

Dr. Robert Chisholm, Amos, Session 6, Amos 7:1-8:3 Judgment is Inescapable (A) Podcast Audio Overview

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Can judgment truly be inescapable? I mean, even for a people who thought they were untouchable, who really pushed the limit. It's a huge question. Yeah.

And it's one that the ancient book of Amos tackles head-on. Absolutely. And today we're doing a deep dive into a really powerful section, Amos chapter 7 and the start of chapter 8. That's right.

And the core theme for this whole chunk, really, from 7.1 through 9. Nella, is stark. Judgment is inescapable. But, you know, what's really interesting is that even with that message, Amos later hints at, well, a kind of happy ending.

Yeah, it shows God's commitment to his long-term plan, you know, even when discipline is necessary. So our mission here is to unpack these dramatic visions, a big confrontation, and really dig into divine justice, patience, and this idea of corporate responsibility. And you'll see why these ancient texts are, well, still incredibly relevant for understanding complex situations today.

Let's start with the visions. Okay, sounds good. But first, the way Amos presents them is clever, right? This paneled structure you mentioned.

Oh, absolutely. It's a great storytelling technique. Think of it like panels, like in a comic strip, maybe.

There's repetition. But each step builds the tension towards a climax. Okay.

Our source uses a neat analogy: the three little pigs reversed. Ah, I like that. So in the story, the brick house stands at the end, escape.

But here... It's flipped, exactly. Amos sees judgment threatened twice, and God actually relents, gives him a chance. Wow.

But the third time, that pattern breaks. Judgment is unavoidable. Okay, let's get into that first vision then, the locusts.

Amos 7, verses 1 to 3. Right. So the Lord shows Amos these locust swarms getting ready. And locusts, I mean, they're just devastating for crops.

And the timing is crucial, isn't it? It's after the king's share has been harvested. Precisely. So the people are already, you know, lying on what's left of later, perhaps less reliable crops.

These locusts are hitting them where it hurts most. And Amos just, mmm, he cries out immediately. Forgive, Lord.

How can Jacob survive? He's so small. Yeah, he acknowledges they've done wrong. But he's pleading based on their weakness, their vulnerability.

And the amazing part, the Lord relented. It's remarkable. And it tells us something important about prophecy.

It's often contingent. Think Jonah and Nineveh. God prefers repentance.

Okay, but if God relents, does that make him, like, indecisive? How does that fit with God being unchanging? That's a really common question and a good one. Relenting isn't indecisiveness. It's about God's antecedent will, his primary desire, his ideal hope for reconciliation.

So his first choice is always mercy if people turn back. Exactly. But human free will can, you know, get in the way.

So when he relents, he's actually being consistent with his merciful character. He's giving another chance. Okay, that makes sense.

So after the locusts, what's the second vision? Amos 7.4-6. It gets worse. It's judgment by fire. Fire, yikes.

And it's portrayed as even more devastating. It doesn't just burn the surface. It dries up the great deep, consumes the land itself.

It's like total destruction. And Amos' plea changes too, right? He's not even asking for forgiveness now. No, he's just desperate.

Stop. How can Jacob survive? He's completely overwhelmed by the potential devastation. And again, God relents.

Again, it really underscores God's incredible patience. And it comes back to that immutability point. God's unchangeable nature includes his mercy, his openness to repentance.

It's not rigidity. Right. His character is constant, even if his specific actions respond to the situation.

You got it. That's a key insight. So two visions, two threats averted.

Then we hit the third one, the plumb line. Amos 7.7-9. This is the big shift. Huge shift.

Totally different feel. The Lord's just standing by a wall, holding a plumb line. It's a still image, no action.

Like a measurement is being taken. Exactly. And God asks Amos what he sees, then says, I am setting a plumb line among my people, Israel.

I will spare them no longer. No relenting this time. The wall, Israel, is crooked.

It doesn't measure up. Precisely. The standard is God's covenant, his righteousness.

And they failed to meet it. This vision forces a perspective shift from pity for the people to understanding the judge's standard and, well, the necessity of justice when repentance just isn't happening. Judgment is now inescapable.

That's the culmination of this panel. And this whole paneled narrative thing, it's not just for kids' stories. We see it elsewhere in the Bible.

Oh, definitely. Think of Elijah and the captains. Fire comes down twice.

And the third guy begs for mercy. It builds drama, highlights authority. Right.

It's typical of oral storytelling, which the Bible fundamentally is. Using this structure doesn't make it less true. God uses it to emphasize both his patience and his justice.

Give him a chance, but eventually. OK, so the vision set the stage. Judgment is coming.

Then, bam, real-world drama. Prophet meets priest. Amos versus Amaziah.

Yeah, this confrontation in Amos 7.10-13 is intense. We meet Amaziah, the priest at Bethel. But Bethel isn't just any shrine, is it? It's a royal sanctuary.

Exactly. Set up by the king, kind of tied to the state religion. So Amaziah's loyalty seems to be more with King Jeroboam II than purely with the Lord.

And he immediately accuses Amos of conspiracy, right? Yes. Missing his words. Yeah.

He tells the king, Amos said, Jeroboam will die by the sword, which isn't quite what Amos prophesied about the house of Jeroboam. But he does accurately report the exile part. And then he tells Amos directly, "Get out, you seer."

Using seer almost like an insult. Yeah. Like he's just some fortune teller for hire.

Tells him to go back to Judah, make his money there, and crucially, don't prophesy anymore at Bethel. Why? Because it's the king's sanctuary. He's putting the king's authority above God's.

That's blatant. Absolutely blatant. But Amos, wow, he doesn't flinch.

His defense in verses 14 and 17 is powerful. He pushes back hard. He says, look, I wasn't a prophet nor the son of a prophet.

I wasn't part of the guild. You know, he was just a shepherd, took care of sycamore fig trees, a regular guy. Exactly.

God called him directly from his fieldwork and gave him a reason for prophesying. The lion has roared. Who can but prophesy? It's like a divine compulsion.

He has no choice. God spoke. He must speak.

And because Amaziah opposed God's word, the judgment against him is incredibly specific and harsh. Yeah. Read that out.

It's chilling. Therefore, this is what the Lord says. Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword.

Your land will be measured up, divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. Dying in an unclean pagan land for a priest, that's just the ultimate degradation. Absolutely.

And then the final hammer blow: Israel will surely go into exile. No doubt about it. Okay.

This brings us right to that really difficult point for modern listeners. The judgment on Amaziah includes his wife, his kids. From our individualistic standpoint, that feels wrong.

Why should they suffer for his sin? It's a huge barrier for many people. And this is where we absolutely have to grapple with the Old Testament concept of corporate responsibility. The idea that one person's actions can affect the whole group.

Yes, especially within a covenant community. The Bible operates with this understanding frequently. It's not always comfortable for us, but it's there.

We see it clearly with Achan back in Joshua, right? His sin led to battlefield deaths, and his whole family faced the consequences with him. Exactly. The text says Israel has sinned, even though it was Achan's specific act.

His sin contaminated his household, his unit. Or King Saul. His failures had consequences for his descendants.

And his actions against the Gibeonites later led to a famine, resolved only by the death of his innocent offspring. It's stark. These aren't isolated incidents.

It's a recurring principle. Maybe some analogies help, like in team sports. That's a good one.

One player makes a mistake. Maybe the whole team runs laps. It teaches that everyone's connected, right? Your actions impact the team.

Or like corporate bankruptcy. Good employees lose their jobs when the company fails, even if they did great work. They're part of the larger entity.

Yeah, their individual performance doesn't shield them from the collective outcome. I was thinking about sports dynasties, too, like the Chicago Bulls back in the day. Amazing players like Ewing or Barkley didn't get rings unless they were on that specific championship team.

The reward was collective, right? You had to be part of that winning unit. Individual talent wasn't enough for that reward. So tying this back to Amaziah and Israel, God is sovereign here.

He decides when corporate consequences apply. Exactly. And it's not like God is causing the suffering directly out of spite.

It's more like he withdraws his protective hand because of the sin introduced by someone like Amaziah, allowing the natural consequences, often through human agents like the invading Assyrians, to fall on the community, which is seen as a single entity. So the blame still rests with the one who sinned and brought this on the group. Precisely.

The fault lies with the one who broke the covenant or defied God, bringing trouble upon the whole. So wrapping up this part of our dive, we've seen God's incredible patience, but also his absolute commitment to justice. Yeah.

And a prophet compelled by God, standing firm against corruption, even when it leads to harsh judgment personally and nationally. And we've really had to wrestle with that tough concept of corporate responsibility, pushing back against our maybe overly individualistic views. It definitely challenges us.

Which leads to a final thought for you, the listener. Think about this idea of corporate responsibility in your own world. Where do you see individual actions having wider ripple effects impacting whole groups? For good or for bad? Yeah.

What does that reveal about how connected we all really are? Maybe in ways we don't always acknowledge. Something to chew on, definitely.