

## Dr. Marv Wilson, Prophets, Session 13, Amos, Part 3

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This is Dr. Marv Wilson in his teaching on the Prophets. This is session 13, Amos, Part 3.

All right, let's pray to start the hour.

As we come to the end of this week, our Lord, we are glad you're our friend, because some of us wouldn't be here today without your, indeed, intervention in our lives, even in ways that may not be obvious to us. We thank you that the Shomer Yisrael, the one who watches, guards over, keeps Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps. That has become an assurance for us, because we serve the God of Israel.

We thank you for your ultimate revelation in our Lord Jesus Christ, who comes as the God of Israel in the flesh. We thank you for the incarnation. For so many of these things we study in the Hebrew Bible take on added and even ultimate significance. Grant that we will not forget who we are. We're nothing without Israel. We can't explain ourselves without Israel.

We grew out of Israel, not they out of us. And so, in the church, help us appreciate, understand, and carry with us throughout our lives a sense of indebtedness to these scriptures and these people that we study in prophetic literature. I pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All right, do you have any questions, comments, or anything I've said so far? Feel free to do so. All right, we're talking about the three messages against Israel.

We talked about these three messages each beginning with Shema, here, listen. In 3.1 we've begun talking about some of the highlights of the second message, beginning in chapter 4, where the prophet again calls in scathing, denouncing terms, the women of his day, cows of Basha. Again, sleek, prized cows coming from this area up to the northeast of the Dead Sea area, Bashan, B-A-S-H-A-N, there it is on the map.

And you can see it in big, bold letters. That connected with the people of the northern kingdom. He's addressing them.

And this area of Bashan was adjacent to what tribe as they settled into the promised land? Half-tribe of Manasseh, remember? He settled up on the very edge of the area of Bashan. Later that area was called Golanitis during the Roman period. We call it

today in Boston Globe language, the Golan Heights, which is sort of a buffer zone that overlooks the Assyrian territory where Israel holds its modern border.

This area was famous for these cows prized in the ancient world. So, these women, in their cows that grazed in that particular region, only interested in pampering themselves, not concerned, as verse 1 says, the poor, the needy. They were bossy on two levels.

They were cows, but they also bossed their husbands. Hey, bring me something to drink. This is kind of a reversal of the roles as they tended to be in Old Testament times.

So, in their ease and in their luxury, the northern kingdom was falling apart. Riches have a tendency to destroy nations because people become fat and flabby and complacent. People who have very little, very often, have to very seriously, from their heart, intercede with the good Lord for where their next meal is coming from and are much more likely to be open to God because they are the have-nots of society. Amos carries the torch for these people. Again, we need to read Abraham Heschel on the prophets because he does such a wonderful job helping us understand what was important to the prophets.

The pathos of God is with the people who often get neglected in the society, dominated by an upper class that removes itself from the needs of those around them. We now come to and for a case of irony or sarcasm. Come to Bethel and transgress.

Could you come with me to the House of Hypocrites on Sunday morning? If I asked you to join me there, would you get the point that I was inviting you to church? But this sort of humor, ridicule, or light sarcasm's intended purpose is the opposite of what it's asking you to do. That's the beauty of the Bible as a literary work.

Here the opposite of the literal verse, literal sense of the words. Come to Bethel and transgress. Hey, this was a big center right smack on the southern border of the northern kingdom for pagan worship, Amaziah's shrine.

And so, the people had given themselves so much to idolatry, he urges them to continue it with this biting sarcasm. A call to remove themselves from the empty ritual of the shrines of Israel. Sort of in the same spirit of Elijah the prophet, remember he mocked the prophets of Baal up on Mount Carmel.

Hey, why don't you shout a little louder? Maybe he's deaf. Maybe he's gone to the john, which is literally what the text says. Maybe he's sleeping.

And so, Elijah pokes fun at, ridicules, and mocks Baal. And as the prophets of Baal work themselves into a prophetic frenzy, calling on Baal, answer us. No.

So here is the problem for the prophet. People were performing the legal requirements, but here is where the priests come in conflict with the prophets. And we'll see this many times in the course.

The priests were there to check out the ceremonies, review the animals, the specifications of the ceremonies, that they were done properly and so forth. But the emphasis was upon the external. The prophets come along and say you can do all of the legal requirements externally, but if your heart is wrong, if you're doing it with the wrong spirit if there's no teshuva or repentance.

So, the spirit of self-willed worship, published and broadcast before men, in ease and luxury, God wants something deeper. And if the external ceremonies don't point to an inward reality, they're phony, they're fake, they're pretentious, they aren't real. It's like wearing a wedding band and not being faithful.

It's like being baptized in a Christian worship service with all the water, plenty of water, and going out and living a life which is not changed by the spirit of God. There can be an outward symbol, but there has to be an inward reality to conform to it. This concern then, in the New Testament, is something already found in the Old Testament.

External religion is not enough. So, he talks about, in 4.4, how they offer sacrifices and tithes, all kinds of offerings. He says, you love to do these things, and yet, I gave you cleanness of teeth.

Now, what's the meaning of cleanness of teeth? In our modern world, it's to go to your dental hygienist and get a good cleaning. I've said many times, the best commentary in the Bible is the Bible. That's what's nice about poetry.

Read the next line. It defines what cleanness of teeth is. If God is going to clean people's teeth, he's going to withhold bread from them.

Because that's what the next line says, there'll be a lack of bread in all your places. So your teeth aren't going to have anything to work on.

So, God, in some way here, brought famine. And notice the mantra that gets repeated, the same phrase, even though you had some kind of famine. And all of these things, by the way, come from nature.

This is the prophet of nature, living out there with the flocks and the herds. Yet you did not return to me. The second thing in 4:7, I withheld the geshem or the rain.

There's actually a character in the Old Testament called geshem, which is the Hebrew word for rain. If you're in modern Israel today, you'd say, geshem yored, the rain is falling. God withheld this rain, which is absolutely critical for the crops and for the productivity of the land, particularly if there was going to be a harvest.

And yet, Israel did not return to him. In verse 9, he talks about blight, or mildew, which came to lay waste to the gardens. No result of Israel's response.

You see here why Baal worship, in the background, is so important. If Baal is taking care of you, he's the God of nature. No worry about famine, no worry about drought.

He's the weather God. He brings the water in from the Mediterranean. No worry about your crops failing or any plagues.

Baal will take care of the locusts and get them off your back. So, Israel is very vulnerable here in these areas. So, these plagues, or epidemics, or plague-like things that happened in Egypt that caused sickness.

And then God, even through an earthquake, overthrew some of them. Is this the earthquake mentioned in 1:1? We don't know. It could be.

But he uses the analogy of Sodom and Gomorrah that were in some kind of rather sudden way overturned, destroyed. Archaeologists to this day have not, in any conclusive way, found the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which poses some very interesting discussions among archaeologists. Those two cities down in that very volcanic region of the Dead Sea, part of that biggest hole and rift in the whole earth.

They were overthrown. And he uses this fascinating metaphor, which Abraham Joshua Heschel uses for himself. And it comes right out of Amos.

Heschel fled Poland just as the Nazi tanks were rolling in. And he went to England, spent a few months in England. Came to the U.S. in 1940, taught in Cincinnati from 1940 to 1945.

Then, he got a call to go to New York City to the New York Jewish Theological Seminary, where he became the first Jewish scholar ever to be invited to the faculty of a Protestant theological seminary, Union Seminary, of which Dietrich Bonhoeffer had been a graduate.

And there Heschel remained until his death in December 23, 1972. But Heschel with his students, and as he would lecture and write, described himself as a brand snatched from the burning. That's how he described himself.

And if you notice in 4:11, that's what the picture of this remnant, like a burning stick saved from a fire. And this earthquake, whatever the reference is, particularly in relation to the Northern Kingdom. Just as a burning piece of wood would be grabbed from the fire.

And just as at Sodom, they had barely escaped by the miraculous intervention of God. Yet, even with this grace and mercy, these people had not turned around and returned. Again, our Hebrew word for repentance comes from this word, return.

Now there's a difference in the New Testament when you want to say repent. Metanoeo is the idea of changing your mind about things, quite literally. In the Hebrew Bible, it's to do an about-face, do a 180, go back, return is the idea.

In other words, forsake your sin, return in faith to the God who loves you, and keep walking on the road of life. But it's the idea of turning your back on something, forsaking the wrong, and turning to the right. The fifth chapter begins the last message against Israel.

And it's actually one that extends for two chapters, five and six, where he cites some of the injustices in Israel. And again, there's an emphasis upon lamentation over Israel's problems, her sins that are laid out. He's warning them that 721 is coming.

Hear this word, 5:10, House of Israel, the northern kingdom is about to fall. And he probably gets as evangelistic as the Old Testament gets in any place, certainly in the prophets. Because you start reading in the text here that God is passionately pleading for Israel to avert the Assyrians coming in.

And how do they do that? By seeking God Himself. In other words, don't seek the things that are destroying you. Your summer homes, your ivory pads, your complacency, lack of worry about those around you.

But seek me and live. There's a difference, you see. He's saying religion is personal.

It's a relationship. Seek me and live. Now that's why Christians need to start their studies of the Bible with the Old Testament.

Because we always work from a relationship with a person, seek me and live, to the second question, which is, well, tell me now how to live. Once you establish the relationship covenantally by faith through God's grace, the next question is, how may I please you? Teach me how to live. And that's where the Word of God kicks in.

That's where the teaching, the Torah gives direction, instruction, guidance for life. So, this appeal for God not to seek more sacrifices, but to seek Him personally, is really the key to understanding Scripture. When you put law, requirements, and all

of the specifics, the expectations of outward religion before the heart has a relationship of love with the one who graciously calls that one into a relationship, all that other stuff is very, very difficult and people will reject it.

This is the key to serving because you want to, not because you have to. And if religion becomes simply an outward requirement imposed on people, it's compulsory. If you want to belong to this group, then you've got to give this, this, this.

Where Jesus comes along and builds on this prophetic tradition and says, look, hey, it starts in the heart. And if you don't have that heart of love, the passion for me, as I wrote to Moses and his people, Jesus says, I endorse what Moses said. Love God with all your strength, with all your heart, with all your soul.

Love Him entirely with all you've got. And from there we'll go to the horizontal now that we've got the vertical straight. You love God, this is a relationship.

Seek God, and you will live. And then the other things are going to fall into place. So, cross Bethel off your list, 5:5.

Bethel was one of the worship centers for this heartless ritualism. Check Gilgal off your list. Why is G-I-L-G-A-L? Gilgal.

Why was that listed? What happened at Gilgal? Does anyone recall? There was a 40-year miracle in the wilderness. Israel wandered, God provided the what is it food, the manna. And then Israel camped across the Jordan River, roughly across from Jericho.

The 40-year miracle ceased, they began to eat the produce of the land, they celebrated Passover. That's why we know the conquest was in the spring of the year, Passover time. This time of year coming up, when the Jordan overflows its banks, March and April.

Israel crosses over and the first place they set up camp is Gilgal. As soon as they come into the Promised Land. In fact, they set up those 12 stones to commemorate the crossing of the Jordan at Gilgal.

Now stones are very important in the Bible, even if you go to modern Israel. You see piles of rocks scattered around the country. Could commemorate a modern tank battle where so many people passed away.

Rocks are usually to memorialize something. And just as if you have seen Schindler's List, which was filmed at the Patriarch Cemetery in Jerusalem. What do you see? Dozens and dozens of people in line with stones in hand, ready to drop one of those on Oskar Schindler's grave.

Overlooking the southern valley there that surrounds Jerusalem. Again, to commemorate a visit to a grave. And in this particular case, a man who intervened, even though his moral life was quite atrocious.

On a personal level, he rescued about 1100 Jewish people at the time of the Holocaust. And so, you remember someone like that. So, the piles of 12 stones remind Israel of a faithful God to the 12 tribes.

And so, this became a teaching tool for future generations. And when we do the Passover together, you get a feel for how Jews in every new generation have to use the Passover as a teaching tool to their children. It says in Exodus 13 that when in time your son comes to you and asks you, what do these things mean? Then you tell them, Haggadah is a telling, a narration, a story.

The Haggadah will be at everyone's place, which is the story of the Exodus. The liturgical book of readings and poems and scripture and songs that help to tell the story of the Exodus. And so, you eat history, and each of the items on the table recalls something.

It becomes a very visual and indeed sensual, you smell it, you taste it, teaching tool. As you relive vicariously what our ancestors experienced. Now that's for Christians.

We're not going to a Passover Seder to see what God did for the other people's ancestors. These are our ancestors. Have you read 1 Corinthians 10? The opening verses.

Paul writes to the Greek church at Corinth. And he tells these people that their ancestors came through the Red Sea. Our ancestors.

Paul's not there paternalistically telling them; it was my people that were rescued. Once you come to faith, Abraham's family becomes your family. Galatians 3:29 Israel's heroes of the faith become your family of the faithful.

Have you read Hebrews chapter 11? And so, you come into a whole new family of relationships. These are the people into whom, by God's mysterious love, we are engrafted, as Paul puts it in Romans 11, into the olive tree connection. The olive tree is the metaphor for Israel.

And so, the deepest faith-filled roots of that olive tree are the people we're studying in this course, who nourishes us and who sustains us.

It's interesting, the word that Paul uses in Romans 9-11 is a particular Greek word used in the book of Ruth. It says we are nourished by this fat olive root, this reviving sap of the olive tree. We're nourished by it.

The same word is used in Luke for a baby on its mother's breast. And Dr. Luke, who's very astute at these kinds of things, being a doctor, who talks more about women, by the way, than any of the other evangelists, points out this is life support. This is what sustains us, nourishes us, keeps us alive.

The sad thing in the church today, and while you know I'm a nut for these things and have a passion for these things, the sad thing in the church today is most people see the Jewish people in all that Old Testament history as optional, like Jimmy's on an ice cream cone, rather than the very foundation of their faith from which they draw. You have a very truncated, superficial, and shallow understanding of the Christian faith without our family, out of whom our faith grew. And the family of Israel had their ups and downs just like you and me.

God had to show them things, and this long history is so beneficial for us. So, he says, don't go to these pagan centers.

Again, he says, like he did in 4:4, 4:6, seek the Lord and live. Then the prophet lets forth words that sting the establishment of his day. In verse 10, the people of Amos' day hate him who reproves in the gate, they abhor him who speaks the truth.

The prophet was there to speak the word of God, and those words often hurt. And what was Amos attacking? Well, he was attacking the people that sat at the gate. That's where business transactions were carried on, legal things were solemnized by scribes who sat by the gate.

Marriages were solemnized with the elders who were there. And the prophet would come and he would challenge those people who in verse 12 were taking payola. They were taking bribes.

I had an article way, way back, I think it was in the late 60s, published in Christianity Today called Prophets, P-R-O-P-H-E-T-S, and Green Palms. People who paid people to pervert justice. And there's a lot in the Bible, even in the Law of Moses, that says don't be blinded by a bribe.

So, Amos is standing on the shoulders of Moses, not inventing a new religion. He says, you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and who turn aside the needy in the gate. The call is to seek good, not evil, that you may live.

Hate evil and love what is good. This again, in very telegraphic style, gives us the two great kingdoms in the world. The kingdom that is for good, that advances in the world, and to which we can do constructive things.

And the other, the kingdom of evil. The call is to establish justice in the gate. Verse 15.

This is why so many Jewish people to this day go into law. They go into being an attorney. The pursuit of justice in the world.

Because they read the prophets and realize the important emphasis here of being an advocate for justice, the very end of chapter 5 is a classic passage you should never forget. There will be a lot of things you will forget about the prophets if you don't rather quickly reinforce them.

But again, mastery of the Bible is a lifelong task. And every time we go through it again, repetition is the mother of learning. But one passage again and again you will want to come back to.

There are not a lot of passages in the minor prophets where God speaks in the first person. And he does this in the final section of chapter 5. He is going to do this also with Amos' compatriot, Hosea. But here he tells the people to begin with in verse 18, I mean, woe to you who want the Yom Yahweh.

I'll discuss that again when we get to Joel. The Day of the Lord was what the people in the northern kingdom wanted—the masses.

What's the Day of the Lord? Hey, we've got all these enemies around us. And that big Assyrian threat sitting over there in the east. The Day of the Lord is we, God's covenant people, are going to be vindicated.

We're going to be delivered in the face of our enemies. Bring it on. We want the Day of the Lord.

This was popular theology. We're the good guys. And everybody else is a loser.

This God who would intervene in history and right the wrongs and establish justice before the whole earth. Amos says, what? Do you really want the Day of the Lord? Do you think the Day of the Lord is going to be pleasant? Amos, now in his poetical style, uses these great metaphors. No, the Day of the Lord for you guys at least is going to be darkness.

It's not going to be light. The lights are going out. It's like you flee from a lion.

And, of course, Amos loved that metaphor. You flee from a lion and who's around the corner to meet you? A big bear. So, you think you're out of trouble? No.

It's like a guy who leans against the wall, Amos says right here in chapter 5. Puts his hand on the wall and he goes, ouch! There's a serpent in curl up in the crag or the little hole in the wall there where the rocks come together and it bites him. That's what the Day of the Lord is going to be. In short, the Day of the Lord is going to have bite.

But it's not a bit at this point against the enemies of God's people. Judgment starts at the house of God. This is a theme that the prophets are hitting at.

Clean up your own mess. God's interested in your own righteous living. And so the Day of the Lord is really going to be gloom for the northern kingdom if you don't have godly repentance and a change of your actions.

Now God goes into a bit of a tirade. In fact, it's almost counter everything you read in the Law of Moses that God not just advocated, but He made as part of the covenantal obligations. And now God says, I hate, I despise your feasts.

The feast days of Israel, Sukkot, Passover, Shavuot. I don't take any delight in your solemn assemblies even though you offer me your Ola, your whole burnt offering.

Your Micha, your cereal offerings. Where cakes of grain look like a pie crust. In May or June, during the harvest season.

Sukkot is, pardon me, Shavuot is when the grain offerings were particularly offered. God says I won't accept it. Your Shalomim, your peace offerings, these fellowship offerings.

Where the priest sat down and ate with the offerer. I'm not accepting these. Basically, He's blackballing on the surface the whole Levitical code.

For ritual around the tabernacle or temple. Take away from me the noise of your songs. Pretty much remove the book of Psalms.

Because Psalms are songs set to musical accompaniment. And other music. Take away these things.

I don't want to listen to the melody of your harps. And then verse 24 becomes one of those marked texts in the whole Bible. Then He goes to the adversative, to the but.

Let justice, mishpat, roll down or cascade down like a waterfall. And tzedakah, righteousness, like an ever-flowing stream. As Heshu would or indeed does tell you in your book on the prophets.

Justice and righteousness are often coupled together as twins. In prophetic literature especially. And righteousness is more than simply a strict just giving to another their due.

Or what they are entitled to. But righteousness, Heshu points out also, has to do with a burning compassion associated with the just act. Where justice can be reciprocity, and it is in the Jewish tradition of the Hebrew Bible.

Not just what I'm entitled to, what's fair and right and proper. For me, it's also what's right for the other guy. It's a two-way street.

And Heshu brings that out very beautifully and effectively in your textbook. But when you're a righteous person, this word righteousness, as Heschel points out in many contexts, also refers to the heart of the person who's doing this. Their sense of compassion and pity for others that leads them to want to be fair.

Because it's out of a kindness born in one's heart toward the other. So, this marked text which says this is true religion. Not more ceremony, not more ritual.

Okay, are the prophets in conflict with the priests? Yes and no. Amos is not negating everything in the Torah. Amos is negating people who took the Torah thinking doing the external requirement, ceremony, ritual was sufficient.

Without the internal to show the reality of the external, it's phony. It's not real. So, to use the language, it's hyperbolic.

It's extreme. It's over the top. And so, you don't always read the Bible literally.

If anyone ever asks you, how do you read the Bible? The answer is never. I always read it literally. I think a more appropriate answer would be I try to read the Bible faithfully in keeping with its contextual meaning.

Which obviously embraces many figures of speech. And every literary genre has to be heard in its own context against the book. In this case, what Amos is passionately speaking about in correction.

And that's the problem even with New Testament epistles. One of the books on the New Testament calls Paul a task theologian. You take the Corinthian correspondence, Paul needed to get in there, and he had a task.

And he had certain problems he had to correct and speak out against. But if you extrapolate that and make all of those precise problems in one local church, what you're going to find in every church, that's just not the case. These are actual true life situations where God's truth through the apostle had to be spoken into those situations.

But you also at the same time have to take the wider canonical teaching. The culture of the day. The testament in which something is written.

The extracanonical or extra-biblical literature of the day. To help you put that into a clearer context. Now in chapter 6, there's another series of woes.

A double woe. Because again, of the self-sufficient rich of Jerusalem. Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, secure in the mountains of Samaria.

Again, the call is against complacency. I don't know if I've ever heard a sermon on complacency. But most people would tell you they don't care.

The people who are in the mountains of Samaria. And Samaria here, of course, is the bastion of the northern kingdom where Amos is found. And there in Samaria, the capital city.

Which by the way, took three years to bring down. Once the Assyrian juggernaut came in and began attacking under Shalmaneser V. And then finally it was taken under Sargon II. But people felt very, very secure.

Perched up there in the top of Samaria, later renamed Sebastia. And on a clear day, from the top of Samaria, you can actually see out to the Mediterranean Sea. This is Samaria.

Where today, the Samaritans live on those cliffs. They'll be celebrating Passover in the next few weeks as we come into the spring season of the year.

Still performing animal sacrifices according to the law of Moses. They've never left the area. They live by simply the law of Moses.

A lot of intermarriage. I have a picture in my office of the Samaritan high priest. We were up there to do some filming about ten years ago.

But it's a remarkable location. Right smack in the center of the land, up high, commanding position. And yet, this fortress as it's described by Amos here, is going to be brought down.

The capital city. People will not feel secure on the mountain of Samaria. Anymore.

The mantra against the rich again. Verse 4 of chapter 6. Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory. Or lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on couches.

You know, here's a guy that wrapped himself up in a shepherd's cloak on the ground every night. And he's talking about these other people who are at ease. Who, according to verse 6, drinks wine by the bowlful.

Actually, the word he uses here, the bowlful, in verse 6, is the same word used for large sacrificial vessels in the temple. And what he's emphasizing here is their indulgence and ease and gluttony and sensuous pleasure and even drunkenness. Not drinking wine in ordinary cups that weren't big enough.

But large drinking parties. Some scholars have even developed this into kind of a pagan festival kind of interpretation. Yes, he was jealous because of the rich.

I'm not sure how to answer that. I could take it either way. I could say Amos is like you and I, a sinful human being who might be envious of others who have some things you'd love to have.

And to say that any human being totally lives a life without saying, I'd like to have this sometime, is that sin? I think for Amos, Amos saw how materialism was destroying the spiritual backbone of the people. They were pursuing the almighty dollar among this rich group who were isolating themselves. One, I've had, let's see, one is dead now, the other lives a bike ride from campus.

I have known two super-rich people. And both of them have very much a fortress mentality. That's one of the things I learned.

They all have gatekeepers in more than one department. People can't get to them, they can't reach them, because they become worried about people wanting to pick their pocket, they want to protect their wealth, they have a bastion, an implicit mistrust of other people because the only reason you want me is my money, kind of thing. And so, to protect themselves, they isolate themselves from really the burning issues of the person, the average person out there who's really, really struggling.

That's one of the problems of the rich, where it's a very small circle of people who have never lived day to day, praying for your next meal, wondering what you're going to do if you get sick. And so, there's a callousness that begins to develop toward others. And many, of course, begin to look down their nose at others, and, you know, let these people get busy and get to work is the attitude.

And then you slam and bolt the door of your castle. And that's the answer. And I think Amos, who had this wonderful ability like your lord, and Amos had the guts to

not only represent the poor people of his day and speak out on their behalf, but he also had the guts to go to the leaders of his day.

He wasn't afraid to confront Amaziah, as we see here in this next chapter, chapter 7. And he wasn't afraid to meddle with the establishment, and speak out against the establishment. And I think if Amos was alive today, he'd be part of political protest. He'd be a reformer within the community for a much more equitable distribution of resources for the community.

Amos exposes what happens when religion goes bad. There was plenty of religious activity in the Northern Kingdom. All kinds of outward activity.

What do we have today? I would call them social status kinds of churches, where blue bloods in communities have perpetuated an institution and keep their name on the rolls, and so forth. And they go through the motions, but again, they're in the hatch-match-dispatch syndrome. Bring your kids in when they are born for a little water.

Shlep your daughter up the aisle to get her hitched to the church, and then bury them. The splash-em, hitch-em, ditch-em mentality, as some call it. The church is there kind of as an institution.

Amos, I think, is challenging the institutionalization of religion. While that's painful and very difficult, he was a spokesman for the poor. Now, this final section, 7 through 9, deals with a series of five visions of Israel's condition.

Give me several other prophets who had visions. Isaiah had visions. Isaiah 6 is a vision.

He saw the Lord high, lifted up, sitting on a throne. That was a vision. What other? Ezekiel.

Good. Ezekiel 37 is it? The Valley of Dry Bones. That's a vision.

And he had other visions. He had visions. Zechariah had a series of night visions.

And here we come to Amos' five visions. Did God speak to any of the patriarchs in visions? Yes. Visions and dreams are part of Revelation.

And while we may not all be able to get our hands around that today, even Joel says, when God pours out His Spirit, your young men will dream dreams. There will be visions. And Peter gets up and quotes Joel.

So, again, to understand somebody on this campus that comes up to you and says, I had a dream, or I had a vision if you say, that's Old Testament, we don't accept it. It's inadmissible evidence. I'll ask Peter at Pentecost.

He seems to say, in some way, God can still talk to people in this new age that's dawning through the coming of Jesus and the resurrection. Look at these visions. Each one deals with Israel's condition and coming judgment.

In 7:1, you have the locusts and crop failure, which is due to the locusts coming in and ravaging the land. I'll talk a lot more about locusts when we talk about Joel. But it brought a food shortage in the land.

The vision follows with a prophet's prayer for forgiveness, which in this particular case is followed by God's pardon. The second vision, in verses 4-6, talks about fire coming to devour the great deep.

Now, in the ancient world, the deep, the primeval deep, was thought to be the supply of the earth's water supply. And here, it dries up. And so, the vision seems to be one of a very sudden drought to come to the land.

But again, intervention. Who is the great intervener to pray for other people? It was Moses. He was the intercessor.

There is a tradition in the prophetic tradition for the prophet interceding in regard to God for the people. The great act of intervention that way, God was so ticked off by the Israelites, murmuring, complaining, kvetching, disobedient. God says I'm going to wipe them all out right here in the wilderness.

Moses says you can't do that. He gets in God's face. You can't do that.

What will the nations of the earth say? They'll make a laughing stock of us. You committed yourself to us. And while God wanted only to get rid of all those guys and continue with one man, Moses, Moses beseeches God on behalf of the nation.

And God says, okay, not because of them, but in spite of them, I'm going to forgive them and move on, which to me is the good news of the Gospel. All of us, in any one day or any one occasion, we can disappoint God.

And the highest expectations He may expect of us who are enlightened by His Word. But you know, like Israel, that's why we need the Old Testament. God is faithful to you not because of you or not in my life, but because of me.

But He does it because He's faithful to His purposes in the world. And that's why I don't think He's done with Israel yet. Israel, when you read the prophets, unless you

want to be a radical reductionist in terms of the words of the prophets and say, all of this teaching that Paul and Jesus embraced, all of a sudden is over.

We don't take it seriously anymore. God seems to take Israel seriously on one thing I think we can be assured of in the end. And that is, God is going to vindicate Himself.

Corporately, He chose these people for His purpose on earth. So corporately, He's going to climax all of that in some way on this earth. And there will be a physical presence of the Jewish people as the prophets of Israel indicate, especially in chapter 9 of Amos.

Because there's a fallen tent of David that's going to be restored, and it's going to involve all the other nations that bear His name, as the end of Amos says. And it will be a time of great blessing on this earth.

Not in heaven, but on this earth. And so, the geopolitical, physical, this earthly context in which Israel finds herself, I think, requires covenantally God's ultimate outworking with His seed. And this has many sides to it none of us can comprehend.

But I think it is part of the message of the prophets. Alright, that will be it for today. I have a few more final things on Amos, and then we'll get into Hosea for next week.

This is Dr. Marv Wilson in his teaching on the Prophets. This is session 13, Amos, part 3.