

# Eviction Notice

The Lion's Roar: Listening to the Book of Amos

Amos 7:1-8:3

Pastor Josh Black

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## *Audio Visual*

Our passage this morning marks the beginning of a new section in Amos. There are four visions in this passage as well as a narrative section. Up to this point, Amos has delivered oracles (or speeches) that spell out Israel's sin and announce God's judgment. But now we move from audio to visual.

I think this shows Israel how serious things are. The oracles are the roar of the lion—the voice of God. And it's scary to hear a lion roar. But what's scarier: hearing a lion roar or seeing a lion in front of you without the protection of a fence or glass? If you hear a lion roar you may jump; but if you see a lion, you may wet yourself! Israel has heard about their sin and God's judgment. Now they're going to see it.

### **Amos 7:1-8:3<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>7:1</sup>*This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. <sup>2</sup>When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said,*

*"O Lord GOD, please forgive!  
How can Jacob stand?  
He is so small!"*

<sup>3</sup>*The LORD relented concerning this:  
"It shall not be," said the LORD.*

<sup>4</sup>*This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, the Lord GOD was calling for a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. <sup>5</sup>Then I said,*

*"O Lord GOD, please cease!  
How can Jacob stand?  
He is so small!"*

<sup>6</sup>*The LORD relented concerning this:  
"This also shall not be," said the Lord GOD.*

<sup>7</sup>*This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. <sup>8</sup>And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,*

*"Behold, I am setting a plumb line  
in the midst of my people Israel;  
I will never again pass by them;*

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® unless otherwise noted.

<sup>9</sup>*the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,  
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,  
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”*

<sup>10</sup>*Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. <sup>11</sup>For thus Amos has said,*

*“Jeroboam shall die by the sword,  
and Israel must go into exile  
away from his land.””*

<sup>12</sup>*And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there,  
<sup>13</sup>but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”*

<sup>14</sup>*Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. <sup>15</sup>But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ <sup>16</sup>Now therefore hear the word of the LORD.*

*“You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel,  
and do not preach against the house of Isaac.’*

<sup>17</sup>*Therefore thus says the LORD:*

*“Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city,  
and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword,  
and your land shall be divided up with a measuring line;  
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,  
and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.”*

<sup>8:1</sup>*This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, a basket of summer fruit. <sup>2</sup>And he said, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me,*

*“The end has come upon my people Israel;  
I will never again pass by them.  
<sup>3</sup>The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,”  
declares the Lord GOD.*

*“So many dead bodies!”  
“They are thrown everywhere!”  
“Silence!”*

This is the Word of the Lord.

### ***When Enough is Enough***

A good friend of mine owns a number of rental properties. For the most part his work is full of joy. He provides dozens of places for people to live. He’s able to bless his tenants and show them Christ’s love. There’s a lot of opportunity to show people grace and second chances when people get behind on rent. But sometimes enough is enough. Sometimes my friend has to evict his tenants.

One of the properties he owns is a multi-unit apartment complex. He had a tenant in this apartment that violated his lease agreement from day one. Not only did he get behind on rent, but his lifestyle

was a bother to the other tenant; that's an understatement. He would regularly leave trash behind the apartment building. And scary people were always over at his apartment—probably gang members. He also had two pit bulls that he let out all the time.

This was all threatening to the other tenants. So after giving this guy a number of chances, my friend said, "Enough's enough. You've gotta go." But he pleaded with my friend to give him another chance. He promised to get current on rent, to pick up the trash, and to get rid of the pit bulls. So my buddy did what he often does. He gave him another chance.

But then one day the cops showed up at the apartment complex. Someone complained that a man pulled a gun on them. And others heard gun shots in the man's apartment. Apparently one of his friends had pulled a gun and fired a couple of shots. He actually shot himself in the foot.

That was it. My friend couldn't bear it any more. So he evicted the tenant. A week later, a woman in the complex called my friend and said she found a shell casing in the floor of her apartment. The bullet had come through that man's ceiling and into her apartment.

Was my friend justified in evicting this tenant? Or was he acting like a slumlord? I think it is fair to say that he was justified in evicting him. The man had broken his lease. And he was a threat to other people.

In our passage this morning, Israel is issued an eviction notice by Amos. God had given Israel many chances to fulfill their lease agreement—to keep the covenant he made with them. But they refused to keep the covenant, over and over again. Eventually, God said, "Enough is enough." And he sent Amos to deliver their eviction notice. "The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them" (8:2). "Israel will surely go into exile away from its land" (7:17).

Our passage this morning contains two different text types. We have the four visions and a narrative section that comes between the third and fourth vision. So to divide our time this morning, I want to start with the four visions. Then we'll look at the narrative section. These two parts will teach us two lessons.

## **FOUR VISIONS (7:1-9; 8:1-3)**

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Let's begin with the visions. The four visions teach us that eventually our time runs out. They are grouped together into sets of two. The first two visions are different from the second two.

The first two visions predict devastating judgment on Israel for breaking covenant with God. In the first vision there's a plague of locusts threatened. In the second there's a plague of fire (or drought). The plague of locusts would've wiped out all food. The drought would've made it impossible to grow food. In each vision, Israel was threatened with starvation.

### ***Time Out!***

But after each of the first two visions, Amos prays. In verse 2, he prays, "O Lord, please forgive! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" In verse 5, he prays, "O Lord, please cease! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" Amos calls a time out.

There's tragic irony in these prayers. Up to this point, Israel has acted like they're too big for their britches. They're powerful in the eyes of the world. They have great military might. They have great

wealth. They're self-sufficient. They're self-indulgent. They're big in their own eyes. But in the eyes of God they're quite small. And they won't be able to stand against God's judgment. So Amos prays, forgive their sins and stop your judgment, O God.

So much of what we learn in Amos is about how to respond to the gospel. But here we learn something about how to proclaim the gospel to others. Amos isn't like a slumlord who just says to Israel, "Get out!" He has a heart of compassion. Sure, he preaches God's judgment on sin, but he desires God's mercy too! He's a true prophet.

True prophets speak *for* God *to* God's people. But they also speak *to* God *for* God's people. They preach. But they also pray. A true prophet stands in the gap for the people.

That's what Moses (the first true prophet) did, when God said he was going to wipe out Israel at Mt. Sinai for their sin with the golden calf. What did Moses do? He stood in the gap. He prayed to God. "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you've written" (Ex. 32:31-32).

Moses prayed for mercy. Amos prayed for mercy. Jesus also stood in the gap. Remember when he was on the cross? And everyone was mocking him? And spitting on him? What did he say? "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Prophets preach against sin and they preach judgment. But they *also* pray for people to be delivered from judgment. And here's the lesson for us. Eventually our time will run out, therefore, those who preach God's judgment must also pray for deliverance from it.

We deserve judgment for our sin, but Jesus stood in the gap for us. He paid for our sin on the cross. We can now be forgiven of sin and rescued from judgment if we receive Jesus through faith. That's amazing grace. And this amazing grace teaches us how we're to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We need to be faithful to share the whole gospel. The gospel is good news that Jesus died for sinners. But to understand the good news, we also have to understand the bad news—without Jesus we'll die in our sins and face eternal judgment. We do have to preach judgment, but we don't have to delight in it. We need to pray earnestly that God will deliver people from judgment. We must preach hell. But we have no business preaching hell without tears and without prayer for deliverance.

Amos spoke *for* God *to* the people. But he also spoke *to* God *for* the people. And God answered his prayer. After the first two visions, God relented. He didn't bring the judgment of locusts or fire. But Israel didn't repent of their sins. They continued to sin. They continued to break their lease—the covenant of God. And so in the next two visions, God says, "enough's enough." In the first two visions, Amos prayed to God, "Time Out!" And God stopped. In the next two visions, God said, "Enough's enough, your time's out."

### *Time's Out*

The third vision is the vision of a plumb line. A plumb line is kind of like a level in our day. It was a tool that helped you know if your wall was straight. God was the plumb line in Israel. He was the standard. When God established Israel as his people, they were straight. They conformed to God's

ways. But over time they became crooked. They became so crooked that they were beyond repair. And so God says, "I will never again pass by them." He's done. No more chances. Time's out!

God says the same thing in the fourth vision in 8:1-3. Here we have the vision of the summer fruit. Or the ripe fruit. Again, the lesson is that the time has run out. It's picking time. The Hebrew word for "summer fruit" sounds a lot like the Hebrew word for "the end." When the summer fruit is seen, the end has come. Time's out. The songs in the temple will become wailing. There will be dead bodies everywhere. There will be complete silence.

The message here for Israel is similar for us. Eventually our time will run out. God is patient with us. Actually Peter says the reason judgment hasn't yet come is that "The Lord is patient toward us. He doesn't wish that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." But let there be no mistake. Eventually the day of the Lord will come. Our time will run out. And those who haven't turned to Jesus will face his judgment.

So here's the lesson. Eventually our time will run out; therefore, now's the time to repent. The kingdom of heaven broke into our world when Jesus came the first time. He ushered in a time of salvation. But when Christ comes the second time it will be the day of the Lord; it will be a time of judgment.

The difference between Israel and us is that it was too late for Israel. The eviction notice was final. But it's not too late for us. Today is the day of salvation. Repent from your sins and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **NARRATIVE (7:10-17)**

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Let's look now at the narrative section in verses 10-17. We've learned how to proclaim the gospel. Now we're going to see how to respond when people reject the gospel.

When Amos delivered the third vision, he predicted judgment would fall on Israel's government and on their misguided religion. Look at verse 9. "The high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." Amaziah was the high priest at Bethel, and he didn't like this. This was a threat to his authority. So he reacts strongly against Amos.

His reaction is not surprising. Ever since the beginning of time people have been reacting negatively against God's Word. Especially against God's Word of judgment. Remember the Garden of Eden? God told Adam and Eve, "If you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die." But Satan said to Adam and Eve, "You will not surely die!" Satan denied God's Word of judgment. There were competing voices in the Garden. God's voice and Satan's voice. And Adam and Eve rejected God's Word and listened to Satan's Word.

There's something similar going on in this narrative. In verses 10-17 we learn that God's Word is challenged by competing voices.

The leadership in Israel was hardened to the Word of God. Amaziah didn't want to hear that Israel would fall. And he certainly didn't want to hear that the religious establishment would fall. After all, he was the leader of that religious establishment. He would not listen to any word that threatened the status quo. He wouldn't listen to any word that threatened his authority. Even if it was God's Word.

So what does he do? He tries to get rid of Amos. He tries to fire the preacher! He begins by sending a letter to king Jeroboam accusing Amos of sedition. In verse 10 he says, “Amos has conspired against you.”

It’s interesting. This is the same thing the religious leaders did with Jesus. When Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, the religious leaders accused him of opposing Caesar. In doing so, they were basically saying that the authority of the government was more authoritative than God’s Word.

Next, Amaziah tries to question Amos’ credentials and his motives. Instead of listening to God’s Word through God’s prophet Amos, he issues his *own* word in verses 12-13.

And he thinks that as a priest appointed by the king that his word is more authoritative than Amos’ words. He thinks the authority of the religious establishment is more authoritative than the word of the prophet. Isn’t that how it is in our day as well? There are churches that sideline God’s Word and elevate their own authority.

What does Amaziah say? He tells Amos to get out of Israel and go back “to the land of Judah and eat bread there and prophesy there but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.” He’s basically saying, “You don’t have jurisdiction in Israel. You’re a prophet from Judah.” And he’s accusing him of trying to get money (bread) for prophesying in Israel. He’s saying that Amos is in it for the money.

But again, it’s all because his authority is being threatened. Amaziah would rather stay in control than have God have control.

How does Amos respond? He starts by saying that he doesn’t have any official credentials. In verse 14 he says, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs.” He’s saying, “Look, my authority isn’t bound up in a piece of paper on a wall. I didn’t go to seminary. And it doesn’t come from my family. I’m not from a line of prophets. I’m not a professional preacher. I’m a farmer. And I don’t need to make money preaching. I already *have* a job. I’m not in this for power or position. I’m doing this because God has called me.”

Look at verse 15. “But the LORD took me from following the flock and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’” Amos’ authority comes from his call by God and his commission to proclaim God’s Word. And that’s an authority we all have in Jesus. His preaching is from the highest level of authority in heaven.

As a result of his call, he doesn’t have to listen to Amaziah’s words. His job is to speak God’s Word. Amaziah’s words actually prove to be quite ironic. He wants Amos out of Israel. The reality is Amaziah’s words have no power. But God’s Word through Amos is quite powerful. Amaziah will be the one who has to leave Israel.

Look at verse 17. “Therefore thus says the LORD: Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be divided up with a measuring line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from this land.”

What are the lessons in all of this for us? Remember when Peter was arrested in Acts 5? The religious leaders strictly charged him not to proclaim the gospel. But Peter and the apostles answered the council and said, “We must obey God rather than men.” The apostles couldn’t help but to speak

of what they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20). They couldn't listen to the word of man over the Word of God.

Friends, there are many words in our day that lay claim on our allegiance, just like in Amos' day. But we need to listen to God, not man.

In our day God's Word is challenged by many competing voices. And if we are faithful to proclaim the gospel we will face opposition, just like Amos. Just like Peter. After all, we are Jesus' disciples. And he was opposed for his message as well.

The question before us is whose Word will we obey? Whose voice will we listen to? Will we listen to the word of Amaziah? Or the Word of God? Will we listen to the voices in our day that say we deserve comfort and pleasure and power in this life? Or will we listen to the gospel that calls us to a life of suffering now, but a life of glory in eternity? Will we listen to the voices in our day that say all truth is relative and there are many ways to God? Or will we listen to the gospel that says that Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life, and we only come to the Father through him? Will we listen to the voices in our day that say we are the gatekeeper of our own destiny; that we are autonomous and that nobody can tell us what to do? Or will we listen to the gospel that calls us to repent of our sins and surrender our lives to King Jesus?

If we listen to the Word of God, and if we proclaim the Word of God, we will face opposition. Those who are friends with the world won't face opposition. But those who reject the world will.

But our confidence is that God's Word stands. If we belong to God and stand on every promise of his Word, then we may face temporal opposition from man. But we won't face eternal opposition from God.

Amos chose to stand on God's Word. Amaziah chose to reject God's Word. What will you choose this day?