

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

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March memory verse Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV) Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

April memory verse Ephesians 3:21 (NKJV)

to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

The Northern Kingdom of Israel has become apostate. They are living in luxury, carelessness, indifference towards God, when suddenly their peace is disturbed because of an unknown person to them who suddenly arises in Bethel, one of their cities of worship, and begins to denounce their worship. Begins to denounce the Northern Kingdom, and begins to prophecy the judgment of God. Amos suddenly appeared on the scene, telling of the judgment of God that is soon to come upon this apostate kingdom. In chapter 6, continuing his denunciations he declares,

Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion, that are trusting in the mountain of Samaria, which are named for the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! Pass unto Calneh, and see; go from there to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their borders greater than your borders? Ye that put far away the evil day, and caused the seat of violence to come near; That lie upon the beds of ivory, and stretch yourselves out on your couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent instruments of music, like David; That drink your wine out of bowls, and anoint yourselves with the oils: but you are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amo 6:1-6).

So he describes now the conditions that existed in the Northern Kingdom that were actually perpetuating its destruction. At ease in Zion, they were trusting in the mountains of Samaria. They felt that their cities were well defended. That the city of Samaria, a very great stronghold. Actually, Samaria sits on the top of a mountain. They had ingeniously brought water into the city by a spring that was several miles away on another hill, and had brought a tunnel all the way along and up into Samaria. And by the process of water seeking its own level, as the pool on the other hill would fill, of course it would bring the water to the level there within Samaria. So they had a good source of fresh water within the city. The city had the strong walls, the great towers, and built on the hill they felt that they were impregnable as far as their enemies were concerned. So they were trusting in their military strength, in their strategic location, rather than really trusting in the Lord. So the prophet said, "Now go to some of these other cities that have fallen. You think that you're any stronger or greater than they were? And yet they've been taken. You say that the evil day is far off, but in reality you are hastening your own destruction."

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

There are always those who will mock the prophet of God by saying, "Oh, you know, that's not going to come for years. All the things that you're talking about, they're way down the road. We're gonna go on; we've got enough oil for the next hundred years. Let's use up the supply, don't have to worry about it." In that attitude, actually, you're only hastening the evil day of judgment.

Now the kingdom of Samaria had become very prosperous under Jeroboam. In the excavations of that city of Samaria, in excavating the ruins they found furniture made out of ivory. So this is not a figure of speech. But he's talking about literal things that were happening. They were stretching themselves out on their beds of ivory, and upon their ivory couches. It was quite a vogue thing to have ivory furniture. As they feasted on their lambs and upon their pen-fed calves, as they were just indulging themselves in wine, in music, in luxurious living, living in the lap of luxury, and yet judgment is waiting right around the corner. They weren't really grieved over the afflictions of Joseph. Therefore, these who are living in the lap of luxury are gonna be the first to go into captivity.

The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, I hate his palaces: therefore I will deliver the city up to the enemies and all that is in it (Amo 6:8).

This is again one of those places where it declares that God swore by Himself.

Now we do not really practice the taking of oaths much anymore. It used to be a very common practice where a person would seek to affirm that what he is saying is really true. He would swear to the truth of his statement, and he would always swear by something greater than himself. You couldn't say, "Well, I swear by my name that I'll do it." Your name might not be any good. So you'd swear by my mother's honor, or you'd swear by heaven, or, "I swear by God that I will do it." That was to confirm what a person was saying.

Now Jesus said, "You really shouldn't be doing that. You shouldn't have to be doing that. If you say yes, you should mean yes. If you say no, you should mean no." Therefore, to take an oath or to take a vow is really superfluous. Be a man of your word, let your yes be a yes, let your no be a no, so that you don't have to swear to declare that you're gonna do it, or you're not gonna do it. If I just, if I say I'm gonna do it, let my word be as my bond.

But God on occasions wanted to impress how definite was His decision in a certain matter. To establish the covenant so that they would know that this indeed is what God will do, God would swear. But who is He gonna swear by? There's nothing greater in all the universe to swear by; He's the greatest. So He would always have to swear by Himself. So God to confirm the covenant with... and the oath to Abraham swore by Himself saying, "And in blessing surely I will bless thee." Confirming that covenant. Now God is... Amos is saying that God is swearing to the fact that He abhors the excellency

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

of Jacob, and the palaces, and He promises to deliver the city up to the enemies, and God did do just that.

It shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, they'll all die. And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burns him, shall bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say to him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of Jehovah (Amo 6:9-10).

Now he's talking about the destruction that's gonna come. The people are gonna be slaughtered, they'll come to the houses and to take the bodies of those that had been slaughtered to burn them. It was a very common practice to cremate the bodies.

There are some people today who wonder about the practice of cremation. Is it scriptural, or is it biblically right or wrong to be cremated? It was a practice in the Old Testament to cremate bodies. Saul's body was cremated. I do not know of a single scripture that condemns cremation. I personally have no problems with cremation. They can do with my body whatever they please. I'll care less. Once my spirit has moved out of this old house, I don't care how they dispose of the house. To me cremation only speeds up the natural processes, and will do in thirty-seven minutes what nature will do in thirty-seven years or so. So I have absolutely no problem with cremation. There are some people that have problems, and if you have a problem, then let the worms eat it. But once I move out of this house, this old tent, I then have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and so what they do with the tent could concern me less. You know, just, I don't care.

I do care on another sense. I don't want people going into hock to buy some fancy coffin for this old carcass. I think that's ridiculous. I could care less if I'm buried in a pine box, or whatever. I means, this... the body isn't me. The body is only a tent that I'm living in for a while. The real me is spirit; I'll be gone. Do with the body whatever you want, but dispose of it as reasonably as possible. People make such a big to-do over the carcass. We ought to make a greater to-do over the person.

Behold, the LORD commands, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. Shall horses run on the rocks? will one plow there on the rocks with oxen? (Amo 6:11-12)

Now, of course, you really need to go over to the land of Israel to appreciate those scriptures, because there are just hillsides that are just barren rock. Horses just don't run on the rocks, nor is there any value in trying to plow them.

ye have turned judgment into gall, the fruit of righteousness into hemlock: Ye which rejoice in a thing of nothing, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness (Amo 6:12-14).

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

So God's rebuke against them.

Chapter 7

Now the Lord showed unto Amos certain judgments whereby He could bring His judgment against Israel. These were shown to Amos, no doubt, in the form of a vision.

And thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me; and, behold, he formed the grasshoppers [literally, the locusts] in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. And it came to pass, that when he had made an end (Amo 7:1-2)

That is, the locusts had made an end of eating the grass of the land, as he saw in the vision the locusts coming in and destroying the green crops completely.

then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. And so the LORD repented for this: And it shall not be, saith the LORD (Amo 7:2-3).

Now here is language with which we are bound, by which we seek to describe the actions of God. And as we use human language to describe the actions of God, it makes it as though God has the same kind of human reactions that we have. The word translated repent should probably better be translated relented. So God relented. The Bible tells us that God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. God doesn't change. And the word repent means *change*. "Behold, I am the Lord God, I change not" (Malachi 3:6).

But as we look at the activity of God from our human standpoint, there are times when it would appear that God did change. That God started to do a certain thing, and then did not carry through with it. And so from my standpoint, describing the action of God from a human standpoint, because I am bound by language that deals with human beings, I have to use the language of man and say, "Well, God changed." As though He changed His mind. God doesn't change His mind. "God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent" (Numbers 23:19). But we are using human language to describe the activities of God, and therein we have a problem. So I have to use some words to describe what went on. So I use a human term, but it isn't really an accurate term in describing the activity of God.

So God showed to him a vision of the locusts destroying the crops. This is one way by which God could bring His judgment against the nation. As he sees the devouring locusts, the crops destroyed, he cries out in intercession to God, "Oh God, don't do that. Forgive, I beseech Thee." And so God relented; He did not bring the plague of locusts.

One thing that we might note here is the intercession of the prophet for the people. This indeed is commendable. It is quite a stark contrast to what we will read next Sunday night when we get to Jonah and his prophecies against the Ninevites. How that he

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

became angry when God didn't wipe them out. He was far from interceding for the Ninevites. He was just the opposite; he was encouraging God to destroy them. "Wipe them out, Lord!" And became extremely angry with God when God didn't wipe them out, in fact, sat down pouting and asked God to kill him. "You don't want to kill them? Just kill me then, Lord, I don't want to live!"

So here is the prophet of God interceding and, of course, this is always more true to the purpose of God for the prophet that he would intercede for the people. You might have to declare the judgment of God that is going to come; nonetheless, we still intercede. We don't declare God's judgment that is coming with a, "You know, God's gonna get even with you, you wicked people." It's just, "If you continue in your wickedness, this will be the inevitable result. Turn from your wickedness. Oh God, work in their hearts, cause them to turn." And you intercede.

Many people misinterpret the prophets as they declared the judgment of God that was coming, as though they were relishing the idea of the judgment of God. Not so! Here is Amos declaring God's judgment that must fall because of the way these people were living. But even so, he's interceding, "Oh God, forgive them. Lord, they're small, how are they ever gonna rise if they're wiped out like that?"

Then he saw a vision of a fire devouring the cities. And again he intercedes and prays for forgiveness. So God says, "All right, they won't be destroyed by a fire."

Then the Lord showed him, and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what do you see? And he said, I see a plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I'm gonna set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: and I will not again pass by them any more (Amo 7:7-8):

They've become so crooked. God laid the plumbline in order that, of course, the purpose of the plumbline is to make the straight corner, the straight wall. God held the plumbline and He could see the crookedness, the perversity.

The high places of Isaac (Amo 7:9)

That is, those places that they had made for the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth.

they'll be desolate, the sanctuaries of Israel (Amo 7:9)

Whereby they worshiped the calf and the false gods.

will be laid waste; and I will raise again the house of Jeroboam with a sword (Amo 7:9).

"I will rise," actually, "against the house of Jeroboam with a sword." Now at this point,

Amaziah who was a priest there in Bethel (Amo 7:10)

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

He was not a priest of God, but one of the priests of the religious system there in Bethel.

sent to Jeroboam the king who was in Samaria, saying, Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel: the land isn't able to bear his words. For Amos is saying, Jeroboam is going to die by the sword, and Israel will be led away captive out of their own land (Amo 7:10-11).

So this priest became concerned at the prophecies of Amos, sent a message to Jeroboam, "You better do something about it. We can't bear the words of this man. He's right here in the midst of your country, but he's speaking out against you. He's conspired against you."

And then he came to Amos, and he said, O thou seer (Amo 7:12),

The prophets were often called *seers* because of their visions and their ability to see into that spirit world. "O thou seer,"

go, flee thee away into the land of Judah (Amo 7:12),

"Go back where you came from." He'd come from the southern province of Judah, from Tekoah, southeast of Bethlehem.

get back to the land of Judah and there eat bread, and there do your prophesying: But don't prophesy again any more at Bethel: for this is the king's chapel, and this is the king's court. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, I was a gatherer of the sycamore fruit [which is a fig]: And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, and prophesy to my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: You say, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Your own wife will be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth out of his land (Amo 7:12-17).

The line, the plumbline that God has set. Those that are straight will be spared; those that are crooked will be destroyed. Those that are out of line will be destroyed. "So Amaziah, you're a part of line that is out of line; you're gonna be destroyed. Your family, your wife will become a prostitute in the streets."

Amos in answering this priest, who was really challenging his authority, "Who ordained you? Where did you go to seminary? Who gave you the authority?" These are challenges that are often made today concerning those who are doing the work of the Lord. "Who ordained you? Who gave you the authority? What seminary did you attend?" It is because somehow we have a false concept that somehow a seminary education ordains a man for the ministry. Nothing could be further from the truth. Only

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

God ordains a man for the ministry. Seminary education may be beneficial, but only God really ordains.

Many of the young ministers that have gone out from Calvary in order to start works in other areas are lacking Bible college or seminary experience, so they are really challenged. Especially when their churches grow and they have the largest church in town. "But who ordained you? Who gave you the authority?" You know. All they can say is, "Well, I was just a drug pusher, and while I was pushing drugs the Lord got hold of my life and changed me, and now I'm pushing the gospel!"

"Amos, where'd you come from? Who gave you the authority? What seminary?" Amos said, "Look, I was only a shepherd; I was just a herdsman. I picked sycamore fruit. And while I was following the herd, the Lord said to me, 'Go and prophesy.'" No formal background, no training, just the call of God.

It is interesting to me that John the Baptist had the same kind of challenge. When John was preaching in the wilderness, the Pharisees came to him and said, "Who gave you the authority to baptize?" They even challenged Jesus. They said to Jesus, "Who gave You the authority to do these things?" So I sort of laugh when they come around today and say, "Who gave the authority? Who's ordained?" When it's obvious that God had ordained John the Baptist, and it's obvious that the Lord had called.

Now, what people seem to have a hard time accepting is that God so often calls and uses just plain ordinary people. But that is usually the case. God calls ordinary people to do His work. Somehow we put a special little aura around those men who have been used of God, and we put them on a pedestal, and we begin to think of them in sort of a super-saint classification. In our minds we somehow feel they are something special, they are out of the ordinary. They are... they're not really, they're somewhere between human and angelic. But they're not just plain people. They don't think as I think. They don't respond as I respond. Surely they must always respond just perfectly. They never, surely never, get angry, nor get upset! They must be just so perfect and that's why God has used them. Not so. God uses just plain ordinary people. Elijah was a man of like passions just like you. No different from what you are. Amos was just a herdsman. He was following after the herds when the Lord spoke to him, and called him for this ministry.

God has a plan and a purpose for each one of your lives. God has a work for you to do. But you disqualify yourself so often from the work of God. "But, Lord, I don't have the education. But Lord, I'm just a plain ordinary person. I'm just me, Lord, how can You use me?" And you disqualify yourself because you are ordinary and somehow you think God doesn't use ordinary people. Because you are flawed, and you think God doesn't use flawed people. Because you are weak, and you think God doesn't use weak people. God uses just plain people. God wants to use you. Those men that God called were always surprised at the call of God and many times sought to excuse themselves because of the fact that they were just plain.

Commentary on Amos 6&7, by Chuck Smith 4.3.24

When God came to Gideon as he was threshing wheat of the threshing floor of his father and said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might and deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites." Gideon said, "Oh Lord, You can't mean me. Hey, don't You know my family, my father is nothing, and I'm the least in my father's household? Lord, I'm just an ordinary guy. I'm just out here threshing wheat. Lord, I'm nothing, what do You mean me? Lord, You've got to... You've made a mistake. I'm ordinary. You know, You use super saints." But yet the Lord called Gideon and the Lord used Gideon. Now you notice how the people sought to elevate him once God had used him. Gideon said, "No way. You're not gonna make me your king, nor any of my sons. I'm..." He went right back to threshing wheat.

God called Moses. Moses said, "Lord, I can't do that. No one's gonna believe me. Lord, I'm just an ordinary person. I'm just out here watching these sheep for forty years. What do you mean go down to tell Pharaoh let Your people go? Can't do that, Lord! I'm just an ordinary person." Yes, that's exactly who God uses, just ordinary persons. And God wants to use you.

"While I was following the flock..." A mistake that many people make in seeking to offer their lives to God is to quit their job and just go out and wait for God to lead them then into whatever ministry He has. But as a rule, God will take you right out of your job if He wants you. I think that it's wrong to quit your work, and say, "Well, I'm just gonna serve the Lord. I quit my job last week, and now I'm just gonna serve the Lord." Many people have suffered disastrous consequences from a movement like that. You can get real hungry.

"While I was following the flock, the Lord spake to me." While Peter and John were mending their nets, Jesus came by and said, "Leave your nets and follow Me." But you're not to leave your nets until the Lord comes by and says, "Leave the nets." As Matthew was sitting at the receipt of customs, Jesus passed by and said, "Come follow Me." But he was right on the job, doing the job when the Lord called him. And the Lord can call you right from your job. You don't have to quit and go into some wilderness area and just wait upon God for the vision or the call. God will call you right where you are if you're only listening.

"Go prophesy to My people Israel." Now Israel had forsaken God. Israel was worshiping the false gods. Still God calls them "My people." When does God let a man go? When does God disclaim you? When does God say Loammi, no more My people? God was claiming them as His people long after they had disclaimed God as their God. God still claims you. He has claims upon your life. He won't let them go. God won't let you go. He has claims on your life. It's sort of thrilling that God speaks of us as His people, "My son, My child." That thrills me that God claims me as His own.