

Amos 2:4-12; Amos 7; Amos the Rejected Shepherd I. The Rebuke II. The Rejection III. The Removal
 Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever spoken the truth- only to be rejected? Have you been
 in a situation where you were bold and clear in your speech- but others simply dismissed your testimony
 out of hand or ignored you? Well, today we find such a dismissal as we look at our 3rd Minor Prophet-
 Amos. Now Amos was a prophet by calling- not by trade. He did not seek this line of work- he did not seek
 it- but God called him out of the fields to become the mouthpiece of God. He was born in Tekoa- just south
 of Jerusalem- but most of his work would take place in the Northern tribes near Bethel. He was as 7:14
 says a herdsman and dresser of figs. He was a farm boy- not a professional prophet. He lived around 760
 BC during the reign of wicked king Jeroboam II. One of Amos' themes is this: to those whom much has
 been given, much will be expected. If you are God's people, you are expected to know and obey the God
 who has called you. Yes, the enemies of God will be judged- but God's people will be held accountable as
 well. There are points of similarity between Joel from last week and the book of Amos. Amos speaks of
 invading armies and drought in ch. 4- even an infestation of locusts in ch. 7. The Day of the LORD is going
 to be a dark day- and not a day of light. But where we focussed on the call to repentance last week- this
 week we will the rejection of the LORD by the Northern tribes. The name- Amos- means "one who carries a
 burden." Today we consider this theme: the prophet Amos carries the burden of rebuke as God's people
 rebelled.

I. The Rebuke

In our first point, we consider how the LORD rebuked the sins of the people. There are two subgroups
 under this point- the first group of people that the LORD rebukes by the mouth of Amos is the nations.
 Chapter 1 opens with a pronouncement of judgement on all of Israel's neighbors. Amos does a circuit
 around the neighborhood- identifying the nations and their sins. Now these are the close neighbors- like
 Ammon, Moab and Edom- each just on the other side of the Jordan River. We find Tyre and Sidon,
 Philistines and Gaza. And what these nations have done is to rebel against the LORD and sin against

humanity. These nations had broken their alliance with each other- they have attacked their neighbors without cause. They stole, burned, pillaged and murder. Note that these are not God's covenant people- they are the ethnos- the Gentile nations. And yet, they were held accountable for their works. God has written on the conscience of every man- a sense of morality- knowing what is right and wrong. As Rom. 1 puts it, God reveals in creation that there is a God and that His Law is to be known. But they exchanged the truth for futility- and suppressed the truth in their rebellion. They should have known God's decree- but they decided to practice iniquity. These nations refused to show restraint- but rather attacked and devoured one another. This speaks to the use of the moral law today. A sense of right and wrong- a conscience that either convicts or excuses as Rom. 2:15 says- means that everyone will be held accountable for their actions. No one can claim ignorance when it comes to living a life that is rebellious against God as He has written His Law on the hearts of all men. When we look around us today- we see a complete rejection and rebellion against God- a complete disregard for the life of fellow man. Deep in the heart of these rebels, they know that murder, theft and adultery are wrong. But as grievous as the sins of Gentiles are- the sin of God's people is so much worse! It would be like watching the news to hear of the rise of crime and violent riots in Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio and Missouri. The neighboring states are home to great rebellion and sin. But the matter comes closer to home. As the LORD says to Amos in ch. 2:4 and 6. For the transgressions of Judah and for the transgressions of Israel! Not only other nations- not only other states- but Illinois and Indiana are now in the forefront! The sins of God's covenant people now come into focus! What makes the sins of God's covenant people so much worse is that they had been so blessed- they had the added revelation of the Law written on stone. Or as Paul puts it in Rom. 9, to these belonged the Law, the ceremonies, the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the worship and the promises! Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required. The Israelites- both the northern and the southern tribes had received so much! Yet what were they accused of doing? They had rejected the Law- 2:4. They sold the poor and trampled the needy- 2:7. They were filled with drunkenness and pride. Going forward in

their false worship- living in idolatry- forsaking the temple as they flocked to the golden calf at Bethel- 7:10 and 7:13. They profaned the name of the Lord by their wickedness- offering their vain sacrifices with little heart. They refused to show justice and neglected mercy. They broke the Sabbath as 8:5 says- they were filled with greed. Now these are the people God had spoken to- these ones had been brought out of bondage as 2:10 says. God had spoken to them repeatedly by way of the prophets- 2:11. But they did not listen- they had fallen into a presumptive worship- polluted by their hard hearts and external shows of piety. They were like white washed tombs. Again, this is one the major themes of the Minor Prophets- the rebuke of sin in the covenant people. But Amos tells of a two-fold pollution. The northern tribes were worshipping false gods- golden calves at Bethel and Dan. And the southern tribes, although still going to the proper temple, had settled for the externals while neglecting the heart. So the Lord sends Amos- as the giver of the Law- to expose man's sin and misery. But the question is- will they listen?

II. The Rejection

And the short answer is- no. Did the Israelites repent- or did they double down in their sin? Did they respond to the God's rebuke with humility- rending their hearts as Joel put it? No, they became hardened in their sins and stiff-necked in their rebellion. We find this first of all in Amos 2:11-12. Instead of listening to their God sent prophets and learning from the example of the pure Nazarenes, they chose to silence the prophets and force the Nazarenes to break their vow. Instead of being warned by the word and ashamed by the example of purity- instead of listening and learning, the people shut their ears and removed from their eyes anything that would remind them of their sins. Children, it would be like taping the mouth of the pastor shut at church, and then going home and throwing out all your Bibles. It was a deliberate rejection and rebellion- since these people had been called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation as Ex. 19 says. Yet there was another, even more dramatic example of this rejection in 7:10. Here the priest Amaziah accuses Amos of treachery- of conspiring against the King of Israel! So the priest says to Amos in 7:12- go, run away you seer. Flee- go to Judah and do not come back to the Northern tribes ever again!

You and your words are not welcomed here! Even the spiritual leaders of Israel rejected God's messenger- even persecuting the one who was the mouthpiece of God! In this we catch a glimpse of what our Lord Jesus Christ also suffered. Coming to His own as John 1 says, His own did not receive Him. As the High Priest and Chief Priest rejected Jesus in Mark 14, so in our passage the priest of Bethel rejected Amos. It seems like these people wanted a message of peace- a promise of prosperity while they cared nothing for the truth and a confrontation about sin. It was like the response of wicked King Jehoiakim when confronted by Jeremiah. This wicked king responded by cutting up the message and threw it in the fire. The people were willing to sell their birthright for a cup of soup. What happens in the church sometimes is that they no longer love the LORD and His Word. It is not by government oppression, but by the people's disregard for the Word that the church strays. The power of men do not take the Word away- but God's people simply bury the truth until it passes from memory. So the people in Israel start to say- do not preach the Word anymore. They have no place for the gospel- and having neglected the Word- soon the Word will be removed.

III. The Removal

In our last point we find that the final step of judgement is the removal of the lamp- having rejected the Word, having silenced the prophets and ignored the example of those with holy vows- God will finally remove His Word from their midst. Children, what do you think is the worse thing that can happen in your life? Lose your favorite toy? Perhaps for your parents it would be the loss of your job, health, car or house? No- it is the loss of God's Word! Having neglected and forsaken God's Word- God finally takes that Word away in 8:11. It is as if when you neglect your Bible- when you no longer use it regularly- when the time comes and you want to read it you can't find it! Let's read 8:11-14. As bad as things became in the book of Joel as we saw last week- invading armies and insects- a lack of water and a drought that ravishes the land. These are nothing compared to a drought from the Word of the Lord! There would be a lack of prophecy- as the people rejected the prophets- so God would stop sending them. Give the people what

they ask for. There will be darkness, ignorance, forgetfulness in the land. The people will be twice blind- the sun will be darkened and their eyes will become blind. There will be a time after the last OT Prophet- Malachi- a period of 500 years- when there would be a silence until the coming of John the Baptist! But although God spoke in times past- in various ways- in diverse manners. And although God removed the Lampstand from the nation of Israel for a time- soon the light would be restored and the fire of God's presence would be returned. We know that in these last days God has spoken to us by His Son as Heb. 1 puts it! We have the blessing of knowing the Living Word of God- whose voice goes out into all the world. As the book of Joel ended- so our book of Amos ends in ch. 9 with a promised of a future restoration! What was broken down will be built up! Again- the tent of David will be raised- 9:11! And we know the One through whom this prophecy is fulfilled! When the Kingdom of the Son is established on this earth in its fullness, there will be a great restoration and rebuilding- so that all of God's people will enjoy the peace and prosperity of dwelling in the Promised Land! And instead of ignorance and rebellion- God's people will all finally be a kingdom of Priests- a holy priesthood as I Peter 2 put it- offering acceptable sacrifices of praise!

To conclude, Amos speaks of a time of rebellion followed by a time of great despair. But that is not the end! As we saw a few months ago from this passage, this would be a fulfillment of what Jesus illustrated in the parable of the Wicked Tenants in Luke 20. The people rejected the prophets- and God would finally send His only Son. Surely, they will listen to My Son! God will not leave His people without a witness- and His remnant will be saved! When Jesus comes back, the earth will be filled with His knowledge as the waters cover the sea! We will each enjoy the wine of the New Covenant – dwelling in the city of our God. Wine is a symbol of blessing and prosperity- it is the drink of kings enjoyed in time of great joy and peace! So now as we come to the Lord's Table, we take the fruit of the vine in hand to drink in remembrance of Him! Taking, drinking, remembering and believing in this perfect King and final prophet who removes all our sins!