

# The Christian Arsenal

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## AMOS 7:1-9:15

Today we finish our study of the **Book of Amos**. The message of Amos has been a message of judgment and destruction, but I believe as we finish today we'll see it end on a note of hope and assurance for the future.

The 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> chapters of **Amos** present to us five visions that God gave to Amos. The first three visions are found in **chapter 7** and they show a progression from what God says He is **not** going to do to what He **will** do.

These **first three visions** show that God will not destroy Israel utterly. He will not destroy the righteous with the unrighteous, but He **will** measure all the Israelites by His own standards.

### **Amos 7:1-3...**

We're not going to cover these visions in great detail, but I believe we see in this **first vision** a picture of total devastation by locusts. Locusts can swarm into a land in such numbers that they can completely wipe out and totally destroy a harvest and God was showing Amos how He was ready to totally destroy Israel.

**But what happened?** Amos interceded for Israel. He begged God not to destroy Israel and **verse 3** tells us God responded to Amos' plea and He relented and did not totally destroy Israel.

The **second vision** God gave Amos is found in

### **Verses 4-6...**

And it's the judgment of fire. Again this would have totally destroyed the land. Amos again implored the Lord not to do this and God again relented and didn't send the fiery judgment the vision portrayed.

The third vision God gave Amos is found in

### **Verses 7-9...**

**This vision is different from the first two, isn't it?** Some historians believe the first two visions actually refer to two literal invasions from the east that were turned back. Whether they actually stood for literal invasions or not, we know from Jewish history that God often (probably more often than anyone really knows) turned back, by His mighty power, forces that wanted to come against Israel and totally destroy them.

But, why was God so patient with His people?

Well, one reason is that God had made a promise long before to their fathers, and another reason is that God is such a God of **mercy** and He is so **longsuffering** and **patient**. God had waited and waited and waited for Israel to turn from her idolatry and wickedness. God had sent prophet after prophet. He had given them years and years to repent...**He had protected them from their enemies and He had provided for their every need.**

But God is not only a God of *love* and *mercy* and *peace* and *comfort* and *compassion* and *longsuffering* and *patience*, God is also a God of **holiness** and **righteousness** and **justice** and **wrath**.

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And we see in this third vision that the Lord is standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb and He is standing there with a plumb line in His hand. A plumb line is a string with a weight at the end. When the string is held up the weight is pulled directly down by gravity and the result is a true vertical.

**When God is pictured as standing by the wall with a plumb line in His hand, this is a way of saying that He is about to check Israel to see if the nation is as upright as it claims to be.**

See, Israel had been built true to plumb. Israel had started out correctly.

**Israel didn't just appear! Israel wasn't just founded by man!  
Israel wasn't just discovered!**

No! Israel was birthed in the heart of Almighty God! God had graciously called a people to Himself. God had given them the Law to govern their **religious** and **moral** and **political** and **family** lives.

God didn't call them because of their talents or special abilities. They were talented and had special abilities because God called them!

**God told them He would set above all nations...for praise and for fame and for honor. God told them they would abound in prosperity.**

God says back in *Deuteronomy*, "I didn't set My love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the people, for you were fewest of all people, but I loved you and I made an oath to your fathers to make you a great nation."

See, God is a covenant-keeping God and we'll see more about that later. God had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He kept it!

These folks were **also** supposed to keep something. These folks were supposed to love God with all their heart and soul. This is why when God was giving the people the Ten Commandments, He said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me..."

Now, He didn't mean, "**I'm to be the number one god.**" He didn't mean that at all. Remember when God gave them the Law? It was when they were coming out of Egypt, wasn't it?

A lot of that Egyptian paganism had crept into their way of thinking. What usually happened is that every home had its shelf or mantle of gods and there was the god of fertility, the god of the moon, the god of the sun, the god of rain, the god of fire and...the God of Jehovah.

Oh, they didn't completely forget about God, but I mean, after all, you have to have all these other gods, don't you?

Then God led them for forty years through the wilderness and they **had** to depend on Jehovah and even though they murmured and complained against Him, they pretty much worshiped Jehovah...I mean, He was pretty much all they had, wasn't He?

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Well, then when they moved into the Promised Land, God told them to drive out the Canaanites and the Hittites and all those other “ites”. God wanted them to drive out all the pagans, but they didn’t do it. They willfully disobeyed God and allowed these heathens to live in the land with them.

So, the heathens in the Promised Land said, “Listen, you Jews, listen...your God, Jehovah, was a good God in the wilderness, but you’re not in the wilderness now. You’ve come to the big city. Jehovah may have served you well back yonder. But not now, He won’t work here...you’ve got to have **our** gods in order to succeed here.

Does this sound familiar? We’ve heard this before, haven’t we? Maybe not in those words, of course, but isn’t that the way it works for us? Haven’t you seen this happen with so many people? Maybe it’s happened to you, or maybe to your children.

I mean, as little children, we love the Lord but as we grow older and older and we get into our teenage years or young adulthood, sometimes...so many times...**too many times**...our hearts grow cold toward the things of God and we begin to go after the gods of this world. Why? Because we become persuaded that the God of our childhood is not going to serve us well in our adulthood. We have to take up other gods...and serve other gods if we’re going to succeed.

So, when He says, “Thou shalt have no gods before Me...” literally He’s saying, “Thou shall have no gods **to My face**.” That means when God looks into our lives He doesn’t want to see Himself as **number one**...He wants to see Himself **the only God**...period!!!

It’s not enough to say, “Well, I put God first. But, you know I’ve got these other gods that I serve.” He says, “Absolutely not! When I look on your shelf I don’t want to see any other god except Me!” Being **first** isn’t enough! It’s being **only** that is sufficient. The other nations around you may have all these other gods, but you aren’t all these other nations.

So, the question is, “How is your life being measured? Is your life being measured against the commandments of Jehovah or is your life being measured against the world around you? What is the plumb line that your life is measured against?”

The plumb line that measures you and me is the same plumb line that measured these people.

Let me give you an example...

Imagine a class of children who are about to receive an art lesson from one of their teachers. The first step in their lesson is to draw a straight line on the left side of their sheet of paper. But, before the teacher can tell exactly how she wants them to draw that line, she is called out of the room. Well, she’s gone about five or ten minutes and the kids get antsy to draw their line and what do you think they did? They drew a line on their paper!

Then they began to compare their sheets of paper. Little Billy says to little Mary, “My line is straighter than yours.” Well, of course, little Mary doesn’t think so. She believes her line is straighter than Billy’s line. And then little Tommy comes up and says, “My line is straighter than both of yours.” So, pretty soon they look at all the papers and compare and some of them are really straight and some of them look like I drew them...they’re really crooked. Only little Tommy’s line looked really straight.

Well, the teacher finally comes back into the room and says that she did not want a freely drawn line, but one drawn with a ruler. She then goes around to each child’s desk and draws the ruler line on each paper, next to the hand-drawn one.

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**What happened? You know! Every hand-drawn line...even Tommy's...looks very crooked!**

See, that's the trouble we have when we measure our lives against God's plumb line. Before God steps in, the lines we've been drawing by the making of many small ethical decisions seem fairly straight. And when we compare them with the world **we** look really good and even when we compare them with other Christians **our lives** seem even better because we naturally tend to compare them with those who do worse than we do. **Don't we?** Oh yes, we rate ourselves highly! But then God steps in and we **all** look crooked!!

What was their plumb line? It was the pure and holy walk God had called them to. It was the Law...but it was also more. It was the promise of the coming Messiah...did they look forward to His coming? And I sure some of these folks would compare themselves with those around them and say, "Well, you know, God, I'm better than the person in the next tent...I never miss a sacrifice and I never miss a feast day, so You shouldn't judge me in the same way.

And if we were honest, you and I say something like that even today, don't we? "I know I'm a better Christian than he is or she is..."

You know how God would answer that? He'd say, "All right, let's see who really measures up to being good." He sent His plumb line, the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "**This** is what's good. Who measures up to that?" No one does, of course. We are all condemned. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God, haven't we? But the good news is that the same Christ by whom our corruption is revealed is also the Christ who died on Calvary that our sin might be covered and we might be declared righteous in God's sight!!

**Verses 10-17** tell us of Amos' confrontation with Amaziah. We covered this several weeks ago...Amaziah doesn't like what he's hearing from Amos and he accuses Amos of treason and Amos tells Amaziah that he's just God's messenger boy...

## **Verses 14-15...**

I believe Amos was telling Amaziah in a very subtle yet sarcastic way, "Amaziah, you're a priest. For goodness sakes, man, why don't you act like it? I'm not a prophet, nor even the son of a prophet. I'm a herdsman and a fig picker, and yet I've been called by God to come up here and preach to your people! You think I shouldn't say the things I'm saying? Well, you'll just have to take that up with God!"

Amos was definitely not a "seeker friendly" preacher, was he? And that's what Amaziah and the people wanted. Remember the old Columbo series? Remember when Columbo would pause on his way out and say, "by the way..." and then he'd drop a bomb on the folks? Well, that's sort of the feeling here as Amos says,

"You attack me for preaching what I preach, but before I leave and I'm sure this will be the last time I'm invited to speak before you...but by the way, before I leave, just let me say that your wife shall become a harlot and your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be divided up and you yourself will die upon foreign soil..."

I bet that went over real big, don't you? You'd think that would have gotten old Amaziah's attention, wouldn't you?

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The fourth vision God gave Amos is in **chapter 8**...

It's a basket of summer fruit and you know, a basket of summer fruit seems so harmless, doesn't it? And it is until you think of what happens to it if you just leave it for awhile. What happens to fruit if left alone? Well, it goes bad, doesn't it?

I believe God is saying, "Israel, you're ripe for judgment and I'm not going to sit by and see you rot away and decay and self destruct. There **will** be destruction but it will be **controlled destruction**... controlled by My mighty hand."

Amos goes on in **chapter 8** and tells about their mistreatment of the poor and their dishonest business practices. See, it was business as usual for these folks. Prophets came and prophets went, but the people of Israel couldn't have cared less!

They'd convinced themselves that God didn't matter!

God's standards didn't matter!

God's Word didn't matter!

God's prophets didn't matter!

Hey, they were prospering! They were getting away with all their underhanded business deals! God had looked the other way! Surely if judgment hadn't come yet, it wasn't going to come at all! I mean, look at how much God had let them get by with!!

But look at **verses 7-8**...

God never forgets, folks! Now, He's told us if we come to Him and repent He will not remember our sins anymore...but He **chooses** not to remember our sins, because they've been washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But here He says, "Indeed I will never forget any of their deeds."

See, God had laid down specific moral laws for these folks. They didn't have to wonder how to treat their fellow man...God had already told them!

They didn't have to look at the nations around and follow their example...God had already told them!

And God said, "**You will pay a price for this...**"

God had warned them of this...God had told them already...

**Deuteronomy 28... "as the Lord delighted over you to prosper you so the Lord will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you."**

**Verses 9-10...**

- **a time of natural calamity**
- **a time of mourning**

**But something worse will happen to them...a time of spiritual hunger!**

**Verses 11-12...**

In one sense this has already been fulfilled...

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I believe it was fulfilled to a certain extent **when the Assyrians actually came in and took over Israel.**

But, I believe it was fulfilled to a greater extent during the time between Malachi and the time of Jesus. There were 400 silent years between the fall of the two kingdoms and the coming of the Lord Jesus when the word of God ceased. **For 400 years we have no recorded word from God.**

No prophet came and told the people what God was up to.

The people had been driven from their land and dispersed. Some returned and rebuilt the Temple, but there would be other dispersions and Israel and Judah would cease to exist as sovereign nations.

Much history took place during those 400 years, **but God didn't speak.**

The Greek Empire rose during that time, **but God didn't speak.**

Alexander the Great conquered the known world and then sat down and wept because he had no more worlds to conquer, **but God didn't speak.**

The construction of the Great Wall of China was begun, **but God didn't speak.**

Rome came to power, but **God didn't speak.**

Cleopatra was made queen of Egypt, but **God didn't speak.**

Caesar was declared to be a god, but **Almighty Jehovah didn't speak.**

Many others things happened during these 400 years, but **God didn't speak!**  
**You know, it must have been a dreadful time!!**

We're not in that time today, are we? I mean, we have so many translations of God's Word. My husband and I have the LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE, we have THE INSIGHT FOR LIVING BIBLE, THE INTERNATIONAL INDUCTIVE STUDY BIBLE, THE WORD IN LIFE STUDY BIBLE. We have the JOHN MACARTHUR STUDY BIBLE. We have the NAS, the NIV, the KJV, the NKJV. We have the Williams translation of the NT, and the Phillips translation of the NT.

And I'm sure you have most of these and then some...

**What I'm trying to say is that our problem is not that we don't have the Word. Our problem in our day is not a famine of the Word of God... God is not silent today. He isn't giving us any new revelation, but the Holy Spirit stands ready to teach us from what God has already once and for all delivered to His people.**

The problem is not the lack of Bibles, it's not the lack of good sound preaching...it is not the lack of good resources...

The problem is the attitude of millions who simply have no time for God's Scriptures. **And I'll say this morning what you've heard me say many times before...if you're too busy to read God's Word...you're too busy!!**

Well, Amos had a conclusion to his book and you'll be glad to know that I have a conclusion to the lesson...

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**Amos 9:1** tells us of Amos' fifth vision. He said he saw the Lord standing beside the altar and then Amos tells us what the Lord said. God had some really sharp words to say against His people in **chapter 9**.

## **Verses 1-4...**

I believe God meant business, don't you? God's patience and longsuffering had come to an end, hadn't it?

Remember Amos' vision was that of God standing by the altar. We could get so caught up in God's words in **chapter 9** that we could miss the significance of the image of God standing by the altar. What was the altar? What took place at the altar? Sacrifice for sin! It's the place where sacrifices were made!

**But this is not a picture of mercy! It is a picture of judgment.** At long last God is ready to carry out the judgment He had long promised through His prophet. And God is on the brink of totally destroying all the Israelites, but wait...look at...

## **Verse 8...**

**"...declares the LORD..."**

What does it mean when you see **LORD** all in capitals? It means Jehovah and **Jehovah is the covenant name of God!**

God will never forget His covenant with Israel.

## **Verse 9...**

Have the Jew been shaken and sifted all over the world? Of course, they have. You will find Jewish people all over the world and wherever they are, they experience anti-Semitism to one degree or another.

**Deuteronomy 28** tells us "...among those nations you shall find no rest...no resting place for the sole of your foot..."

And this was as much a part of His covenant with the people as the "good stuff" was.

The sifting of the Jews is still going on, but God has promised that not one grain of true wheat will perish. **Even in judgment, our God always remembers mercy!**

God chastens those whom He loves...God has judged Israel... but He's not though with them. **Romans 11** makes that very clear. Paul tells us God has not rejected Israel. He has only allowed a time of partial hardening while He gathers to Himself His church during this church age...

God will only save a remnant of Israel at the end times and we must understand not all who go to church will be saved...because Jesus still has His plumb line and know who has built his life on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The rest of this chapter tells us of the time when God  
will plant all the Jews back in their land and  
will rebuild their cities and  
will replant their vineyards and  
allow them to drink their wine and eat from their gardens...

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God told Israel that there would come a day when He would gather back those whom He had scattered...

God told Israel that His plans for them were for good and not evil so that they would have a future and a hope.

God told Israel, "I am the One who fixed the stars in the heavens,  
I am the One who fixed the order of the moon  
and the day the heavens that I created can be measured  
and the foundations of the earth that I created can be  
searched out ...**then** I will also cast off all the offspring  
of Israel."

Of course, that means He will never cast them off!

God is not finished with Israel! Paul tells us that one day all Israel will be saved!

Well,

We've had to leave out so much good stuff today...I'm sorry, but...

I hope as we finish the **Book of Amos** today we leave this book with a new reverence for God's expectations of us. **I hope we leave with a new awareness of His love and mercy and grace and a new respect and awe for His judgment and righteousness and holiness and justice and wrath.**

May God seal the truths of this precious old book to our hearts.