

I want to start ch9 at Amos 1:1 because there are two important words there that help us to understand Amos's methodology. Amos 1:1

***1 The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa -- what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. (NIV)***

This is all about WHAT HE SAW. SO what have you seen in Amos. Here are some pictures from Amos.

Today's warm-up activity is to tell us what they mean.

You are allowed to use your Bibles to check up!

Amos 3:8

Amos 7:4-5

Amos 7:1-2

Amos 7:7-8

Amos 8:1-2

Amos 9:9

So Amos is all about what he saw. Lets turn to ch 9  
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## **1. The gospel and Politics**

***I saw the Lord standing by the altar, Which Altar? –***

The one at Bethel

This is a deliberate illusion to Jeroboam I read 1Kings 12:25-13:5 This is not Amos's king We are now in Jeroboam 2's reign. But the illusion is clear.

The Israel/Judah split was never God's way. But in spite of that God did not give up on Israel. But Israel was doomed because it was pragmatic in its theology. Going to Jerusalem weakened the political hold so lets have

two local 'temples'. The priests and Levites won't go along with this so Jeroboam I takes over as high priest. What is amazing is that in Bethel and Gilgal Golden Calves are set up. Their own history should have told them that this was wrong but having deserted God's way, the substitute was soon nothing like the original. What do we learn from this.

Once we depart from god's way of worshipping, false Christianity soon adopts all those things which the gospel is opposed to. In these days that can be worshipping spirits, idolatry, man worship, adultery. The frightening thing is how easy it is to justify sin as part of worship.

Beware of religious arguments for political ends. Henry VIII did exactly what Jeroboam did in his day. Queen Elizabeth II still claims to be FD which was a title collected from the Pope by Henry VIII for denouncing Martin Luther!! So think carefully about Prince Charles and his claim to be Defender of Faiths.

The current debate about Europe is not helped by Christians making out that there is something Christian about British Government and Satanic in Europe. We still in this country have this romantic notion that the Established Church of England makes us somehow different. And yet we are not Anglicans!

McVeigh, in America, murdered scores of people supported by the belief that multinationals are the Antichrist. They may be an antichrist but we do well not use the enemy's methods in an attempt to overcome him. That only makes us the enemy of God.

In the midst of a pagan rite, the Lord stands by the altar and speaks.

2. **When God speaks things happen** – in this case a earthquake

### ***Amos 9:1-10***

There is no doubt in my mind that Amos was not a popular prophet. In fact you might wonder why God chose him. He was one of them – from Judah. He was not qualified – he had not been to LBC. In fact he didn't even have GCSE in RE. He spoke a harsh message when employment was up, the economy was up, they probably had a new labour government and life was getting better. SO who is going to listen to a fellow saying God was going to wreck the nation? There was no Russian threat and China is far away. But Amos is a prophet with a simple message. God is about to shake this nation. Literally. And being a farmer he uses the illustration of a sieve. But he is talking of an earthquake. The bad news is that the book of Amos is edited at least two years after it was spoken. We know this because it begins:

***1 The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa -- what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.***

This was not a small tremor with a little damage. It was not soon forgotten. It is also mentioned in Zechariah 14:5

***5 You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the***

***LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.***

And this is how bad it was in Judah in the South. Amos stands in the entrance to Sainsbury's rattling his sieve. At least he would have if Sainsbury's had existed and the manager didn't have him removed by the Police!

When God speaks, what he says happens. When this book says something then what it says will happen because this is a record of what God has said. When God speaks through a prophet, then what God says through that prophet will happen as sure as eggs are eggs. And read this passage again, if you dare, and think through the sheer terror that Amos pictures. There is no escape from God. Laugh about hell if you like. It is the place where God pours out his wrath against sin and unrepentant sinners. You cannot hide and you cannot escape. It is just like an earthquake. The house shakes, so you run into the street only for debris to fall on you. I am reminded of nuclear war. Did you ever watch 'Protect and Survive'? Things like put your dead in bin bags and leave them outside until it is safe for you to go out and bury them. The lucky ones are those that do not survive. But there is no merciful oblivion in hell.

I don't expect the majority of South Ruislip to believe it but do you believe it?

It was the realisation that our neighbours are 'within a yard of hell' that drove many in past centuries to risk the contempt of their neighbours and beg them to become Christians. They were bothered about the correct way to evangelise. They were simply awake to what the Bible says about our eternal destiny and had a compassion for their

relations, neighbours and friends. Better to have tried to speak about the good news and put someone off than never to have spoken at all. So Alpha is not just a jolly idea.. It is one of our present ways of rescuing the dying. When you speak of Jesus to a friend you are doing a more heroic job than Brian did in his helicopter. Your mission is to save from an eternity in hell not just saving from death or injury or pain.

But what is true about the certainty of God's word of warning is also true of his word of hope. Lets go back to John 3:16. This is as certain as the earthquake that Amos spoke of two years before it happened. But after Amos and the earthquake Israel still did not repent so God carried out his final judgement. He removed Israel from the face of the earth, more or less. From the fall of Samaria to today Israel is all about Judah. Hence we can mix the words Jews and Israelis without error. The point I am making is that John 3:16 is certain and sure as all God's promises. But people still reject it.

Faced with BSE, Foot and mouth, floods and now racial violence in the North and in Ulster does Mr & Mrs Average turn up to church to ask God what he is saying? Do you? The prophetic word of today is no different from Amos'. A word of prophecy will open our eyes to how God sees what is happening. But I guess most people think our message is irrelevant to the times in which we live. An Old-world God who does not behave to our new-age order. But they are wrong. God has not changed even if his servants have become silent, hesitant and out of touch. It is

time we listened to God so that when he roars, we prophesy.

**3. God does not compromise restoration is restoration to his way.**

*Read Amos 9:10-11*

Remember the nation of Israel has broken away from David's son's rule. And if you lived in Jeroboam's day you may have felt it was a politically necessary revolt. Rehoboam was a political disaster. But the way back to God involves doing things God's way. And that included the bitter pill of returning to David's rule. A modern day equivalent would be Northern Ireland joining the Irish republic, the Balkan states joining together, India and Pakistan uniting or us joining a federation of European States. So often we see people turn away from the gospel because they know it means turning away from things that they would rather keep. The gospel makes sense to them but they rather like things the way they are. The saddest experience we have had on Alpha is those who came, enjoyed it, even experienced answered prayer but still walked away because they prefer to carry on living the same way as they did before. What Israel probably didn't consider is that Amos was, possibly unintentionally, prophesying a very different Son of David to the ones they were familiar with. We can see now that this could apply to the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. It is a device of the Devil to make us think that God is a hard taskmaster. He will help us to interpret the don'ts of the Gospel as lifeless and unhappy. And yet the reality is very different.

Jesus offers us abundant life. Not sinning is life and health and peace.

#### **4. God's blessings are always beyond description.**

#### **Read Amos 9:13-15**

Remember Amos is a farmer. So his heaven is agricultural. Even so he is over the top in its description! Today he would declare the end of Foot and Mouth, BSE, and cows that milked themselves or at least were happy to do it once a day between 9 and 5! Farmgate prices up to sensible levels (which means you paying more for it!) and so on. I have a picture in my mind

In Revelation the imagery is of a city. But the excesses are there – streets paved with gold may not appeal to you either. So what is your model of heaven? I know from this and other passages that the place Jesus has gone to prepare for you is beyond description but that is because God wants to bless us beyond our widest dreams.

Read John 14:1-3

So what is your dream place? A bungalow with loads of space and light which never needs cleaning? Meals that are delivered to your table that are better than MacDonal'd's and no clearing up? This and better is like what God has in store for you. But the key is not the place. It is that 'you may be where I am'. Now think about that. In our materialistic age we value things too much. What really matters is not where you are but who are you with. Heaven

is with Jesus. That is why it is heaven. Be romantic. You know what I mean. “So long as we are together, my love”. We’ll live that way with Jesus this week. Throw yourself at him, and say to him I don’t care what happens, so long as we are together. That way a little bit of heaven will exist - just you and Jesus together. One day you will be with him. But the book of Amos has an uncompromising message

Amos 3:8

*<sup>8</sup> The lion has roared -- who will not fear? The Sovereign LORD has spoken -- who can but prophesy?*

And God warns his people that if they reject his way, they will inevitably face destruction. There are only two ways eternal life in Jesus by faith in him and eternal hell. In our easy well-off situation God’s judgment seems to far away to bother us. In Amos’ day it was two years and then the earthquake. But if judgment for those who reject God is certain so is blessing beyond description for those who believe.