



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Don't Attack the Messenger (Amos 6:1—7:17)

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Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

Amos 3—6 exposes the apathy and hypocrisy of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Each of the three sermons begins with the formula, "Hear this word" (3:1; 4:1; 5:1). Amos 3 emphasized that significant privilege necessitates tremendous responsibility, which is true not only for Israel but also for all nations. Israel was especially accountable to God because the nation was chosen to know Him in a special and unique manner. All nations are responsible for injustices and unrighteousness, and judgment is inevitable without accountability to God for actions, attitudes, and motives (Rom 1:18-20). The truth of this universal responsibility was difficult to comprehend for

those who had experienced God's blessing and privilege. Amos demonstrated that there is a cause and effect relationship between experiencing blessing and judgment.

THE MESSAGE

(6:1-14) "Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured *something*?" (Amos 3:4). A lion will roar or growl for a reason: prey has been captured. Consequently, the judgment of God will not be without a reason: individuals and nations have not practiced justice and righteousness (5:23-24). The judgment prophesied in chapter 3 would be severe. Following the judgment, the "people will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find *it*" (3:12).

... THERE IS A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL INEQUITIES AND SPIRITUAL INJUSTICE.

The second sermon demonstrated that there is a causal relationship between social inequities and spiritual injustice. Amos depicted the women of Israel in an unflattering manner. They were "cows of Bashan" who were well-nourished and sought the focus of attention at all the socialite parties; in the process of their revelry, the women oppressed the poor, crushing the needy for the sake of their partying (4:1). The spiritual sins of the people were regarded with irony (4:4-5). As opposed to true worship that seeks to praise God, the people decided to satisfy their need for enjoyment by gathering together to continue sinning in a religious setting (which was the historical situation in the northern religious centers of Israel). The lack of repentance resulted in God's dreaded "therefore." As a consequence of both social and spiritual sin, the people must prepare themselves to meet their God in judgment (4:12).

The final address of chapters 3—6 concludes God's response to the nation's apathy toward social inequities and vacuous religiosity. The apathy is expressed as a consequence of the luxurious position of the dignitaries. Wealth can never provide lasting security to a people who do not obey and worship God. Banquets are not inherently sinful, which is evident in the fact that Jesus often attended such social occasions. Sinful parties, however, make a mockery of God.

“COME TO ME, ALL WHO ARE WEARY AND HEAVY-LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. “TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. “FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT” (MATT 11:28-30).

Amos portrayed the luxury as the expression of spiritual laxity, which pervaded the city and allowed moral corruption to continue (cf. Esth 1:1-12; Isa 28:1-3; Dan 5). The carefree and self-confident would be the first to experience captivity because they did not seek the Lord (6:1-6). Chapter 6 abounds with lessons concerning the futility of misguided confidence. The vain trust that is described in this chapter is an obvious contrast to the gentle and humble proffer that Christ offers to sinners in Matthew 11:28-30.

A NATION OR PEOPLE CANNOT CONTINUE TO LIVE IN PEACE AND SECURITY, YET MOCK GOD WITH CORRUPTION AND IMMORALITY. . . . WHAT GOD ASKED OF ANCIENT ISRAEL IS APPROPRIATE FOR ANY NATION: “ARE THEY BETTER THAN THESE KINGDOMS?” (6:2).

The message of chapter 6 is warning against false security. A nation or people cannot continue to live in peace and security, yet mock God with corruption and immorality. History is replete with fallen empires of the past, including ancient Rome and the 20th century Soviet Union. What God asked of ancient Israel is appropriate for any nation: “Are they better than these kingdoms?” (6:2). The visions reported in chapter 7 illustrate the truthfulness of Amos’ message.

THE MESSENGER

(7:1-17) The first three visions were recorded together because they appear to parallel the messages that Amos proclaimed in chapters 1—2.¹ The progression of the first in a series of visions (which are concluded in chapter 9) helps to explain Amos’ words in chapters 1—2. The first two visions prophesy with regard to a plague of locusts (7:1-3) and a drought caused by fire (7:4-6). Both visions are symbolic of impending judgment. The intercession of the prophet Amos for his people, and judgment being averted, followed both visions.

The third vision depicted God standing beside a wall with a plumb line in His hand. The portrayal is whether the wall was straight and able to remain, or if not, the wall would need to be destroyed and rebuilt. Amos was unable to intercede for his people this time, which means that judgment was not averted. God would spare His people “no longer”(7:8).

The people were measured by God’s absolute standard; therefore, the full extent of judgment would be upon them. The sequence of these three visions is an appropriate answer to those who heard the sermons of chapters 1—2 and asked whether God had pity and was merciful. Verses 1-9 of chapter 7 demonstrate that God has already demonstrated His pity by mercifully forestalling judgment.

THE PEOPLE WERE MEASURED BY GOD’S ABSOLUTE STANDARD. . . .

Verses 10-17 of chapter 7 form an historical interlude, which describes the reception of Amos in Bethel when he proclaimed the warning that God had given him. The priest of Bethel reported to the king that the words of impending judgment were a burden to the people (7:10). Amaziah demonstrated complete disregard for God’s divinely appointed spokesman. The priest confronted Amos and commanded him to stop bothering the north, and return instead to his home in the southern kingdom of Judah (7:13). Doom, gloom, and judgment of sin are never a popular message, especially if the words are directed against us. The message of Amos was direct, and therefore uncomfortable for his listeners. As opposed to heeding the message of God, the people forsook His word and attempted to silence and oppose the messenger.

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The message of judgment against the house of Jeroboam was offensive to the king, and Amos was commanded to return home and make his livelihood there (7:12-13). Amos replied that he was not speaking because it was his desire (7:14-15). Amos was not motivated by personal benefit in proclaiming his message, but confessed that the only reason for his proclamation was the command of the Lord God. The refusal of the people to hear and heed God’s Word would result in judgment (7:16-17). Proclaiming God’s truth to a sinful world is never a popular thing to do. However, the message of God’s Word is unambiguous against any who would squelch His truth. The fate will be the same for any nation or people who attempt to hinder or silence God’s Word. May it not be true of you and me, but let us humbly “seek good and not evil” so we may live joyful and blessed lives (5:13-15). *Grace and peace is my prayerful desire for you – Ron.*

¹ John D. W. Watts, *Studying the Book of Amos* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966) 28-31.