

# **Dr. Robert Chisholm, Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?**

## **Session 7 (B): Amos 7:1-8:3, Judgment is Inescapable**

This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on the Book of Amos. Amos, the lion has roared, who will not fear? This is session 7 (B), Amos 8:4-9:10. Judgment is inescapable.

Well, let's continue in our study of Amos. We left off at chapter 8, verse 1, and as I explained before, chapter 8, verses 1-3, which I've entitled the Symbolic Still Life, really goes with what proceeds because it is a vision that the prophet had. So you'll recall in chapter 7, we had three visions.

The first two were like motion pictures. The Lord showed Amos his judgment coming upon the nation, the locusts sweeping through and destroying the crops, and then fire just overtaking the land and destroying everything. And Amos cried out, Forgive, and then stop.

And the Lord did relent. But in that third vision, the Lord was more of a snapshot and just a picture of the Lord holding a plumb line beside a wall. And I think you're supposed to assume, based on everything that's happened in the book prior to this, that that wall is not built to plumb.

It's become crooked. And so the Lord is forcing Amos to look at things from his perspective, not the human perspective of how this is going to impact the objects of judgment. But why would the Lord be doing this in the first place? So he's trying to get his perspective adjusted.

And then we have another vision in chapter 8, verses 1 through 3, but in between we get this account of Amos's encounter with the priest. And of course, Amos delivers a very heavy message against this priest that we talked about. And I think at this point, Amos has learned now from personal experience, from dealing with a person who's at the top.

He's part of that elite group. He is the priest at Bethel, the king's sanctuary, as he calls it. And I think he realizes these people are way beyond the line, and they've overstepped their boundaries, and their thinking of the king is more important than God.

And I think Amos came to the point where he realized, yes, judgment is necessary. And this final vision that we see in chapter 8, verses 1 through 3, really drives the point home. The Lord has decided that, yes, judgment must come, and this vision illustrates that.

So let's read it. This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me. A basket of ripe fruit.

A basket of summer fruit is what this is. Probably included figs, pomegranates, and it's just a still life. Artists in the past, especially, would just paint a still life.

They would paint ordinary things sitting on a table, and call them still lifes. So there's just a picture of this summer fruit, and the Hebrew word for this ripe fruit is qayetz.

Remember that. What do you see, Amos? He asked. A basket of ripe fruit, Amos says.

A kaluv qayetz. So he accurately describes what was there. I answered with a basket of ripe fruit.

A basket of summer fruit. Then the Lord said to me, The time is ripe for my people Israel. I will spare them no longer.

On that day, declares the Sovereign Lord, the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies flung everywhere. Silence.

So some images of judgment that came up earlier in the book, but the NIV translates, the time is ripe for my people Israel. It's trying to show the correlation between this announcement of judgment and the vision of the qayetz. But if you translate it literally in Hebrew, it would be, The Lord said to me, the end has come for my people Israel.

I will no longer spare them or pass by them. And the word for end in Hebrew, so he sees a qayetz, he sees summer fruit, and then the Lord says, The end has come. What's the correlation? NIV, I think, has done a nice job using the word ripe to bring out that there is a correlation.

But guess what? The Hebrew word is for end, qayetz, qayetz. Hear the similarity? qayetz, qayetz. And so this is one of those sound plays that the prophets will use that you could easily miss in English.

But summer fruit in Hebrew sounds like the word for end. So when he sees the qayetz, that should make you think about qayetz, a similar sounding word. And of course, the summer fruit is sort of, the harvesting of the summer fruit is toward the end of the agricultural season as well.

And so it fits the idea of the end. But the Lord is making the point that this summer fruit should make you think of the word for end, and the end has come for my people. The Gezer calendar, we have a document that we discovered, an inscription that we discovered called the Gezer calendar, and it outlines the agricultural season as the Israelites viewed it.

And the summer fruit was harvested in August and September at the end of the agricultural season. And it's listed last in the Gezer calendar. So, qayetz, see it's always associated in their mind with the end, the end of the agricultural season.

So it's a beautiful wordplay that he brings in here. The Lord knows his Hebrew, and he uses it to make a point. So we finished that section, and so what's the principle for chapter 7 verse 1 through chapter 8 verse 3, this series of visions? We've stated it along the way, but just to reiterate, to understand God's seemingly harsh judgment, we must look at reality from his perspective.

So let me repeat that again, to understand God's seemingly harsh judgment, we must look at reality from his perspective. And I think a lot of people focus on the judgment of God when they're reading a book like Revelation, and they extrapolate that from that something about God's character, and they question his goodness. But God is sovereign, he is just, and he's also good, and we have to hold those in balance.

And it's difficult to do sometimes, but I think this is important when you're even thinking about hell, the whole concept of hell, and what that entails. Some people will say, Well, it's eternal punishment. Others will not go so far.

They'll talk about annihilation, perhaps after God has given appropriate punishment, but wherever you land on that, it's severe judgment, but you have to look at it from God's perspective. And he is all-wise, he is just, and so his perspective is what matters, and it's kind of what he forced Amos to see through the plumb line. God puts the plumb line there beside all of us, and we're all crooked walls, and consequently, his justice and holiness can't tolerate that, and so judgment is necessary.

So it's still difficult at an emotional level to read some of this judgment, but it's important to see. I teach a course at Dallas Seminary. I've taught it for many, many years, called Knowing God Through the Old Testament, and in that course, the main task is to demonstrate that God is both sovereign and great, but he's also good.

It's really easy to go one way or the other. There are some Old Testament scholars who will say God is sovereign, he's great, but he's not consistently good. They see a demonic side within Yahweh.

He is the author of everything, both good and evil. He's got a dark side. Others will say, well, God is good, but he's not sovereign.

He's not sovereign. He's engaged in a battle with evil, and we don't know who's going to win, but God is on the side of good, and it's good versus evil, as if evil is co-eternal with God. That's not a correct answer either.

You've got to hold them in balance, and it's difficult to do, and what I make my students do in that course, I received a letter many years ago from a young man who was struggling with God's goodness, and he hadn't had any traumatic experiences that were going to turn him against God at an emotional level. He was just reading scripture, and he didn't like what he read about God. God seemed too severe to him, and so he was ready to abandon his faith.

He sent a letter out to dozens of seminary professors or college professors, biblical scholars, and I was the only one who answered him, and I carried on a long discussion with him via email. I never met him personally, and eventually he went his way, and I went mine. I'll spare you the details on that, but I used the letter that he sent me with his name.

It's not indicated at all. It's just the letter that I had to deal with. It's the content, not the person, and I make my class write a letter of response because he was a very intelligent individual.

He was really wrestling sincerely with these issues growing up in a good evangelical church, and so I make my students interact with that letter as a final project, and so it's a difficult issue, and I went through it, and I was explaining from the text, and I can make that statement. We have to look at things from God's perspective, but sometimes it's difficult to understand God's perspective. We need to remember that he is holy and just, and I think the minor prophets, to some degree, force us to wrestle with this issue, and the book of Hosea. We're not doing Hosea here, but if I can kind of go off course a little bit, I will come back to Amos, but the book of Hosea has some difficult passages on both sides.

I'm involved in a Jewish-Christian Bible study with some Jewish friends of mine, not Messianic Jews. Well, there's a couple of Messianic Jews in the group, but they're part of the conservative Jewish movement, and we're studying Hosea right now, and we're talking about this kind of thing, and in the course that I teach, I make my, to get them warmed up for their final project, I have them talk about what God looks like in the book of Hosea. It's kind of a microcosm of what we see in Scripture, so in Hosea, we see God bringing harsh judgment upon his people for the very sins that Amos is exposing.

Hosea and Amos were contemporaries, basically, and God in Hosea says he is going to deprive the people of their children. He's going to take their children away from them, and that means there's going to be a military invasion, and there's going to be a slaughter of the children. Why would God do that? Well, they're Baal worshipers, and they've rejected the Lord for Baal, who is the Canaanite fertility god, and the Canaanites worship Baal because they think he gives them kids and crops, and that's what they want.

He's a fertility deity, and so when they have children, they thank Baal for giving them children. The Lord says, That's not going to cut it. The children are a blessing from me, and if you reject me in this way and turn to another god, I'll take those blessings away, and that's often the scenario when God punishes the children for the sins of the father.

He takes the blessings away because people are not recognizing him as the source of blessing, so you've got some harsh imagery in Hosea. The Lord is going to come as various predators, and he's going to attack his people and rip them to shreds. It's terrifying, you know, lions, bears.

At the same time, in Hosea chapter 2, the Lord says, I'm going to take my people into exile, basically. I'm going to separate them from their lovers, and you remember Hosea's marriage to Gomer is an object lesson of all this, where she's unfaithful to him, and then he goes and retrieves her out of love, amazing love in that case, but the Lord is going to take them into exile where they won't be around Baal anymore, and he is going to take them back into the wilderness. That's the image that Hosea uses, and to paraphrase, he's going to whisper sweet nothings into her ear.

He's going to approach her romantically because she is his first love, and he wants to win her back, and so the first step is to get her away from her lovers, false lovers, and win back her affections. I mean, that's very tender language, and then in chapter 11 in Hosea, the Lord says, I brought my son out of Egypt, and I know that that's applied by Matthew to Jesus, who is the new ideal Israel, but he's talking in Hosea 11 about the Lord bringing Israel, the nation Israel, out of Egypt through Moses. I brought Israel out of Egypt, and the more I called to them, the more they turned after the idols.

Well, that can't be Jesus. That's not Jesus, so that passage is working at two levels. There is an application, an appropriate application to Jesus as the ideal Israel, whose experience mirrors that of the earlier Israel.

The earlier Israel failed in the wilderness. Jesus succeeded in the wilderness by defeating the devil when the devil tempted him, so there's some correlation between the two texts, but in the Hosea context, he's talking about how Israel turned away from God after he had delivered them and made him his covenant

people, and they turned to false gods, and they rejected the Lord, and so the Lord is going to bring judgment upon them, and it's going to be severe judgment, but then you hit a spot there in Hosea 11. It's amazing.

It's like the Lord pulls back the curtain and lets you look into his heart, and he basically says, How can I give you up, and he uses father-son imagery there rather than husband-wife. How can I give you over? I can't make you like I did Sodom and Gomorrah. He uses two different names of nearby cities, but it's Sodom and Gomorrah that are in view.

I can't totally destroy you like I did Sodom, because my mercy, it turns within me, and it overcomes my anger at you, and then the Lord makes the point, I'm God, not a man, and I don't think the comparison, the contrast is I don't have emotions, and you do. No, he's talking about his emotions, but as God, I can hold my emotions in perfect balance. The anger that comes out of my holiness and desire for justice, I can balance that, temper that with my mercy and compassion and desire to forgive you, and so we see both of them working, and it's depicted as if it's a struggle within God.

He is an emotional being, and we have emotions. Part of the reason for that is we're made in his image, but in Hosea, you see this, you have to balance the harsh imagery with the tender imagery, and God himself seems to be struggling with that, and if you think that, oh, I'm anthropomorphizing God, I don't apologize. This is God who is saying this himself, and you can't say, well, he doesn't really have emotions, because he says he does in that passage, so it's a very important passage in many ways, but so this is what we struggle with when we come to a passage like this in Amos, where this judge, this severe judgment is going to come, and I got to believe that God is going to use the locusts, and he's going to use the fire, as it were, even though he relented initially.

Anything goes on this judgment, so some things to think about as we try to process this and correlate, and with a passage like this, you have to go. I took a little time to go to Hosea and some other texts, because you have to do correlation. You have to correlate this with other texts, and one of the things I told my friend who wrote me that letter, who became my friend, my pen pal, as it were, I said, you know, you got to remember that God, yeah, it seems harsh, but he doesn't insulate himself from the consequences of sin, because the God-man came, the second person of the Godhead, Jesus, the God-man came and suffered the penalty for sins and went through that, so there's something about justice and sin that it's just the way, it's got to work a certain way, and to redeem us, God entered into that and suffered himself. Jesus suffered on the cross for us, not just the human Jesus, the God-man suffered on the cross, so I think that's important to remember as well.

We may not understand it all; there's mystery involved in all of this, but we do know that God cares about us enough to suffer himself so that we can be redeemed.

Maybe someday he'll explain it all to us, maybe not, maybe we won't need an answer at that point. Well, let's march on, and in this next section, chapter 8, verse 4 through chapter 9, verse 10, we're talking about judgment being inescapable, we kind of did part A of that, and now we can do part B, and in my outline, I've got three parts here in the sub-points.

A corrupt society gets totally eclipsed, 8:4 through 14. The reason I chose that is because in one of the verses here, the Lord refers to an eclipse. He refers to the light, everything turning dark in the middle of the day, that would have been an eclipse for them, and it would have been a huge sign to them.

It wouldn't just be a natural occurrence. They didn't understand how an eclipse took place. They would see this as an act of God, and it would be in their experience.

Then in chapter 9, verses 1 through 6, I've entitled this one, God Always Wins at Hide and Seek. You'll see why I chose that, and then in chapter 9, verses 7 through 10, we have shaken in a sieve. You know what a sieve is.

You use it to separate things, and the Lord is going to shake his people in a sieve, and that's going to be good news as we begin to make the transition to the happy ending that's going to occur in Amos. We're going to make that transition, and this imagery of God shaking his people in a sieve is good news. It's good news for the righteous remnant.

So that's where we are heading as we dive into this next section of the book. So chapter 8, verse 4. Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land. We've heard that language before, so we are returning to this injustice theme, and the Lord has a message for these individuals who are treating others unjustly, saying, Here's what they say, when will the new moon be over that we may sell grain? They had a religious festival in conjunction with the new moon, and the sabbath was ended so that we may market wheat, skimping on the measure, boosting the price, and cheating with dishonest scales, almost like they're proud of this.

Buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, peddling people. We've seen references to that, and selling even the sweepings, the chaff with the wheat. Okay, let's stop right there.

So the Lord depicts them as standing around, those who are oppressing the poor. They want to buy and sell people. They're also buying and selling crops, grain, and that sort of thing.

And so, they just can't wait until the religious observations are over, and the sabbath is ended. Now, they're not violating the sabbath at this point. They're not engaging in this kind of economic activity, or in slave trade apparently, on the sabbath.

But they can't wait to get the sabbath over. And I think one writer has said, if you go through Amos, you will find a violation of nine of the Ten Commandments. Nine of the Ten Commandments will be violated.

The only exception is the sabbath. Well, is it really an exception? And I think this writer made the point. Okay, technically, they have not violated the sabbath, but in spirit, when you're sitting around on the sabbath, oh, I wish that day would get over.

You're not celebrating the sabbath. You're not enjoying the sabbath the way it was intended by God, as a kind of a relief from the work week that God has granted to you in his mercy. Even when he was creating the world, he ceased on the seventh day, giving the pattern for the sabbath.

So, I think they're violating the sabbath in spirit. Yeah. If they could, they would engage in this activity on the sabbath.

Skimping on the measure, boosting the price, and cheating with dishonest scales. Okay, here's what's going on here. And I'm going to read from a text that I've written out.

Two of their favorite tricks were skimping the measure and boosting the price. Literally making the ephah small, a unit of dry measure, and making the shekel large. A shekel would be a coin that you would use to purchase something.

So, when measuring out grain, they used a less-than-standard ephah, a unit of dry measure, so that the customer received less than he thought he was buying. So, oh, you want to buy a bag of grain. Let me get my alpha basket.

Whoa, whoa. You take a smaller basket. You got two baskets back here.

So, they can go either way with this. But you take the small amount and you measure out the grain. Here's a grain of truth.

No, it's less than an ephah of grain. It's maybe 0.8 of an alpha. So, that's what's happening on one side.

So, the customer is going to get less than he thought he was buying. At the same time, they use a heavier-than-standard shekel weight to measure the purchase price so that the customer actually pays more than he should. So, you need to give me a shekel.



Well, he's got a shekel measure, but it's heavier than a normal shekel. So, you're paying more and you're getting less. See how it works? And then we also discover, as we read on in this section, that the scales are rigged.

So, they've done something with the scales to make it even worse, more to their advantage. Not sure how they did that, bent them or something, because they're using the scales to weigh this stuff out. And has this ever happened to you? You buy some strawberries at the farmer's market, and the upper layer looks wonderful, but then you get down to the lower layer and they're all rotten.

You'd better eat them right away because in about five minutes, they're not going to be edible. So, that's what they're doing. In the ephah basket, there's chaff being put in there.

So, you're not really getting as much grain as you thought. You're getting less because of the way they're doing the weighing, and you're also getting a mixture of real grain and chaff. And so, the Lord is not happy with this behavior.

This is an injustice. And, you know, we emphasized yesterday that you've got to be careful about taking texts in the Bible and just putting them over into a modern context, without taking account of the context here. But it seems to me like this is pretty applicable for Christian businessmen, any businessperson.

The Lord is watching, and I don't see why He would feel any different today about this kind of cheating in the marketplace than He did back then. It seems to me that this is something universal. The Lord hates it when people cheat others economically.

And so, I think Christians need to make sure that their business practices are fair and that they're not cheating people. And I know in the business world, some people are going to say, well, everybody does it. It's just the way it works.

Everybody does it. If you're going to make a profit, you've got to do this kind of thing. No, you don't.

You know, trust in the Lord. Do it His way. Be fair.

And he may surprise you by blessing you, because you're going against the grain, no pun intended. You're going against the grain, and He will honor you when you honor Him. Remember Eli's house.

The Lord says, I will honor those who honor Me. I will punish those who don't. And so, give the Lord an opportunity.

Try doing it the Lord's way if you're caught up in something similar to this. And watch. He may very well bless you in ways that you didn't think possible.

So, the Lord is not pleased with this, and then it's really kind of the accusation part of this judgment speech. The Lord has sworn by Himself the pride of Jacob. I will never forget anything they have done.

I'm not going to forget this. NIV translates it, I've sworn by Himself the pride of Jacob as if He is the pride of Jacob. That's one interpretation here, that the Lord is swearing by Himself, even though that's not stated, and He then says, I am the pride of Jacob, and it's sarcastic.

The people take pride in me as their God. You would never know it by the way they treat me, disregarding my principles and my laws. I think I like the translations that take it as the Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob, and it's even more sarcastic.

The pride of Jacob is literally their pride. It's described that way in Hosea. And so, remember, you swear an oath by something that is constant and unchanging.

And so, the Lord is suggesting that Jacob's arrogance and pride are something that is not going to be changed, short of judgment. And so, I'm going to make, just like I would take an oath by my own life or my holiness, their pride is as unchanging as my eternal, unchangeable character. So, it's just dripping with sarcasm.

I take an oath by their pride and their arrogance. I will never forget anything they have done. I'm not going to forget this.

Apart from repentance and forgiveness, the Lord doesn't forget. And then, we kind of move into more of the announcement of judgment that describes what's going to happen to the land. Will not the land tremble for this? And all who live in it mourn.

People are going to be afraid and trembling. The whole land will rise like the Nile. It will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt.

They knew about the Nile, and they knew about the seasonal changes. The Nile would rise, and then it would fall. That happens more gradually, but He still uses it as a metaphor here for shaking the earth.

So, just as the Nile rises and falls, yeah, it takes a while, but that's not the point. I'm going to do the same thing to the Earth. The Earth is going to quake, and you will see it rising and falling.

You know, you see some of these shots of earthquakes, so it's like a fair ride or something. Yeah, and that's what He's getting at here. And so, the whole land is going to do that.

And so, this is that earthquake motif. We talked about the day of the Lord and some of the imagery that comes with that, and often when the Lord appears in a theophany, in judgment, the whole land shakes. He is the creator of all things, and when He comes to do judgment, it's like the land itself is frightened.

It's personified. It's afraid of what is going to happen, because the land is going to be collateral damage. The land itself is going to suffer the consequences of judgment upon the people.

And so, I think some of that's involved. It's almost like the land is being personified. It's very poetic, very metaphorical.

Don't say the prophet is silly for picturing the land like this. No, this is good poetry. It's good metaphorical language.

On that day, declares the sovereign Lord, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. Sounds like an eclipse to me. And they had eclipses, and we know from the culture and even the Bible that eclipses were viewed as major signs from a God, but from many, many times.

There was an eclipse before the fall of Babylon, and the Babylonian king at that time was a moon god worshiper, and so there was an eclipse of the moon. And so, these things would really grab their attention. They would see it as gods being involved.

I'm not suggesting that eclipses today are divine interventions. They could be in certain contexts they were in the past, and so apparently the Lord's going to bring some kind of eclipse along, but even if he's just talking metaphorically, it's the idea of light turning to darkness. We've been using that throughout the book.

Judgment is coming. I will turn your religious festivals into mourning, and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads.

This is something that they did in the culture to mourn the death of someone. They would shave their heads, wear sackcloth to signal to everyone that life is abnormal right now. We have suffered a loss, and we are mourning that, and you see it throughout the ancient Near Eastern world.

When the god Baal in the Canaanite mythology dies, he is actually defeated by death and goes into the underworld. The high god El comes down, puts on sackcloth, and

starts cutting his body to mourn. So, they're very outward expressively in this culture, even to this day.

If you see on TV shots from the Middle East, they're very, very expressive when they're mourning, when they're angry, and so that's what's going to happen, and then notice the degree of it. I will make that time like mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day. It's terrible to lose a child, but you especially feel for people who lose an only child, an only child, and that's the extent of the mourning.

As judgment comes upon them, they're going to be mourning for what they see around them, widespread death and destruction, just as you would mourn for an only son. The wailing and the weeping are going to be loud. The days are coming, declares the sovereign lord, when I will send a famine through the land, and we've already had that imagery being used for literal famines.

The lord has sent some famine to them already, at least in some areas, to try to get their attention, but that's not what he's talking about here, when I will send a famine through the land, not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the lord. So a time is going to come when you're going to want a message from the lord, but you're not going to get it. Remember Saul? Saul disobeyed the lord to the point where he could no longer contact the lord.

He wasn't receiving any prophetic messages, other than maybe a message of judgment from Samuel, and the lord wasn't communicating to him anymore. And he eventually got so desperate, he visited the witch or medium, who is the medium of Endor, because he's trying to make contact with the dead, with Samuel. And so that's what's going to happen to these people.

Remember, they're the people who told the prophets, shut up, don't talk. We see that with the priest at Bethel. He tells Amos, Shut up, get out of here, we don't want your prophetic message.

And so this is a very appropriate judgment. We're seeing that God's judgment is going to be very severe. Now we're seeing that it's appropriate.

People who reject the word of God, in a very aggressive kind of way, hey, the day may come when God will no longer communicate to them, and that's what's going to happen. People will stagger from sea to sea, all the way from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea. People who are in Galilee, people will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the lord, but they will not find it.

The prophets will not be speaking. On that day, the lovely young women and the strong young men will faint because of thirst. Those who swear, now here the language gets a little cryptic, but I think he's referring to idols, various idols.

Those who swear by the sin of Samaria. What would the sin of Samaria be? I think sin is being used as a metonymy for idolatry. When you are worshiping an idol, you are sinning.

So this is an idol in Samaria that is causing people to sin when they worship it. And so those who swear by the sin of Samaria, I'd flesh it out to say the sinful idolatry or the sinful idol that resides in Samaria. Maybe Baal, maybe the Canaanite god Baal.

You know, Ahab married a Canaanite wife, Jezebel, and she brought Baal worship in. And with Baal worship comes Asherah worship. Asherah is a goddess who is worshiped.

So probably something like that. Who says, as surely as your god lives, Dan? Remember Jeroboam, the first, set up an image in Dan, a golden calf.

Seems to be hearkening back to what happened with Israel at the beginning. And even though I think he intended it to be some kind of a symbol of Yahweh, it's a fertility symbol. It's very Canaanite.

It's syncretistic. And I think that's probably the god that's in view here that they're worshiping. As time goes on, I'm sure they worship that god in conjunction with Baal worship.

Or as surely as the god, it's literally the way of Beersheba. And so we're not sure exactly what that means. But in light of the parallelism, I'm thinking that it's got to refer to some kind of false worship system.

Maybe idolatrous worship down in Beersheba lives. They will never fall to rise again. And so notice that Judah is, Beersheba south.

That's Judah. So he's slowly but surely including Judah in this as well because judgment is going to come their way.

So that's the first part of this section. I'll wait to state the principle until we get through chapter 9 verse 10. We'll get started on chapter 9, and we'll finish it in the next lecture.

So we come to chapter 9, and Amos is going to have another vision that he sees. I saw the Lord. And here Lord is Adonai.

It refers to the Lord as the sovereign one. And so I saw the sovereign God standing by the altar. So he's seeing some kind of worship center.

He's just mentioned some worship centers. You know, Dan, Beersheba, and Samaria. And I saw the Lord standing by the altar.

You might think, well, which altar? Any altar where these people are worshipping. And he said, Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. So the Lord is commanding that the sanctuary where this altar is would fall, would collapse.

Bring them down on the heads of all the people. So there's a temple that's got an altar in it, and the Lord is commanding that the temple be destroyed. And the roof's going to cave in on them.

And those who are left, the implication seems to be that when the altar falls, I mean, when the temple falls, many will be killed. Those who are left, I will kill with a sword. Not one will get away.

None will escape. So see how the inescapability of judgment theme is being developed here. I used it as a kind of the overriding theme for this section.

I think it is, but here it's being specifically mentioned. And here's where, remember, in my outline, I called this section, God always wins at hide and seek. I think you're going to see why I use that title now.

So they may try to run away from the judgment. You know, there are always fugitives, refugees, when judgment comes through. However, they hide themselves on the top of Carmel.

So, Carmel is one of the higher regions. Let's say they try to run up to, I jumped ahead of verse, so I'm sorry. However, they dig down to the depths below.

We'll get back to Carmel here in a minute. Though they dig down to the depths below, from there, my hand will take them. So the idea there might be if they go down into Sheol itself, you know, where the dead reside, they can dig way down into the ground, try to get away from me.

No, no good. Though they climb up to the heavens above, from there, I will bring them down. So obviously, they can't dig their way down into the underworld.

They can't climb into the heavens. But the Lord is just, you know, theoretically saying, even if you could go to the extremes of the world, you won't get away from me. You try to hide from me out there on the perimeter, I'll find you, and I'll bring my judgment upon you.

And so think about the logic here. This is called a merism, where you use opposite extremes to refer to everything in between. So if those places won't be safe, then what about the places that I can reach? No, that's not going to work.

Though they hide, and he comes down to those here. Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, which is elevated, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea, that's not really doable, but even if they tried, there I will command the serpent to bite them.

So wherever they go, high or low, anywhere in God's world, the Lord is going to get them, and he even has agents, operatives. He's got this serpent. So that's been interpreted in a couple of ways.

In the poetic text of the Bible, there is a sea creature, Leviathan, that is a seven-headed creature, who is associated with the... Psalm 74 says that the Lord defeated the heads of Leviathan. We know from the Canaanite material he's got seven heads. So maybe he's referring to the chaos monster.

That's what he's called. He lives in the sea. So maybe that's the serpent here.

Leviathan is referred to as the serpent in other places. So maybe the Lord is saying, hey, even the bad guys, the forces of evil, ultimately obey me, and I will tell them to get you and bite you and you'll die. Maybe that's in view.

He may also just be talking about the serpent. Sometimes in Hebrew, they put the article on a word when it's just generic. We do that sometimes.

We'll talk about the typical bluebird or the typical dog, and we'll just say the dog, and we know it's generic in a context. The article doesn't always mean it's specifically a singular thing. So you could just translate it, a serpent, a poisonous snake, will bite them.

You know, some kind of sea snake that would be able to kill you. So there's a little bit of a debate among the commentators on which it is. Either way, it's bad news.

The serpent, however, you identify it, is going to bring death your way. Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. So you can't run away.

You can't escape my judgment. My judgment is going to involve exile. You may think, well, maybe if we go into exile, we'll be away from this place, and this is where the Lord lives.

They might be thinking of the Lord as the patron deity of their territory. No. The Old Testament emphasizes that the Lord is not a regional deity who is limited to one location.

He is the sovereign creator of the whole world, and he controls everything, and even if you're in exile, I will command the sword to slay them. I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good, and this is a place where in the Hebrew text it uses the word *ra'a*, which sometimes means evil, but the Lord is not one who endorses evil. This Hebrew word can be translated as disaster, calamity, or evil.

It depends on the context, and I think NIV has made a wise choice here. Harm as opposed to good, disaster as opposed to blessing, and so even if you go into exile, you can't escape. I'm going to be watching you, and I'm going to make you suffer in exile.

So this is an inescapable judgment, and I think we'll read verses five and six, and then we'll move on to the next lecture, but in five and six, we have another one of those sections we've seen thus far in Amos, one in chapter four and one in chapter five. In the midst of these judgment announcements, the Lord stops, and he just describes himself, kind of the way you would expect to see in a hymn in the Psalms, where the psalmist is just describing how great and mighty God is, and some scholars say this doesn't really fit in a prophetic judgment speech. I think it does, because they may be thinking of God in a lesser sense, and so he reminds everyone just who he is.

So here's who he is. The Lord, the Lord Almighty, is who God is. The Lord, the Sovereign One, Yahweh, who leads armies, is really what that says.

He touches the earth, and it melts. That sounds like judgment to me. He touches the earth, and it melts, and all who live in it mourn.

So this is judgment. The whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt. He's already talked about that.

That's the earthquake, the shaking of the earth and people when the Lord comes in judgment. He builds his lofty palace in the heavens. So if he's building a lofty palace in the heavens, I think that makes him the king in heaven, and that kind of makes him the king of the world.

So he has the authority to do what he has said he's going to do. He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land. The Lord is his name.

So he controls the water cycle and all of that. That doesn't fit judgment necessarily, but nevertheless, it does picture him as having absolute control of nature because he



created it all. And so this is the one who is saying that judgment is going to come upon the nation.

The Lord is his name, and so this portrait of God's sovereignty, I think, really solidifies his announcement of judgment. If you've got any doubts about my ability to do what I'm threatening you with, you better think twice. Remember who I am.

So we'll take a break here now, and we'll pick up our next lecture in chapter 9, verse 7.

This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on the Book of Amos. Amos, the lion has roared, who will not fear? This is session 7 (B), Amos 8:4-9:10. Judgment is inescapable.