 million Americans were sentenced to prison; 40% of all male children will be arrested sometime in their lives for something more serious than traffic violations; 3 million crimes reported in 1965 while in some places only 1/10th of certain crimes are reported
 3. In all large cities no one is safe on the streets after dark; THERE ARE MANY WHO ARE ADVOCATING THE BURNING DOWN OF CITIES, RIOTING, CIVIL REVOLUTION! Gangs of wild, thrill-seeking, cruel, cold-blooded boys and girls roam the streets, even of Joplin!

4. Organized Crime like the Mafia, etc., control great institutions and organizations and often city governments and political parties!
- B. Indulgent luxury and sensual excess; ". . . at ease in Zion lying upon beds of ivory, eat lambs from the flock . . . sing idle songs . . . drink wine in bowls . . . anoint themselves with finest oils . . ." Amos 6:1-6a
 1. Indulgence and excess is rampant all over the world among the rich and poor, in every realm possible
 2. Indulgence in building expensive homes and clothes
 3. Excess in eating, obesity, have to take pills, etc.
 4. Excessive indulgence in frivolity, recreation, etc.
 5. Excess in alcohol are ruining us. Yale School of Alcohol Studies, drinking cause of 20% of all divorces, 25% of all insanity, 37% of all poverty, 47% of all child misery, 50% of all crimes, 50% of all traffic deaths; industry loses 60 million man hours and 1 billion a year in wages due to alcohol absenteeism; Hoover says 5 billion a year is spent to combat crime due to liquor drinking. This is 1 billion more than total revenue received by federal government for liquor sold!!!
 6. We have so indulged in sex it is openly perverted . . . homosexual wedding performed in Rotterdam by catholic priest . . . plays on Broadway now have naked women and men on stage and roaming through audience . . . a movie about the love of two lesbians for one another is being shown in New York.

In one play, Time describes, "In full light, and facing the audience, the unclothed heroine knelt on a table throughout the play as a symbol of passive white idealism. A fully dressed Negro, symbolizing angry black nationalism, devours her." THE DECADENT CANAANITE, GREEK AND ROMAN THEATRES HAD NOTHING ON THOSE OF U.S.A.!

7. We indulgently pay money to see such things . . . corrupt-minded movie stars make millions of dollars off indulgent society . . . sports heroes are paid fabulous salaries . . . so-called entertainers are millionaires over night simply for sitting and spouting obscenities on the T.V.
- C. Oppression of the poor: ". . . cows of Bashan, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy . . . trample the poor . . . afflict the righteous, turn aside the needy . . ." (cf. 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4-6)

SERMON FROM AMOS

1. Like it or not there are people all over the world who make their living by oppressing the poor . . . yes, even here in Joplin
 2. Loan sharks; those who exploit people by bring young girls into prostitution to escape poverty; criminals who exploit the poor by selling them numbers or other forms of gambling; people who pay less than fair wages simply because of a persons color or nationality
 3. Like it or not some people in America have been denied the opportunities others have simply because they were black-skinned, were Mexican nationality, were poorly dressed, etc. I have lived in the South, and the West and the North and it is all the same! Greed, prejudice, SIN causes men to oppress one another!
 4. GOD WILL NOT HOLD THE OPPRESSORS OF THE POOR GUILTLESS . . . NEITHER WILL HE HOLD GUILTLESS THOSE WHO KNOW IT AND DO NOTHING ABOUT IT! ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO OUGHT TO BE REGENERATING SOCIETY BY PREACHING REPENTANCE TO THE OPPRESSORS, AND HOPE TO THE OPPRESSED!
- D. Perverting Justice and Righteousness: "O you who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth . . . you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe . . . they hate him who reproves in the gate . . . abhor him who speaks the truth" (5:7, 10, 12)
1. Convicted criminals go unpunished because of political pressures on courts and judges or because of outright bribes
 2. Looters encouraged to rob, destroy because politicians want votes
 3. Rich and influential able to get by with flouting tax laws, and other laws the poor and middle class would not
 4. International criminals violate our sovereignty and we do nothing
 5. Our boys dying in V.N. while our so-called allies ship our enemies food and arms
 6. Those who stand for truth, justice, law and order, smeared as fanatics, extremists
- E. Apathy—Indifference ". . . but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph . . ." 6:6b
1. None seem to have the courage to speak out against evil and in favor of righteousness

2. Too many have it too good . . . and those who do not have it so good want to change the situation only in terms of materialistic values!

Rolland Steever says in Christian Standard, July 6, 1968, Christ in the Ghettos . . . "We cannot turn our faces away and fearfully hope that this situation will go away. It will not!"

3. People have made sin respectable by euphemizing it . . . the godless liquor traffic is now called "tavern, grill, nightclub, cocktail lounge." Drunkenness is called "illness of alcoholism." Youthful crime is called "juvenile delinquency". Pornography is called "realism," Divorce and sexual promiscuity are recommended as producing maturity for later marital relations, immodest dress is called "fashionable." Dope addition is called "escapeism."

- 4 10 or 12 people stand by and watch a pregnant school teacher attacked and raped in Kansas City. Others warch while a gang kick an old man to death in New York park.

LEGISLATORS AND JUSTICES SEEM UNCONCERNED OR PARALYZED BY FEAR TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE MORAL ANARCHY EXCEPT VOTE MORE MONEY HANDOUTS AS RANSOMS

POLITICIANS HAVE PROPOSED EVERY PANACEA POSSIBLE AND ALL THEIR SCHEMES ONLY ADD MORE PROBLEMS TO THE PROBLEM SCIENCE'S SOLUTIONS ARE SUPERFICIAL AND SHALLOW

EDUCATION IS EXTRANEIOUS AND IRRELEVANT TO THE PREDICAMENT

WHAT ARE WE TO DO? WHERE ARE WE TO TURN? WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

II. THE CAUSE OF ISRAEL'S DECADENCE PARALLELS OUR OWN

- A. Psychiatrist Carl Jung, in a letter to E. Stanley Jones, wrote, "Those psychiatrists who are not superficial have come to the conclusion that the vast neurotic misery of the world could be termed a neurosis of emptiness. Men cut themselves off from the root of their being, from God, and then life turns empty, meaningless, without purpose. So when God goes, goal goes. When goal goes, meaning goes. When meaning goes, value goes, and life turns dead on our hands."
- B. Sidney Cave, in his book, "The Christian Way," says "Right and wrong are, for many, words which have ceased to have any intelligible content, and the sense of liberation from the restrictions of traditional morality has brought not the joy of freedom but

SERMON FROM AMOS

the *malaise* which comes from lives lived without aim or meaning. We are all aware of the psychic injury suffered by a child if he finds that the one he has trusted as his father is not his father. That is the plight of many in the modern world. They have lost their heavenly Father and feel not liberated, but merely insecure . . . Many have lost the sense of a father's care but not the sense of need."

- C. Time, April 26, 1968, in an article on American authors, says they are "viewing the world as a lunatic comedy . . . they work from an assumption that society is at best malevolent and stupid, at worst wholly lunatic. The gods are dead and their graves untended, morality is a matter of picking one's way between competing absurdities, and the only sane reaction to society—to its alleged truths and virtues, its would-be terrors and taboos—is a cackle or a scream of possibly cathartic laughter"

WHAT IS THE CAUSE? "MEN HAVE CUT THEMSELVES OFF FROM THE ROOT OF THEIR BEING, GOD . . . THEY HAVE LOST THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER . . . THE GODS ARE DEAD . . ."

D. ISRAEL'S ROAD TO RUIN WAS PAVED WITH UNBELIEF, IDOLATRY, RITUALISM

1. ". . . because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes . . ." 2:4
2. THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR LIES—2:4
". . . but their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked."

OUR NATION IS FILLED WITH POLITICAL LEADERS, INDUSTRIAL LEADERS, YES, EVEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO HAVE REJECTED THE WORD OF GOD . . . THEY HAVE SCORNFULY REJECTED THE TRUTH OF GOD . . . THEY HAVE EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR THE SATANIC INSPIRED LIES OF HUMANISM, AND EVOLUTIONISM.

3. The Israelites in Amos' day were worshipping idols, golden-calves, star-gods and other images at Bethel and Dan (cf. 3:14; 5:25-27)

AND OUR NATION HAS ITS IDOLS AND IMAGES TO WHICH THEY PAY OBEDIENCE . . . MOVIE STARS, ENTERTAINERS, SPORTS, TELEVISION, AUTOMOBILES, HOUSES, POLITICIANS, PHILOSOPHERS, THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR!

WE HAVE OUR SHRINES, THE MOVIE HOUSE, THE NIGHTCLUBS, THE STADIUMS, POLITICAL RALLIES, WHERE THERE ARE SET RITUALS WE ALL GO THROUGH, LAKESIDES, ETC.

A M O S

4. Ritualism ". . . bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days . . . proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel."
4:4-5

10 years ago in Christian Standard, Jan J. Erteszak said, in an article "From Asylum to Powerhouse" 12-5-59 . . . "Our churches are increasing in membership and material well-being at an unprecedented rate. Religion has become popular. But, almost in inverse proportion to its popularity, it is losing its central place of commitment in the lives of the people." YES, WE HAVE MANY PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO GO TO CHURCH AND GO THROUGH THE RITUALS . . . THEY LOVE TO DO THIS . . . IT SALVES THE CONSCIENCE . . . BUT GOD AND HIS WORD DOES NOT PERMEATE THEIR EVERYDAY LIVING!

THIS IS THE CAUSE . . . IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CAUSE OF EVERY SOCIETY WHICH HAS PERISHED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH . . . REJECTION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD'S REVEALED WORD!!!

EGYPT DID NOT DIE FROM LACK OF WEALTH OR POWER!

OLD BABYLON DID NOT DIE FROM LACK OF EDUCATION OR CULTURE!

ASSYRIA DID NOT DIE FOR LACK OF MILITARY MIGHT!

THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE WAS THE RICHEST ON EARTH!

PERSIA WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

GREECE WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

ROME WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

AND ON AND ON ONE MIGHT GO . . . NONE OF THEM WERE OVERTHROWN AS A RESULT OF ATTEMPTS BY ENSLAVED PEOPLE THYING TO HAVE A DEMOCRACY . . . SO DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS OF NO ASSURANCE OF PERPETUATION OF SOCIETY!

ALL SOCIETIES, GOVERNMENTS, PEOPLES, INDIVIDUALS STAND OR FALL ACCORDING TO THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE UNIVERSAL AND ETERNAL PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE MORAL GOVERNMENT!

MORAL ANARCHY BREEDS POLITICAL ANARCHY . . . WHICH WILL IN TURN PRODUCE POLITICAL DICTATORSHIP AND MORAL DICTATORSHIP.

IT IS PRAGMATICALLY PROVEN CORRECT . . . A PERSON OR A NATION CAN ONLY BE FREE SPIRITUALLY, MORALLY, AND POLITICALLY IF IT KNOWS AND DOES THE TRUTH OF GOD!

SERMON FROM AMOS

III. THE CURE FOR ISRAEL'S DECADENCE IS THE SAME CURE NEEDED TODAY . . . REGENERATION

- A. Cecil Todd said in his last Revival Fires magazine, "Our nation has strayed from God! Our problem is not the color of people's skin; our problem is the color of people's hearts. The heart of our problem is the problem of our hearts! Our problem is not the poverty-stricken ghettos—the slum areas; our problem, rather, is the poverty-stricken souls—the slums of people's hearts . . . What we need in this country more than a war on poverty is a war on sin."
- B. Amos said it this way: "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord the God of hosts will be with you . . . Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate . . . let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream." 5:14-15, 23-24
- C. The prophets taught and Jesus confirmed that all social morality finds its roots, its spiritual source and compelling power over the consciences of men in the character of God Himself. To seek God is to seek good; to love God is to love good, and, conversely, to hate evil because God hates evil.
1. The solution is even as it was in the days of Jeremiah . . . restoration of the old paths wherein is the good way (Jer. 6:16-21) . . . the solution is REGENERATION, not REVOLUTION.
 2. Social injustice cannot be corrected by simply renovation and reorganization of the social structure. NO MATTER WHICH POLITICAL PARTY REORGANIZES!
 3. Social injustice can only be overcome when men are recreated in the image of God. SOCIETY WILL NEVER BE CHANGED EXCEPT AS INDIVIDUAL MEN ARE CHANGED! AND MEN WILL NEVER BE CHANGED UNTIL THEY ARE UNITED WITH GOD THROUGH HIS REVELATION WHICH IN THESE DAYS IS MADE IN HIS INCARNATE SON
- D. The FAITHFULNESS OF GOD is the great motivating power appealed to by the prophets. GOD HAS KEPT HIS PROMISES IN THE PAST . . . HE WILL KEEP THEM IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE!!
1. History is appealed to.
 2. So, what God did through Jesus Christ in time and in history is confirmation of the FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (II Cor. 1:20) . . .

AMOS

THIS BECOMES THE BASIS OF MORALITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, EVERYTHING . . . BECAUSE IT IS THROUGH THESE EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES THAT WE ARE ABLE TO ESCAPE THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD AND BECOME PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE . . . REGENERATED (II Pet. 1:3-4)

CONCLUSION

WHAT THEN CAN THE CHURCH DO IN OUR AGE OF SOCIAL UPHEAVAL . . . HOW IS THE CHURCH TO BE INVOLVED . . . HOW MAY IT BE MADE RELEVANT FOR THIS GENERATION?

I. THE CHURCH MUST START BY OUT-COMMITTING THOSE WHO, BY THEIR OWN ADMISSION, ARE DETERMINED TO DESTROY OUR SOCIETY

A. A committed church is a fellowship of believers which accepts the following premises and acts upon them:

1. The basic teachings of Christ are universal in time, space, and every situation of life . . . as significant in London, Berlin, Moscow, Paris, Peking as U.S.A.
2. They are just as pertinent to our interdependent and complex society of today as they were in the first century
3. They are applicable to the totality of our problems—business, home, public life, international relations
4. Those who practice the Christian precepts in their daily lives are blessed themselves while, at the same time, they bring blessings to their society.

B. The church must come to grips with the following tasks:

1. Of involving men in her message for today and in her activity . . . SHOWING MEN THAT THE WORD OF GOD IS RELEVANT FOR THEIR PROBLEMS . . . EVANGELIZE THOSE WHO ARE SEARCHING TODAY
2. Become skillful in building a lasting conviction in its members. WE MUST CONVINCe MEN THAT CHRIST'S RULE OF LOVE REALLY WORKS . . . THAT IT WILL ENRICH THEM IN THE GREATEST POSSIBLE WAY . . . SPIRITUALLY
3. It must learn to generate commitment in its entire membership . . . IN A COMMITTED CHURCH THERE ARE NO SPECTATORS: EVERYONE IS A PARTICIPANT . . . EVERYONE HAS A TASK

SERMON FROM AMOS

THE CHURCH CAN ONLY IMPART WHAT IT POSSESSES, AND THE EXTENT OF ITS INFLUENCE WILL DEPEND ON THE SINGLE-MINDEDNESS, THE SPIRITUAL MUSCLE, THE DEPTH OF CONVICTION, AND THE WILLINGNESS TO WITNESS OF THOSE WHO ARE FULLY COMMITTED.

IT IS USUALLY AT THE CROSSROADS OF DESTINY THAT REAL PROGRESS IS AFFECTED. WE ARE AT SUCH A CROSSROAD. IF WE UNDERTAKE TO BRING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO GRIPS WITH THE 20TH CENTURY, WE CAN, AND WE WILL CHANGE THE COURSE OF THE HISTORY OF DISSOLUTION WHICH IS NOW IN THE MAKING

II. IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU AND WITH ME AS INDIVIDUALS

TO BE A CHRISTIAN IS NOT SO MUCH DOING THIS OR THAT, BUT ALLOWING GOD TO CREATE IN YOU HIS OWN IMAGE—JESUS CHRIST!

NATIONS MAY CRUMBLE, BUT GOD'S PROMISES ARE CERTAIN TO ENDURE!!



"That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches . . ." (Amos 6:4). Ivory plaques, often inlaid with gold and precious stones, decorated with cherubs and religious motifs of foreign origin, have been found by the hundred at Megiddo and Samaria. They testify to the luxury and extravagance of the upper classes in Israel in the first half of the eighth century B. C., against which the Prophet Amos thundered in vain.

ALONE

It is human to stand with the crowd, it is divine to stand alone; it is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is God-like to follow a principle, to stem the tide.

It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty.

"No man stood with me, but all men forsook me," wrote the battle-scared apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer for his life for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world.

Truth has been out of fashion since man changed his robe of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves.

Noah built and voyaged alone. His neighbors laughed at his strangeness and perished in style.

Abraham wandered and worshipped alone. Sodomites smiled at the simple shepherd, followed the fashion, and fed the flames.

Daniel dined and prayed alone. Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone. Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone. Jesus loved and died alone.

And of the lonely way His disciples should walk, He said: "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Of their treatment by the many who walk in the broad way, He said: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

The church in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The church of the kings praised Moses and persecuted the prophets.

The church of Caiaphas praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus. The church of the Popes praised the Saviour and persecuted the saints. And the multitudes now, both in the church and the world, applaud the courage and fortitude of the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness or foolishness like faithfulness to truth today.

Wanted, today, men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortune and friends and life itself.

SPECIAL STUDY TEN

FIGURES OF SPEECH IN AMOS

American Standard Version

by Shirley Woolsey

CHAPTER 1

- v. 2 — Jehovah will roar and utter voice . . . anthropomorphism . . . pastures shall mourn, the top of Carmel shall wither . . . personification
- v. 3 — for three transgressions, yea for four (also in vv. 6, 9, 11, 13, and 2:1, 4, and 6) . . . meiosis
they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron . . . personification of Gilead and verbal metaphor
- v. 4 — send fire into Hazeal that shall devour the palaces (also in vv. 7, 10, 12, 14, and 2:2 and 5) . . . metaphor
- v. 5 — break the bar of Damascus . . . verbal metaphor
- v. 11 — cast off pity,
anger did tear . . . verbal metaphors or personifications of abstract qualities: pity and anger

CHAPTER 2

- v. 7 — they pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor . . . hyperbole
- v. 9 — height was like the height of cedars . . . simile
they were strong as the oaks . . . simile
I destroyed their fruit from above and roots from beneath . . . metaphor
- v. 13 — I will press you, as a cart is pressed down that is full of sheaves . . . simile
- v. 14 — flight shall perish from the swift . . . personification of flight
- v. 16 — flee away naked . . . maybe literal, or an ellipsis if it means naked of courage

In chapters 1 and 2 there is a climax of judgments, in the Oriental custom of "beating around the bush" . . . finally coming to Israel.

1:3—Damascus; 1:6—Gaza; 1:9—Tyre; 1:11—Edom; 1:13—2:1 Moab; 2:4—Judah; 2:6—Israel.

AMOS

- v. 11 — You were as a brand plucked out of the burning . . . simile
- v. 13 — God treads on the high places of the earth . . . anthropomorphism

CHAPTER 5

- v. 2 — virgin of Israel is fallen,
no more rise,
cast upon her land
none to raise her . . . personification of nation
- v. 3 — 1,000 and 100 left
100 and just 10 left . . . synecdoche (definite no. for indefinite)
- v. 6 — God will break out like fire, devour, none will quench . . . simile
- v. 7 — You turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth . . . verbal metaphor and perhaps a hyperbole
- v. 8 — God calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the earth . . . anthropomorphism
- v. 18 — The day of the Lord is darkness and not light (also v. 20) . . . metaphor
- v. 19 — As a man flees from lion and bear meets him
As a man runs to house, leans on wall and a snake bites him:
So (you seek day of Lord and will find it darkness.)
. . . similitude which climaxes with an interrogation
- v. 24 — let justice roll down as waters
and righteousness as a mighty stream . . . personification of justice and righteousness and a simile.

CHAPTER 6

- v. 3 — you that (try to) put away the evil day . . . ellipsis and cause the seat of violence to come near . . . metonymy (cause stated and effect understood)
- v. 8 — abhor excellency of Jacob . . . metonymy (nation called by name of founder)
- v. 12 — shall horses run upon rocks?
shall one plow the sea with oxen? . . . interrogation
6:12b compare with 5:7