

MAJORING IN A MINOR-AMOS PART SIX

ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO AMOS

In part 5 of our study, we examined the first three visions of Amos as presented in verses 1-9 of Amos chapter 7. We saw that the first two visions, of Locusts and Fire, showed forth the great mercy of our God, but in the third, God spoke judgement. We explored the two differing renderings of the key Hebrew word 'Anak' and noted that it could either mean a wall of soft, easily perishable tin, that would not stand against the wrath of an angry God, or it could also mean a plumb-line, against which the people of Israel were measured and found wanting.

I concluded by saying, that I believe, we are in the position of Amos. We may not be God's chosen prophet, but we are His voice in this day, in this society and in this nation. If we won't speak forth a word of warning, then who will? I also foreshadowed that their response to him, would likely be the same one we will face when we too try to give warning.

Let us now turn our attention to the final verses of chapter 7, to measure Israel's response and determine what lessons it has for us today.

10. Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel 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 their own land.

12. *Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there*

13. *But prophesy not again any more at Bethel for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.*

14. *Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit*

15. *And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.*

16. *Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.*

17. *Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an 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 shalt die in a polluted land and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.*

Note first in verse 10, that Amaziah, a priest of Bethel, the heart of the idolatry, goes to the King, to bring a negative report about Amos, God's chosen Prophet. We see quite clearly here, an example of how false religious leaders attack the reputation of the true men of God. They bring accusations against them, to those who are in power and authority; in our case, it would be the government. I like what Matthew Henry has to say, '*Great pretenders to sanctity are commonly the worst enemies to those who are really sanctified*'.¹ Instead of thanking Amos for his God given warning, they persecuted him. Sound familiar?

¹Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

There is no substance to his claim. Amos has not conspired at all. In fact, if anyone had conspired it would be God, not His messenger. Nowhere, does Amaziah attempt to answer the charges Amos brings, instead he tries to ‘shoot the messenger’ because he doesn’t like the message. He certainly wasn’t open to repentance. What happens today when a true man of God brings a warning? The same thing. The name and reputation of the messenger is sullied and reviled. No real attempt is ever made to actually address the issues.

Next, in verse 11, the priest twists the words of the prophet. Amos did not say that ‘*Jeroboam shall die by the sword,*’. In verse 9 he said, ‘*and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.*’ This is quite a different thing. In fact, he didn’t die in that manner. A quick reference to 2 Kings 14:28-29 says;

28 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

29 And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel; and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.

Who’s bringing the false message now, Amos, the Prophet, or the so called religious leader who feels threatened by his words? What do we witness today, when accusations are brought? Is it not also, the twisting of words to the advantage of those who have been on the receiving end of God’s warning!

Threaten the livelihood of a false religious leader and watch the personal attacks that come. We have seen it over and over again here in the last few years; it's not something new. None of them ever try to defend themselves from scripture, because they can't. They always attack the integrity of the messenger and ignore the message.

When a personal attack doesn't work, as it didn't with Jeroboam and Amos, verses 12-13 show us the next method these people use.

12. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there

13. But prophesy not again any more at Bethel for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

False teachers, false prophets, false 'men of God', will always try to 'warn off' the true prophets. They will tell you to go home, go overseas, go anywhere in fact, except right here where you are; anywhere but the place God wants you. That is the key in all this. Prophets don't go where they choose, they go where they are sent. By God and by no-one else.

Note the audacity of Amaziah; he not only tells Amos to go away, he tells him not to prophesy anymore in verse 13. In effect, he is telling him to disobey God and obey men. Does this sound familiar? Hello!! Look at verse 15.

15. And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

Amos didn't choose to be a prophet, he didn't go to a school for prophets. God chose him, as He chooses all true prophets, and told him where to go and what to say. Amos chose to obey God. Whenever the true comes up against the false, there will be conflict and the false will do everything it can to be rid of the opposition. Therefore, persecution, in one form or another, will always be the lot of the true people of God.

However, we also see here the correct way to respond to this situation. Amos didn't shirk, or waffle, or make excuses. He simply stood his ground and continued to obey the voice of his Lord. That is always what we are called to do; obey God, not man.

Finally, let us see how Amos answers his attacker. He does not do it in his own strength, but in the strength and words of the Lord.

16. Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.

17. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an 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 shalt die in a polluted land and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

Note, it is God who answers Amaziah, God who pronounces sentence on all false religious leaders. As it was then, so will it be today; God doesn't change. We don't have to worry about defending ourselves, God says clearly in His Word, that He will give us the words to say, He will be our total justification in all situations. All we have to do, is trust Him fully.

There are 5 judgements given here, which is interesting when you consider that 5 is the number of Grace in Bible numerics:

1. His wife shall become a harlot.
2. His children will be killed.
3. His land will be divided.
4. He will die defiled.
5. Israel will go into exile.

Let us consider the significance of each of these pronouncements for our society. They have both a natural and a spiritual import.

The Bible tells us that a husband and wife are one in the sight of God. He is a spiritual harlot through his idolatry and that will also manifest in his natural relationships. It's amazing how much sexual immorality is associated with those who bring false messages; either through falling themselves, or through members of their immediate family. A little leaven spoils the whole batch, and God's judgements are still at work today. ***The natural will always reflect the spiritual.*** Keep your eyes open and your guard up. Stay well away from any ministry tainted by sexual immorality; according to Amos, it is a sign of God's judgement.

There are several ways we could interpret the second judgement, depending on how we perceive the meaning of 'children'. While this could obviously relate simply to his natural children in both a natural and a spiritual sense, I believe it also applies to his spiritual children. Who are these spiritual children? They are the fruits or products of his ministry.

God will destroy these children. There's will be a spiritual death. Are we not seeing this already in the world today?

His land will be divided. All his material possessions that are so important to him, will be taken away and divided among his enemies. Nothing of these will remain; family, wealth, and ministry; all will be taken and divided. Again, we see examples of this happening today with false ministries and it will continue to occur. God has said it and that settles it.

The fourth judgement relates to his own end, both in the natural and the spiritual. He shall die defiled. The Hebrew word used here, is *tame* which means foul, defiled or polluted. That's how God sees these people and their pollution must stop. It is a spiritual and a natural pollution and they will die in it. They have chosen spiritual and eventually natural death in a land God did not choose for them. They die defiled, separated from the one pure and living God. Unfortunately, they will probably take many others with them, unless we do something about it.

Finally, Israel will be taken into exile. God's people were in a sense taken from His presence; they were taken from the land He gave them to a foreign, heathen land where God's presence would no longer be manifested. This too has not changed. Those who do not heed the warnings, who follow blindly after the false prophets and teachers of this age, will also go captive into exile from the presence of their true God. As the Bible says, 'they are without excuse'. Yes, they have been deceived by the wiles of Satan, but the NT is full of warnings as well. All they have to do is read their Bible. God's message is spelled out very clearly in nearly every book. These people really have no-one to blame, but

themselves. Sadly, on the day of Judgement, they will be the ones crying *Lord, Lord*.

On the one hand, this message from Amos is frightening, but on the other, it should be an encouragement. If we follow after the false, then our end will be destruction. However, as we look with discerning eyes on what is happening in the so called church today, we see that God is still in control and He will judge all things righteously as His Word declares. The pleasures of the sin these false men of God seem to be enjoying, is but for a season and I believe that season is fast coming to an end.

Therefore, be encouraged and keep your eyes and ears open to see and hear what the Lord is really saying in this hour. God always has a remnant and I believe we are called to be a part of that end-time remnant church. Remember, we are the Lord's voice in this day and age, therefore, we have to declare the true gospel to all those God sends us to, and to all those He sends to us. As Christ said to His disciples many times, *Fear Not, for I am with you*. Go forth with boldness this week in the Name and Power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May He richly bless all your undertakings. Amen.