

Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?

Session 6: Amos 7:1–8:3, Judgment Is Inescapable

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Abstract

Dr. Robert Chisholm examines Amos 7:1–8:3, demonstrating that while God exhibits divine patience through prophetic intercession in the first two visions (locusts and fire), divine judgment ultimately becomes inescapable as illustrated by the third vision of the plumb line. The narrative progresses to a sharp biographical confrontation between Amos and Amaziah, the royal priest of Bethel, highlighting the tension between royal human authority and divine prophetic mandate. In response to Amaziah's attempt to silence God's word, Amos pronounces severe individual and corporate judgment, illustrating that human rulers cannot thwart sovereign divine decree and that individual sin often carries sweeping corporate consequences.

Outline

I. Introduction and Thematic Context of Amos 7:1–9:10

- A. Overriding thematic message: Divine judgment is inescapable across chapters 7–9.
- B. Transition to ultimate restoration in Amos 9:11–15 ("A Happy Ending") rooted in God's covenant promises to Abraham and David.
- C. Structural division of Session 6 (Amos 7:1–8:3):
 - 1. Amos 7:1–9: The sequence of three visions ("The Three Little Pigs Reversed").
 - 2. Amos 7:10–17: Prophet meets priest (confrontation between Amos and Amaziah).
 - 3. Amos 8:1–3: The fourth vision (a symbolic still life).

II. The Paneled Narrative Structure in Biblical Literature

- A. Characteristics and literary function of paneled structures in oral literature:
 - 1. Repetition of parallel panels with progressive intensification.
 - 2. Dramatic culmination in the final panel featuring significant narrative shifts.
- B. Parallel biblical examples of paneled structures:
 - 1. The call of young Samuel in the night (1 Samuel 3).
 - 2. Elijah's confrontation with King Ahaziah's captains and fifty men (2 Kings 1).
- C. Thematic purpose in Amos 7: Balances divine patience (relenting) with divine justice (inexplicable judgment).

III. The Sequence of Three Visions (Amos 7:1–9)

- A. First Panel: Vision of the Locust Swarm (Amos 7:1–3)
 - 1. Threatened devastation: Swarm preparing to strip the late crops after the king's harvest.

2. Prophetic intercession: Amos cries "Forgive, Lord!" appealing to Jacob's smallness.
3. Divine response: The Sovereign Lord relents, demonstrating the contingent nature of prophetic warning.

B. Second Panel: Vision of Devouring Fire (Amos 7:4–6)

1. Escalated judgment: Fire consuming the land and drying up the great deep.
2. Prophetic intercession: Amos cries "Stop, Lord!" deeply empathizing with the objects of judgment.
3. Divine response: The Sovereign Lord relents again, illustrating divine patience and willingness to relent.

C. Third Panel: Vision of the Plumb Line (Amos 7:7–9)

1. Shift in vision style: Static image of the Lord standing by a wall true to plumb with a plumb line.
2. Symbolic meaning: Israel tested against God's covenant standard and found crooked.
3. Divine decree: "I will spare them no longer"—judgment is executed on high places, sanctuaries, and the house of Jeroboam.

IV. Biographical Interlude: Prophet Meets Priest (Amos 7:10–17)

A. Amaziah's Opposition and Accusations (Amos 7:10–13)

1. Amaziah sends a conspiracy report to King Jeroboam II accusing Amos of treason.
2. Misrepresentation of prophetic words: Claims Amos said Jeroboam would die by the sword while omitting God's role.
3. Command to silence Amos: Tells the seer to flee to Judah, earn his bread there, and cease prophesying at Bethel.
4. Subversion of divine priority: Amaziah labels Bethel "the king's sanctuary" and "temple of the kingdom," elevating royal authority over divine sovereignty.

B. Amos's Defense and Divine Calling (Amos 7:14–15)

1. Disavowal of professional status: "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet."
2. Agricultural background: Shepherd and tender of sycamore fig trees.
3. Imperative divine mandate: "The Lord took me from tending the flock and said, 'Go prophesy to my people Israel.'"

C. Pronouncement of Specific Judgment on Amaziah (Amos 7:16–17)

1. Fulfillment of corporate and personal consequences: Wife becomes a prostitute, children fall by the sword, land divided.
2. Ironical priestly end: Amaziah will die in an unclean (pagan) country.
3. Reiteration of national fate: Israel will surely go into exile.

V. Theological Reflection: Corporate Responsibility in Biblical Judgment

A. Contrast between Western individualistic thinking and Old Testament corporate solidarity (Joel Kaminsky).

B. Scriptural illustrations of corporate judgment:

1. The sin of Achan at Jericho affecting the entire nation and his household (Joshua 7).
2. Saul's violation of the Gibeonite treaty resulting in famine and execution of seven descendants (2 Samuel 21).
3. Corporate impact of Adam's sin on humanity (Romans 5).

C. Modern corporate analogies: Sports team mental errors and corporate bankruptcy.

D. Sovereign execution: God withdrawing divine protection to allow historical consequences (the Assyrian invasion) to unfold.