

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

AMOS 1-3

Paul “Bear” Bryant was the legendary football coach for the Alabama Crimson Tide. The Bear is one of the greatest coaches of all time. But at practice most of the actual coaching was done by his assistants.

The Bear did his coaching from an observation tower that stood high above the field. On occasion he’d notice a mistake his assistant coach failed to correct.

He’d grab his bullhorn, and shout down instructions.

In a sense this is what God did in the Old Testament.

Often God’s on-field assistants - the priests and Levites and kings - grew corrupt and failed in their job.

They refused to follow the playbook, the Scriptures.

And God would take His bullhorn and shout down instructions from on high. Prophets were His bullhorn. And no one fits that description better than Amos.

During the middle of the 8th century BC a flurry of prophets were blasting out God's warnings to both the northern and southern kingdoms. To the *southern tribe of Judah* God sent Isaiah and Micah. To the *northern ten tribes of Israel* He sent Hosea, Jonah - *and the subject of the next in our Minor Prophet series, Amos.*

I like to call Amos the **in-your-face prophet**. He was hard-nose, no-nonsense, a tell-it-like-it-is king of guy.

Chapter 1 begins, “The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.”

We're told that Amos wrote two years before the earthquake. This must've been *quite a quake!*

It was so memorable that the Prophet Zechariah was still talking about it 250 years later. He makes reference to this quake in Zechariah 14:5. Josephus, the Jewish historian, also mentions this earthquake. He links it to the pretentious pride of King Uzziah.

Recall, rather than be content as king, Uzziah wanted to expand his role. He wanted to also be priest.

This was a violation of God's Law. God had ordained a separation of powers. Kings and priests were distinct. That's why in 2 Chronicles 26 we're told that when Uzziah enter the Temple, God struck him with leprosy.

Josephus adds that the earthquake occurred at the same time. "A great earthquake shook the ground, and a tear was made in the Temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized him immediately. Before the city... half the mountain broke off from the rest on the west, and rolled itself four furlongs (literally, a half a mile), and stood still at the east mountain, till the roads... were spoiled by the obstruction."

Obviously, this earthquake was strong enough to alter the topography of the city of Jerusalem.

Some scholars believe the quake was of such magnitude it effected not only Jerusalem but the surrounding region. In the first two chapters of Amos the prophet records fire and brimstone type judgments on Israel's neighboring nations. It's possible this *killer quake*, with the lightning storms and prairie fires that accompanied it is what fulfilled those judgments.

Science, and history, and archeology all combine to date the earthquake, 756 BC. This makes the time of Amos' prophecy two years earlier - or 758 BC.

Amos also tells us he was a herdsman from Tekoa. Tekoa was hick-town - a "one traffic light town."

It was the kind of place "where dogs live under the front porch, where mailboxes are made out of old automobile parts, where funeral homes have neon signs, where there's a tire swing in everyone's front yard, where children are named after good dogs, and where everyone in town knows how to milk a goat."

Tekoa was a country village twelve miles southeast of Jerusalem in the Judean wilderness. It was the last settlement between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

Amos was a herdsman. In 7:14-15 he tells us, "I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet..." I guess you can say Amos was the first *non-prophet organization*.

He goes on to say, "But I was a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the LORD took Me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.'" In Chapter 1 the Hebrew term "*sheepbreeders*" refers to sheep, but in Chapter 7 the same English word

“sheepbreeder” is a different Hebrew word, it’s more generic. It can refer to cattle. Amos must’ve been a rancher who raised cows and sheep. He was *a shepherd* and *a cowboy*.

Amos was also a farmer. He raised sycamore figs.

Apparently, Amos was quite a country boy. He knew *animals and agriculture*. And he built a business.

And his business no doubt took him north to Israel.

He visited the cultural and religious centers of Samaria, and Bethel, and Gilgal. There he saw the sins of Israel - *the immorality, and injustices, and idolatry*.

One day God called Amos to leave behind his business, and go, prophesy to the northern kingdom.

Amos tells us he was not a professional prophet. He had no degrees or formal training. He’d never been ordained by men. Amos was just a good ole boy from a southern town, who God called north to the urban jungles of the big cities to deliver a series of warnings.

Amos was a *amateur*. And I'm sure he didn't mind you calling him that - the word “*amateur*” is a French term which means “*for the love of it*.” His ministry wasn't a profession, but his passion - a calling not a career. The Prophet Amos was in the ministry because he loved the Lord and willingly preached God's Word.

May God give us more men like Amos. Not men who choose the ministry, but men that God has chosen.

Too many men become pastors because they view the ministry as an attractive career option - *a lucrative salary*,

plenty of time for golf. They have no deep love for God or for people. Today's Church has paid professionals - what we need are amateurs like Amos.

Verse 2, **“And he said: “The Lord roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem...”** The prophet's voice is not the still, small whisper of the Holy Spirit. It's a godly growl - it's attention-grabbing like *a lion's roar!*

And from where does Amos say the Lord roars?

This is why Amos' prophecy was so controversial in his day. From it's opening salvo here in verse 2 it picks a fight with the establishment of the northern kingdom.

He says, **“The Lord roars from Zion...”** He speaks from the hills of Jerusalem. His ancient dwelling place is His pulpit. It's the podium from where God speaks.

And this angered the leaders of Israel who had broken away from Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah. The north had invented an alternate system of governance and worship that God despised.

After Solomon, the kingdom split. Judah remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty and to the Temple. But the ten northern tribes set up altars in Dan and Bethel, and established a rival capitol in Samaria. Here God through His prophet Amos trumpets His disapproval.

He says, **“the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers.”** The mountains of Carmel were the heartland of the northern kingdom. The fact their shepherds will mourn means judgment is coming.

If I invited Kathy to go with me to a football game it wouldn't prove much. I like football. But if I said, "Honey, I purchased tickets to the Nutcracker." That's true love. A night at the Nutcracker would be torture.

Real love is loving someone the way they want to be loved, not just in a way that's convenient for you.

Yet this is the way Israel treated God. Their alternate religion was one of convenience. God called it idolatry.

And God will judge Israel... But before Amos speaks of that judgment, he unloads on the surrounding cities and nations, and how they treated God's people...

He starts with Damascus and Syria... "Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron."

Here Amos uses a phrase that reoccurs in his prophecy. "For three transgressions... and for four, I will not turn away its punishment..." You've heard the baseball-based idiom, "three strikes and you're out."

In essence, here the Lord is giving Damascus four strikes. He's showing them mercy! God's judgments are always tempered with mercy. But after the fourth strike, Amos is like the umpire, "you're outta here!"

There is a line from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that sums up God's judgment, "Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness, grinds He all." Amos demonstrates

God's exactness when he pinpoints Damascus' crime... *“they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron.”*

Gilead was a region east of the Jordan River - *what is today the Golan Heights*. At the time it was poorly fortified and the Syrians had preyed on the defenseless Hebrews who lived there. Amos compares their abuse to *threshing* - the Hebrew word means *“trampled.”*

Ancient plows were made of wood boards, studded with metal spikes - that were dragged across a field. This was the type of treatment Syria inflicted on Gilead.

Verse 4, *“But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.*

I will also break the gate bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the Valley of Aven, and the one who holds the scepter from Beth Eden. The people of Syria shall go captive to Kir,” says the Lord.”

Ben-Hadad was the king of Syria. He and his capitol city of Damascus will receive the same treatment they've dished out. Tiglath Pileser III, a future Assyrian king, would write in his annals, *“I destroyed 592 towns of the 16 districts of the country of Damascus, rendering them like hills over which the flood passed.”*

Damascus, Ben-Hadad, and Syria got what was coming to it from the hands of the Assyrian invasion.

I can't help but think of the modern day parallel. On our trips to Israel we visit the Golan, and survey the modern battlefields. I've even visited a Syrian bunker where today's Ben-Hadads camped against Israel.

Before the Six-Day War in 1967, the Israelis had a spy in Damascus named Elie Cohen. There's a book about his life called "[Our Man In Damascus.](#)" Elie Cohen was eventually caught by the Syrians and hung.

Before the war Cohen visited these bunkers with a Syrian general. Cohen suggested the Syrians plant eucalyptus trees around the bunkers to provide shade for their soldiers. The Syrians bought into the idea.

But when war broke out and Israeli jets bombed Syrian installations in the Golan Heights guess what they used as their targets? They dropped bombs on the eucalyptus groves. Once again, a fire fell on Syria.

Verse 6 targets another ancient enemy who remains hostile to Israel in modern times, "[Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they took captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to Edom."](#)

Gaza was the capitol of the Philistines - and is today a Palestinian stronghold. Their crime was to capture Hebrew cities and sell their citizens as slaves to Edom.

Which sounds like a tactic out of the Isis playbook. This cruelty has a long history in the Middle East.

But God will judge Gaza... "[But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, which shall devour its palaces. I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and the one who holds the scepter from Ashkelon; I will turn My hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,"](#) says the Lord God." Amos mentions four of the five Philistine cities on Israel's

southwest coast: *Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon*, and *Ekron*... And here's a quiz...

Can anyone name the fifth Philistine city not mentioned? How about Goliath's hometown of *Gath*.

Verse 9 sets its sights on Tyre, "Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre, which shall devour its palaces."

Tyre, the capitol of the Phoenicians, was guilty of the same crimes as Philistia. Here, they received the same judgment. God's punishment always fits the crime.

Tyre sold Hebrews into slavery. And history tells us when Alexander the Great conquered Tyre 400 years later he sold 30,000 of their inhabitants into slavery.

"Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity; his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah."

Edom and Israel - aka, the descendants of Esau and Jacob, were brothers, but their hostility was perpetual.

When Moses led the nation through the wilderness to the Promise Land the Edomites refused to let him pass through their territory. From that point onward the relationship between these nations never improved!

The Edomites harbored a grudge. They were never willing to bury the hatchet; instead they used a hatchet on their brother. They were merciless. They were driven by bitterness. And as a result God judged them.

A comedy routine featured two brothers, *Dumb and Dumber*. Dumber complained about an acquaintance who always slapped him on the chest. His brother asked him, "*What are you going to do to stop him?*"

He said, "Well, I put a stick of dynamite in my shirt pocket, so that the next time he slaps my chest, he's going to blow off his hand." Obviously, what Dumber didn't take into account was that he was also going to blow a hole in his chest. *This is how bitterness works.*

You think you're harming the other guy, but what you're really doing is killing yourself. Its true, "*Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.*"

When will we learn the lesson? Harbor and nurse a grudge, and the person you're hurting most is yourself!

Verse 13, "*Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of the people of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their territory."* The barbaric Ammonites ripped open the wombs of pregnant women to spread terror.

And let me say it, *the Ammonite's sword* and *the abortionist's scalpel* have a lot in common. We're told Ammon

used this tactic to enlarge its territory. And this is what the abortion industry in America has done.

Abortion is now big business in this country. Greed, *not the right to choose*, is what drives it's proliferation.

I once spoke to a 15 year old girl who'd just had an abortion. It infuriated me to hear the coercion and lies she was told. The clinic tried to talk her into aborting her baby. That's not *pro-choice* - that's *pro-cash*.

Amos prophecies, "But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour its palaces, amid shouting in the day of battle, and a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. Their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together," says *the Lord*." Rabbah, capitol of Ammon, will be crushed by the Assyrians.

Amos' judgment of nations continues in **Chapter 2...**

Verse 1, "Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime." The Moabites were guilty of desecrating the dead. They exhumed the body of the king of Edom *and cremated* or burned his bones.

This was actually an act of racial prejudice.

It showed the Moabites hatred for Edomites. And as a result God promises to judge the country of Moab.

"But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth (this was the religious center of Chemosh, the idol of the Moabites); Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and trumpet sound. And I will cut off the judge from

its midst, and slay all its princes with him,” says the Lord.” Moab will also be punished.

“Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, lies which their fathers followed.” Here Amos begins to hit a little closer to home. He prophesies God's judgment against his own people of Judah.

Remember, Amos was not only a country bumpkin in the eyes of the people of Samaria and Bethel, he was also a foreigner. He was a southerner sent north. God called Amos to cast judgment on the Yankee nation.

But before he sets his sights northward he first points out the sins of His own people - the southern kingdom of Judah. He wanted to make sure everyone knew he was proclaiming God's Word, not a personal bias.

Verse 5, “But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.” Until now the prophecies of Amos have been received with applause and cheers. He’s judging the enemies of the Hebrews. But now God’s people find themselves on the hot-seat.

Like the lady on the front row who was really into the preaching. She was clapping and shouting "Amen" as the pastor ripped and railed on every sin imaginable.

She was enjoying his sermon immensely, until he condemn the sin of dipping snuff. She rolled her eyes, shook her head, and told her friend, "Now he's quit preach'n and gone to

meddlin'." Well, for the Israelites, in verse 6, Amos quits preach'n and goes to meddlin'!

“Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.” The king of Israel at the time was a man named Jeroboam II. He reigned for 41 years.

Jeroboam II presided over a time of unparalleled prosperity and military strength. During his reign Israel and Judah took back most of the land that Solomon had governed, which was lost by succeeding kings.

But Jeroboam's reign was the calm before the storm.

In just 35 years the once proud nation would be no more! In just two years an earthquake would demolish much of his empire. Jeroboam's successor would be assassinated causing political turmoil from which the northern kingdom would never recover.

In addition, the Assyrians in the east, and their ruthless army, were on the rise. They were licking their chops, desiring to expand their borders. *Barreling toward the nation of Israel was a tidal wave of trouble.*

And the only way for Israel to avoid the brewing storm was to take heed to the Prophet Amos' warning, renounce their idolatry, and turn back to God.

Amos' critique of the northern nation was twofold: **Idolatry against God** and **injustice against man**.

And the two go hand in hand. When God gets *lost*, mankind loses. Men and women derive their dignity and value from the fact we were made in God's image.

Human rights are inalienable rights because they come from God - they're not given by the government.

That's why if you take God out of the equation, and pretend that man is merely an evolved animal - you diminish the individual's worth. It really is the survival of the fittest. The weak become vulnerable to the strong.

And government takes the place of God in assigning us our rights. The rich and powerful end up in control, while the poor get exploited and the innocent abused.

Amos' prophecy is more relevant than you think.

Amos writes in verse 7, "They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor..."

Throughout the Bible there is a consistent caring for the poor. In the Law, to the Prophets, to the Gospels it's a recurring theme. You can't read the life of Christ without noticing Jesus' compassion toward the poor.

And this should be a Christian priority. *Spiritual commitment* should translate into *social compassion*.

Rather than compete, the two priorities complement. A true love for God will produce a sincere love for man.

Realize, poverty is more than a physical condition, it's a frame of mind. The poor person is so used to living just for the moment, he or she has no future focus.

The demands to stay *alive*, prohibit many folks from learning to *thrive*. When we help the poor we should look for ways to pass on *hope*, not just a *handout*.

It's been said, "Money alone can't help until there is a reason to hope." It's hope that matters more.

Then Amos comments on an awful situation. Some were "pervert(ing) the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, to defile My holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, and drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god." This was a reference to temple prostitution - a practice common in ancient times.

The pagans believed that prosperity and fertility on Earth were the result of sexual relationships among the gods and goddesses in the afterlife. They thought an abundant harvest could be secured by coming to the Temple, and having sex with a priestess. She acted as a prostitute - exchanging sexual favors for an offering.

And sadly, these pagan ideas were adopted by the Israelites when they settled into the land of Canaan.

But lest we think this to be an ancient problem, I read recently of a Los Angeles couple who were found guilty of prostitution. They claimed to be followers of the tenets of the Church of the Most High Goddess. They claimed to be part of a 5000 year-old Egyptian cult.

The woman said that she was the high priestess and it was her duty to perform sex acts with the men she solicited. Sex was the way she atoned for their sin.

Of course, her services were followed by a \$150 contribution. *It's a page from the paganism playbook.*

In verse 9 Amos tells them what God thinks of this practice. "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was as strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath." It was Israel who drove out the Amorites - a once tall and mighty nation.

"Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite." It's ironic, God used Israel to judge the Amorites, because of the very same practices the Israelites were now embracing.

Verse 11, "I raised up some of your sons as prophets, and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is it not so, O you children of Israel?" says the Lord. "But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, 'Do not prophesy!' God raised up godly men in the land to teach holiness to His people.

The Nazirite was a man who had taken a special vow. He was not to drink wine, put a razor to his head, or touch anything that was dead. He became a walking billboard for the values of God. *That real joy is in found in the spiritual not the physical. Real beauty is inward not outward. And real life is eternal, not just temporal.*

Yet the Israelites didn't want to be reminded of what pleased God. Instead, they were a nation of Delilahs. They enticed

their Samsons, their spiritual strongmen, to break their vow, by giving them wine to drink...

“Drinks on the house for all pastors.” “99 cent margaritas for the pastors.” “Happy hour for pastors.”

They wanted to reduce the Nazirites to background noise by getting them to compromise their holiness.

When men, like Nazirites (*or pastors today*), who God intends to *stand out*, end up *blending in* by living a compromised lifestyle, God’s cause loses in society.

If you’ve been a Christian for long, I’m sure you’ve discovered that people who don't want to live for God, don't want **you** to live for Him either. It makes them feel uncomfortable - it convicts them of their own sin.

And they'll go to great extremes to encourage you to compromise. That’s why we need to stand strong!

But that’s not what the Israelites had done. God tells them in verse 13, **“Behold, I am weighed down by you, as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down.”**

God’s people were a burden to Him - a rock in His shoe. How sad, to become *a yoke around God's neck, a monkey on His back, a burden He's tired of carrying.*

If you're like me, you want to be a joy, a delight to God. You want to be *a blessing* to Him, not *a burden*.

Verse 14, **“Therefore flight shall perish from the swift, the strong shall not strengthen his power, nor shall the mighty deliver himself; he shall not stand who handles the bow, the swift of foot shall not escape, nor shall he who rides a horse**

deliver himself. The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day," says the Lord." No one will escape God's judgment.

Not the swift, or strong, or skilled, or even the brave. The justice and power of God will humble every man.

Chapter 3, "Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

At one time, the American Express Card had a motto: "Membership has its privileges." Of course, fail to pay your bill and you'll also realize, "Membership has its responsibilities too." Israel was chosen of God.

Out of all the nations on Earth, God handpicked the children of Jacob to be His people. They had special seating in the plan of God. But with their privilege came more responsibility. God held them to higher standard.

One Jewish historian prayed facetiously, "Lord, thank you for choosing us as Your chosen people, but how about choosing someone else for a while." He understood that membership also has responsibilities.

This is what Jesus taught, Luke 12:48, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." And this is a lesson for us.

We too have been chosen by God, and privileged *in Christ*. As Paul said in Ephesians, as Christians we've been given a

high calling we could never deserve, but now that we have it, let's own it and wear it well!

And Amos makes a profound statement in verse 3, "**Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?**"

This is a key verse! In any relationship how can two people walk *side by side* unless they work in sync.

In a marriage, at work, in the church - if you don't find common ground on the big issues; then how are you going to live and function with any kind of unity?

There's just constant turmoil, where there's no trust.

This is certainly true in our relationships with other people, and it's also true in our relationship with God...

If we're going to walk with God we have to agree with God - there has to be a **shared starting place, a shared walking pace, and a shared staying grace.**

For two people to walk together they first have to agree on **a starting place**. And in our walk with God that starting place is the cross. For each of us the day we begin to walk with God is the day we stop living for ourselves and embrace the cross of Jesus Christ.

As He died for us, now we live for Him.

John Bunyan writes of his conversion, "**I was made to see, again and again, that God and my soul were friends by His blood; yea, I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other, through His blood. This was a good day to me, I hope I shall never forget it.**" I still recall the place I died to my self-centeredness, got on my

knees and began my walk with God. Every walk needs a *starting place*.

And to walk together you need **a shared pace**. Ever worked out on a treadmill. You set the machine and jump on; then it's up to you to keep with the pace. Get going a little too fast, or a little too slow, and you'll fall off.

So it is in the Christian life. God sets the pace and it's up to us to adjust our pace to His. If we get ahead of Him, or fall behind Him, we can get off track.

When Peter denied the Lord at his trial we're told he "**followed at a distance**." Peter let too much space get between Him and Jesus. Perhaps tonight, you're lagging behind the Lord, and you need to step it up!

Of course, at other times Peter got ahead of Jesus.

Here's the point, whether you *get ahead* or *fall behind*, you need *a shared pace* to walk together.

And lastly you need **a staying grace**. The truth is, a lot of walking with God is just letting Him carry us. He picks us up in His strength, and moves us forward.

We need His joy, and peace, and power.

He wants us to trust in Him. The key to walking with Jesus is to not only receive *His saving grace*, but learn to rely on *His staying grace*. Learn to abide in Jesus.

"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"

The answer is “no.” You need a shared starting place, a shared pace, and a shared staying grace. This is how you walk through life in harmony with Jesus.

Verse 4, “Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?” The old lion roars when he attacks. He has to intimidate his prey since he's lost his quickness.

“Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing?” The young lion only roars if he has a full stomach - if his hunting has been a success he growls.

“Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? if there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?” Here's Amos' point with all these illustrations... there's a law of cause and effect. Seldom do situations just happen. Usually, circumstances result from the choice someone made.

And this is what we should ask ourselves when troubles pop up in our lives. *Am I the cause of this? Have I brought this on myself by making a bad choice? Have I sinned so that God is trying to get my attention?*

Amos knows judgment is coming and he wants God's people to ask the right questions when it does.

Verse 7, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”

God often surprises us with blessings, but He never surprises us with judgment. He plants warning signs all along the way. He warns us through His prophets.

The person headed for judgment runs through red light after red light, and stop sign after stop sign!

There are Bible scholars who consider the seven churches of Revelation as representative of the seven ages of church history from the time of Jesus to the present. I tend to hold to that interpretation.

But what's interesting is that Amos 3:7 is used as a reason for that view. Since God does nothing He does not first reveal it's fitting He would give us a glimpse of the development of His Church ahead of time.

In verse 8, Amos repeats, **“A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?”** Again, the prophet is compelled to speak.

When God speaks it's like a lion's roar. It commands our attention. It should strike healthy fear in our hearts.

Verse 9, **“Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say: ‘Assemble on the mountains of Samaria; see great tumults in her midst, and the oppressed within her. For they do not know to do right,’ says the Lord, ‘Who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.’”** The Philistines and Egypt are invited to Samaria to see the ruin of the city.

Judgment is coming on her robbery and violence.

“Therefore thus says the Lord God: “An adversary shall be all around the land; he shall sap your strength from you, and your palaces shall be plundered.”

It was in 722 BC that Samaria fell to the Assyrians.

“Thus says the Lord: “As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria - in the corner of a bed and on the edge of a couch! God’s judgment on Samaria will be violent.

When a lion slipped into the herd and attacked a sheep, the shepherd would bring back to the owner of the flock, a piece of the carcass to prove that the sheep had been attacked, not stolen by the shepherd.

And this is what’s going to happen to Israel’s capitol, Samaria, it’ll be devoured by the Assyrian army.

“Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,” says the Lord God, the God of hosts, “that in the day I punish Israel for their transgressions, I will also visit destruction on the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground.” The city of Bethel was the site of Israel’s false worship. God is going to destroy the idol and its sacrificial altar.

“I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house; the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end,” says the Lord.”

Israel had great riches. Many of its upper-crust had both winter and summer homes. A house of ivory was a symbol of

immense wealth. But God is going to bring judgment on their sin, and their houses will perish.