

The Book of Amos

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(1994 Study)

The following notes on the Book of Amos were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1994. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by **“Comment”** or **“Q”** (an abbreviation for **“Question”**) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE BOOK OF AMOS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1994)

Amos 1:1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen 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.

A common shepherd by occupation, Amos was “among” the herdsmen (plural), so others were associated with him. He was a leading spirit but not a priest, being more or less contemporary with Isaiah, Hosea, and Jonah. The ministry of Amos took place about 806 BC, or 200 years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 606 BC. It was a time of great plenty until near the end of the 40-year ministry of Amos.

Amos mentioned a literal earthquake that occurred during the reign of King Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah. Zechariah 14:5 refers back to this earthquake, so verse 1 is important for verifying that a future *literal* earthquake will take place at the end of the present age.

Verse 1 equates the ministry of Amos with both Judah and Israel. Tekoa was in Judah, about six miles southeast of Bethlehem.

Comment: According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, the name Amos means “burden bearer,” which fits chapter 1 and on into the book.

Amos 1:2 And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

This roaring will take place in the future when God delivers the Holy Remnant out of Jacob’s Trouble. “The Lord *will* roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds *shall* mourn, and the top of Carmel *shall* wither.” These events, which are all future, are related to the end time. Since Amos mentioned a literal earthquake in verse 1 and was now speaking about Carmel, there is an intended association; namely, the earthquake of the future, although primarily on Jerusalem, will also affect Mount Carmel. Zechariah associated the same future earthquake with Geba and Rimmon, an area that embraces Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:5,10).

The future earthquake is also mentioned in Ezekiel 38:19,20. “For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely *in that day* there shall be a *great shaking in the land of Israel*; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the *mountains* [plural] shall be thrown down and the *steep places* shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.” This earthquake will be literal to emphasize that when the Kingdom is established, it will be known. One will not have to read a book to know that the Kingdom is here.

All three prophets mentioned the same miraculous earthquake at the time of the establishment of the Kingdom. Amos spoke of the earthquake at Carmel. Zechariah spoke of the earthquake from Geba to Rimmon in the Jerusalem area. Ezekiel spoke of a great shaking in *all* the land of Israel and the mountains (plural). The combination of Scriptures shows how *widespread and dramatic* the literal earthquake will be. Birds will fly and fish will be affected, as well as men and even some insects. The implication is that when the Lord “roars,” He will be *heard*. Thus “in that day,” it will be known that the *Lord’s* Kingdom is being established. Today Israel includes

both the northern and the southern kingdoms, and it will be a combined kingdom at the time of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos.

Mount Carmel is in northern Israel on the Mediterranean coast, near the border of Lebanon today. Shepherds inhabited Carmel in the prophet's day. Carmel was apparently the site of religious worship, since the contest between Elijah and the false prophets of Baal took place there.

Comment: Joel 3:16 states, "The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

Reply: Like Zechariah, Joel zeroed in on Jerusalem.

Q: Will the same literal earthquake join the waters of the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea?

A: First, water from the Temple Mount will go down to the Dead Sea. Then water from the Mediterranean will also go down to the Dead Sea. The northern part of the Dead Sea will be revived with fish from the Mediterranean Sea. Thus fishermen from En-ge-di and En-eglaim will cast their nets into the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47:10). However, the southern part of the Dead Sea will remain briny and be used for chemical purposes. When fish approach the northern half of the Dead Sea today, they die immediately, for the salinity of even the backwater is too high. The water now going down to En-eglaim more or less traverses the path of the future stream that will come from the Temple down to the Dead Sea. In other words, the water will more or less follow the present water courses but be of such abundance that freshwater fish will be able to live in the Dead Sea.

Q: When the Mount of Olives is cleft and the path opens up down to the Dead Sea, will the water go through the Kidron Valley or through another wadi? If farther south, it will be closer to Tekoa, where Amos came from.

A: That could be, because in many instances when God uses human servants, there is a predisposition for the servant to view things from his own emotions and observations. God allows this personal aspect to color the wording, thinking, and illustrations as long as the message is not interfered with or distorted. An example is the Apostle John's enthusiastic "Amen!" Hosea and Daniel entered into the message dramatically too. Yes, the suggestion could be true. With Amos being raised and born in that region, the message would take on an added significance that would be reflected in his commentary.

"The LORD will roar from Zion." Here "Zion" refers to the spiritual phase of the Kingdom, which means that the "roaring" will be supernatural. Consider that God has a head, a voice, and a roar like a lion. Another visual representation is that the "feet" of His lower extremity will be seen. Jehovah's "feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives" (Zech. 14:4); that is, there will be a visual demonstration of His entering earth's affairs in the dramatic west-to-east cleavage of the Mount of Olives, with half of the mount going to the north and half to the south. At that time, it will be seen that the God of ISRAEL is the true God.

Zion is sometimes spelled "Sion," and Sion is usually associated with Mount Hermon, so in one sense, Mount Hermon is considered the throne of the Lord. The name Lebanon means "white," and Hermon is not only the white mountain but also the highest place in Israel. Zion is usually associated with Jerusalem. The One who is above Jerusalem is God—or, in some cases, Jesus. From a broader regional aspect, Mount Hermon, which is the source of the Jordan River, also pictures where God is.

Comment: Deuteronomy 4:48 proves that Sion is Hermon: “From Aroer ... even unto mount Sion, which is Hermon.”

Amos 1:3 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:

Amos 1:4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.

Amos 1:5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.

Starting with verses 3-5, the subject matter for the rest of chapter 1 will be in groupings of “for three transgressions ... and for four.” The first grouping mentions Damascus, Gilead, Hazael, Ben-hadad, Aven, Eden (or Beth-eden), Syria, and Kir.

In review, Amos prophesied two years before the *literal* earthquake that occurred during the reign of Uzziah (Azariah), which is referred to in Zechariah 14:5 as a prophecy of a *literal* earthquake yet future. We should remember, too, that the name Amos means “burden bearer.” Amos prophesied slightly before the prophets Isaiah and Hosea, although all three began their ministries during the reign of Uzziah.

Verses 3-5 were a prophetic pronouncement of a judgment to be inflicted on Damascus, the capital of Syria. Gilead, a territory east of the Jordan River and north of the Dead Sea, embraced the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and one half of Manasseh. Syria caused a lot of damage when it captured Gilead.

Comment: The capture of Gilead is confirmed in 2 Kings 10:32,33. “In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.”

Reply: Because of the violence Syria committed against Gilead in trying to extend its borders, God would punish Syria.

After Elisha prophesied that Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, would recover from his illness, Hazael assassinated Ben-hadad. Hence Hazael reigned in Ben-hadad’s stead (2 Kings 8:7-15).

Q: Is chapter 1 a picture of the end of the age, yet future, because the peoples or nations who are mentioned are the same as those in Psalm 83?

A: Yes, it has a future implication just like the earthquake. Zechariah, who prophesied much later than Amos, referred back to King Uzziah in describing the flight of the Holy Remnant between the split Mount of Olives. Thus, while many of the verses in chapters 1 and 2 of the Book of Amos were historically fulfilled, there is actually a double significance, a prophetic aspect. Back there the destruction of the various places occurred at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 606 BC, after the death of Amos, but that fulfillment furnishes a basis for a future fulfillment at the end of the age.

The expression “for three transgressions ... and for four” is a Hebraism similar to the way we

say, “Three strikes and you’re out.” The expression regarding “three and four” was also used in classical Greek. Here it implies emphasis—that the Lord was fed up with the transgressions, and judgment must now come. The peoples named went beyond the point of no return as regards judgment.

Comment: If chapter 1 is a picture of a judgment yet future, then the indication is that the surrounding nations will be very iniquitous in their concerted, confederate effort to come against Israel.

Reply: Yes, the feelings of hatred that we see now will intensify in the near future. The more liberty and opportunity the Arabs get, the more they abuse them. The hatred of the Arabs will be so great that Israel will retaliate in strong measure, but it is really the Lord’s retaliation.

Comment: The Lord will use the judgment to purify Israel, for that nation needs purifying too.

Reply: In 606 BC, Israel also received a judgment, but at the end of the age, God will forgive and save Israel (the Holy Remnant).

Comment: In the groupings of people who would receive judgment for three and four transgressions, Judah and Israel were also singled out (Amos 2:4-8). There will be a selective punishment on them in the near future.

Reply: The Holy Remnant will survive, for they will be representative of the nation.

Q: Since the Arab situation will be settled prior to the Gog invasion, will there be just a *general* selective process at that point? Will some other than the Holy Remnant also be spared in this particular judgment?

A: Yes. Only in Jacob’s Trouble will *individual* purging occur to reveal the Holy Remnant.

Aven, in this context, is related to Syria. The “plain,” or valley, of Aven is between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, two mountain ranges that run north to south. Mount Hermon is the summit of one range. “Anti” in Anti-Lebanon means “over against” or “parallel.” The two mountain ranges go north from Israel into Lebanon. Today the Valley of Aven is known as Baalbek or the Baca Valley, and Syria has allowed terrorists to occupy this region. Since the famous ancient Baalbek ruins are there, Israel and the Western powers will not directly bomb the valley, for if they destroyed these ruins, it would be equivalent to bombing the Vatican, as it were, to these Arab nations. Terrorists, with their munitions, hide in the valley behind hospitals, schools, etc. The Allies have the power to destroy the terrorists, but they refrain lest they incur the wrath of all other nations in also destroying schools and hospitals. This tactic is cowardice and sneakiness on the part of the terrorists. Incidentally, the king of Syria today has his headquarters in Damascus.

Comment: It is interesting that one of the Hebrew meanings for Aven is “wickedness,” hence the Valley of Wickedness.

The people of Syria will go into captivity “unto Kir,” which was formerly a part of Assyria and is up in Turkey today. The modern name for Kir is Kars. The Kurds are near that vicinity.

Q: Since the Arabs will have to flee into exile, is the account saying that Israel’s territory will be enlarged at this point?

A: Israel will extend to the northern section of Lebanon and on up to the Euphrates River.

Tripoli, the largest city on the eastern Mediterranean coast, is near the ancient border allotted to Solomon. Tyre and Sidon are farther south than Tripoli. Israel will inherit all of Lebanon, going up to the bottom belly of Turkey.

Psalm 83 and chapters 1 and 2 of Amos identify the peoples who will be affected in the future judgment against the confederate Arabs.

Q: Eden means “delight,” so Beth-eden (Revised Standard Version) means “house of delight.” Would this “delight” be in an evil sense? Is it a form of sarcasm?

A: Yes. The Garden of Eden is thought of as a good paradise. However, Beth-eden is a *pagan* paradise. We do not know where Beth-eden is, but Aden is considered by some to be the site of the Garden of Eden. Aden is a province near the lower end of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, whereas the true Garden of Eden is way north, up near the headwaters of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. With just a vowel change, Eden becomes Aden. At the Tower of Babel, a changing of vowels caused the confusion of tongues.

Q: As we go through the other groups of people, the account states that God will send a “fire” upon most of them. Does this terminology indicate that Israel will use nuclear weapons?

A: That might very well be. We think nuclear weapons will be used with regard to Psalm 83, but figuratively speaking, “fire” signifies destruction. And there is “fire” with nuclear weapons.

Amos 1:6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:

Amos 1:7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:

Amos 1:8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.

All of these places are identified with the land of Philistia. The Gaza Strip is the territory, and in the large sense, Gaza incorporates these towns. King Nebuchadnezzar inflicted the original judgment on Gaza, but these verses are obviously prophetic. Incidentally, Samson was active in this area.

Comment: This judgment in the near future will be very severe: “till the last of the Philistines is dead” (NIV).

Reply: Yes, and much of the trouble with the Arabs is in that area today.

Comment: That is the area where the Israelis are trying to compromise for peace, so there is even greater culpability.

Reply: Arafat is chairman of the PLO, but he holds the chief position over the radical elements because he has the purse strings. Money is the key, for the radicals do not think much of him. He doles out the money from Saudi Arabia to those who are supportive (even though they do not like him). They need the money, for they do not plant crops but carry around guns all day. Their manner of life is to sponge off other people, using their guns and getting a salary from Arafat.

Amos 1:9 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:

Amos 1:10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

Tyrus is Tyre, which exists today. Tyre's delivering up the captivity to Edom would be called slave traffic today.

Q: Was Tyre more responsible because Israel was related to Edom through Jacob and Esau?

A: Yes. Edom is Esau. Through many tears, Esau realized he had lost the birthright. Esau and Jacob fought over the spiritual inheritance, and as a result, Jacob fled to Laban. Years later, when Jacob returned, they eventually came to an agreement. Jacob gave Esau many presents, but in the intervening years, Esau had been blessed *temporally* and did not need all the gifts. Although the details are not given, they evidently made a covenant of peace between themselves at that time.

Hiram of Tyre and Solomon of Israel had a covenant centuries later. David had started the relationship, and it continued through to Solomon.

Amos 1:11 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:

Amos 1:12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

Bozrah was the capital of Edom (Idumea).

Esau figuratively pursued his brother Jacob with the sword when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Israel. The Edomites watched and not only gloated but also told the king where the Israelites were fleeing. And while Israel was trying to defend itself against Babylon, the Edomites plundered Israel as scavengers.

Esau's "anger did tear perpetually." Esau himself became pacified but not his subsequent lineage. There was a perpetual hatred.

Amos 1:13 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:

Amos 1:14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:

Amos 1:15 And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

This prophecy is against Ammon. Of course Edom, Ammon, Gaza, and even Tyrus were all considered territories.

These verses show that Ammon invaded the territory of Gilead. Unlike the other territories, Ammon bordered Gilead and wanted to enlarge its borders. Rabbah was the capital city of

Ammon. Incidentally, Amman is the capital of Jordan today.

“Fire” is involved with all of the “three and four” transgressions so far.

Amos 2:1 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

Amos 2:2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:

Amos 2:3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

Ammon and Moab were both children born of Lot and his two daughters. Kirioth is somewhat near Petra.

Notice the continuing expression: “For three transgressions ... and for four.” These words were used for each of the nations surrounding Israel who were due for judgment. We are not to try to find three or four actual transgressions for each. Rather, the point is that Moab and the other nations had a *history* of transgressions and would, therefore, be judged.

“He [Moab] burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.” Edom was Esau’s kingdom, the land of Esau, not Israel. Amos was talking against Moab, an enemy of Israel, for having a history of transgressions. However, the straw that broke the camel’s back among the *numerous* transgressions was the burning of the bones of the king of Edom into lime. Here were two alien people, kinsmen, but not of the direct commonwealth of Israel, yet Amos was criticizing one alien people for mistreating the king of the other alien people. The judgment of the Lord was coming because of that transgression, so what is the lesson?

Verse 1 is a clue to the theme of much of the Book of Amos; that is, the prophet was *against evil no matter where it was*. Amos characteristically spoke *without partiality* about the violation of principle. The Jew, as well as *kinsmen* of the Jew (who were not part of Israel), all had an obligation *to worship God*. Conscience and nature would teach them that, if nothing else.

The burning of the bones of a prominent king of Edom, who evidently controlled Moab at one time, showed a *deep-seated hatred*. When opportunity arose to get even with the Edomites, the Moabites humiliated their king by not even giving him a decent burial. There is an interesting parallel in history.

Wycliffe’s bones were dug up from a grave more than a hundred years after his death. Papacy’s hatred was so strong against Wycliffe for being the precursor of the Reformation that they dug up his bones, pulverized them, and scattered them over the river Avon, which went into the sea. But, as the poet said, the sea took the “bones” into all parts of the earth, dispersing Wycliffe’s doctrines to all. Therefore, instead of Papacy’s killing Wycliffe, there was a repercussion, and public sentiment favored him. Papacy followed a *wrong principle*. *Even if Papacy had had the right religion, the action showed a wrong spirit*.

And here in the Book of Amos, out of all the wicked things the Moabites did, the act that displeased the Lord the most was not allowing a decent burial for an enemy. This shows that the dead of the enemy should be respected where possible. Humanitarian decency is required.

Comment: It seems as if wherever in Scripture a dead body was defiled in any way, it was

displeasing to the Lord.

Reply: That is because man was made in the image of God. An enemy should be allowed to bury his dead fellow citizens.

Q: Is this why some brethren feel a body should not be cremated? In Scripture, it seems preferable that the body be buried in the ground.

A: Even anciently, honor was given to the corpse. In Egypt, for example, the body was preserved through an elaborate process because the people believed that anything done to mutilate the body would adversely affect the future resurrection. In fact, they even made a “ka”—a replica, or image, of the body—so that if the body was dug up and desecrated later, the ka would be preserved and a body in the future life would be made after this replica.

Q: Is complete annihilation (Second Death) represented by burning?

A: In Scripture, fire is associated with Second Death. We personally would not want to be cremated. Among brethren, cost seems to be the main reason for cremation, but for figurative or symbolic reasons, burning by fire is not a happy thought because it is hard to detach the literal destruction of the body by fire from the spiritual portent. From that standpoint alone, the scales are tipped in favor of burial—in a cardboard box, if necessary. It is unfortunate that the funeral pyre (fire) is used in India.

Comment: For the consecrated who know what burning by fire symbolizes, it is advisable to avoid cremation.

Reply: We do not feel that those who are cremated go into Second Death, but there is an adverse emotional aspect to cremation. It is hard to detach oneself from the process.

Comment: Where reasonable and possible according to circumstances, burial seems to be preferable. Even with a closed coffin, there is a certain degree of comfort.

Q: Is there a reason why the Jew will not be embalmed?

A: There is a relationship. Jews want to preserve the body as much as possible. They are allowed to leave the blood in the body and have it buried that very day, before sundown, or within 24 hours. That way they are exempt from the law, which says that the corpse must be embalmed after the first day.

The judgment on Moab was precipitated by the incident of the bones of the Edomite king not being allowed a decent burial. Some things should be respected, such as the office of the President, which is often scandalized. The *office* should not be condemned because of the corrupt individual who is involved. (There is an exception, which will not be discussed now.)

Amos 2:4 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

Amos 2:5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

Judah, the southern kingdom, was limited to two tribes. Back there a “fire” was sent upon Judah in 606 BC, and the nations mentioned previously in chapters 1 and 2 had the same

experience at the hands of the king of Babylon around 606 BC. Here the “fathers” are referred to in an unfavorable sense.

With regard to the *future* fulfillment, Psalm 83 shows that these same peoples will receive judgment. But how does Jerusalem fit in? “Fire ... shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.” In Jacob’s Trouble, the city will be taken; Jerusalem will be purged. Consider Jerusalem today. Ben-Gurion, Rabin, and other leaders will have no part in the future Kingdom. The current government in Israel will be replaced by the Kingdom of Christ, which will be built upon the ashes of the old arrangement. Messiah will have his own laws, rules, and regulations. All those whose names are not written in the book for survival will go into the grave temporarily and hence will have no part in the Kingdom government (Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1). And the Holy Remnant will be completely subservient to the Ancient Worthies, who will be the human representatives of the spiritual government. It will be a complete change. From that standpoint, “fire” will come on Judah not only to purge out the ungodly element but also to change and replace the entire current government.

Amos 2:6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

Amos 2:7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:

Amos 2:8 And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

Amos had already spoken reprovngly of the habits and deeds of the various peoples who surrounded Israel: Syria, Gaza, Tyrus (Lebanon), Edom, Ammon, and Moab. Judah had also been reprovd—and now the ten tribes. All would receive judgments.

Verse 6 gives the reason for Israel’s punishment: “they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes.” This wording reminds us of Amos 8:6, which discusses a Second Death class. Even after all the blessings of the Kingdom, some will still harbor these evil and oppressive tendencies. Therefore, it is quite possible for individuals to develop incorrigible habits in the present life that will prevent them from getting life in the Kingdom—that is, if these habits are indelibly ingrained into their characters. This trait in verse 6 shows a greed for money. Some people will sacrifice principle to get a monetary reward.

For verse 7, the NIV has, “They trample on the heads of the poor, as upon the dust of the ground, and deny justice to the oppressed.” Another translation says they “crush the heads of the poor ones in the dust of the earth.”

“And turn aside the way of the meek” means to override the meek. The proud, the froward, look upon meekness as weakness and ignore the opinions of such individuals. In many nations (for example, Egypt), the poor are regarded as second-class citizens. And the caste system in India sealed a person for life.

“A man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name.” This evil refers to false religious practices and the prostitution that accompanied them; that is, it pertains to behavior associated with religious worship. It was one thing to commit prostitution in private life, but it was another thing when prostitution was identified with the professed (even though false) religion of God.

“And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar.” To understand this part of verse 8, we need a little background information. Under the Law, if a worker gave his outer garment to his employer as a pledge, the employer was to return the garment to him at the end of the day—before the sun went down (Exod. 22:26). The purpose of the pledge was to assure the employer that the employee would not steal from him. Since the outer garment, the coat, was more valuable than what the worker could carry away in wheat, rye, etc., he would not steal. When the employee finished the work at the end of the day, the employer was to return the coat along with the day’s wages.

Now, here in Amos, what was the circumstance?

Comment: This practice seems to have been done in connection with temple prostitution. Instead of giving money for the prostitute’s services, whatever was left there (coat, blanket, etc.) became the property of the temple.

Comment: My Bible says the people would lie down on these garments by the heathen altar.

Reply: Yes, and the coat was not returned to the worshipper. Amos was saying that not only did the leaders tread upon the heads of the poor and override the opinions of the meek, but also they disobeyed the Law regarding laborers by depriving them of their pledge at sundown.

In the olden days, money was not used as much as the barter system. Goods and different types of clothing, including shoes, were often traded. The item was left there in exchange for physical intimacy, and it became the property of the temple after one defiled himself in the clothing, blankets, etc. And this was not a heathen place—it was ISRAEL! In the northern kingdom, this practice took place at Baal altars, such as those in Dan and Bethel. Hosea said these Baal altars were on high hills and usually near a large shade tree. The people lined up in columns and went to the altar under the tree to have relations. What a deplorable condition! Originally the clothes were fraudulently obtained—a bad enough sin—and later the practice of temple prostitution with pledges developed.

In connection with heathen religious worship, the acts of adultery, fornication, and prostitution were not considered a sin or a violation of principle. Even today—for example, in Brahman worship in India—statuary shows fornication taking place in the temple. Prostitution was considered a part of religious worship because the remuneration to temple coffers for the pagan Roman god was substantial. The word “virgins” in “vestal virgins” is a mockery. Abnormal sexual relationships were connected with the religious temple.

Men reclined on the garments and had sexual relations. Then the garments were used as payment to the temple. The religious institution did not look unfavorably on this practice, nor did the individuals see the incongruity of supposedly worshipping the supreme Deity and then committing such abominable acts and giving the polluted garment as payment.

The altars at Dan and Bethel were multiplied so that every high hill in the northern kingdom had a pagan altar that more or less copied the practices of the two main altars. The great number of altars saved the inhabitants from having to travel the distance to Dan or Bethel.

What is the “wine of the condemned” in verse 8? “They drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.”

When Socrates was condemned to death, he drank a cup of poison hemlock as a wine. By lying

on their clothes as a pledge and committing fornication near an altar that was purportedly the altar of the supreme deity Baal and ignoring Jehovah, the Israelites reached the point of no return in incurring judgment. Some of the most deadly poisons take a little time to act, and that is the sense in which the Israelites drank the wine of the condemned. Although they may have literally drunk wine at the altars, it was the evil acts they practiced, especially those associated with false religious worship, that brought condemnation. For example, priests deprived the poor of their pledges, and leaders “sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes” (verse 6). By evil acts, the Israelites condemned themselves, and the acts enumerated by Amos were the last straw. The evil practices got increasingly worse. And now the people practiced fornication in connection with false heathen worship.

The “wine” is primarily figurative, although it could have been literally imbibed too. Drinking the “wine of the condemned” is like Revelation 17:2, “The inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her [the great whore’s] fornication.”

Later God promised to restore the *nation* of Israel to favor. But *individuals* are a different matter, for *God* will appoint the Ancient Worthies and the priesthood. Therefore, the thought should not be entertained that God will forgive these evil practices. As individuals, each will have to suffer whatever retribution God sees fit to order.

The danger in thinking God will automatically forgive all the people for their sins when the Kingdom is established is that it leads to the following reasoning: “God is merciful. If He can forgive Israel’s sins of fornication, He will forgive whatever I do in the present life.” However, God does not wink the eye at any willfulness on our part.

God will make the New Covenant with the house of Israel because the *fathers* were faithful. We have tried to make the distinction that God married Israel, but Jesus marries his Church. Marriage to Jesus is more favorable because he marries *individuals*, whereas God married the *nation*, the *collective people*. Jesus loves each member of his Church *personally* and says to each one *individually*, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). Although the relationship can be looked on favorably as the Bride of Christ, it is composed of individuals. Therefore, the present relationship through Jesus gives closer access to God than any other circumstance. With regard to favor returning to the nation of Israel, God will not just *carte blanche* forgive individuals who practiced evil but the *people as a whole*.

As shown by 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, *after* a person consecrates, even though *previously*, before consecration, he may have done some of these things (such as being an idolater, a drunkard, or a thief), from that time forward, these things are not to be done. The nation of Israel was born into a covenant relationship, but one is not born into Christ. A young child is covered by the consecrated parent up until a responsible age. From then on, a person is responsible in proportion to his or her knowledge of truth and will be held accountable. Ignorance is no excuse, for even a worldly person’s conscience knows certain things are wrong. Hardened criminals, for example, will have an accounting in the Kingdom, even though Jesus tasted death for every man. All will have the *opportunity* for life, but willful misdeeds of the past will receive some retribution. Based on Zechariah 8:23, imagine someone in the Kingdom who previously intensely hated the Jew then having to take hold of the skirt of a Jew!

Therefore, we should not read of Israel’s coming forgiveness and draw the lesson that we do not have to be so strict. The old mind is very deceptive and clever in its reasoning and, in this respect, is superior to the new mind. If the flesh gets too powerful, it will justify sin, saying, “God will wink the eye and forgive me down the road.” Such an attitude is going toward sinning the unpardonable sin. And the old mind may even use Scripture to justify its wrong course. We must walk circumspectly and not listen if we are told we are too strict. It is an all-

out effort to become a member of the Little Flock.

In summation, Israel's forgiveness is based primarily upon the faithfulness of the fathers: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Sinai, God told the Israelites that He would make of them a great nation, and that is the promise He has given to us (Exod. 19:5,6; Deut. 14:2). If faithful, we will be a great nation of kings and priests. Some Christians think they will be saved and all others will be destroyed. However, the Kingdom will be the opportunity for mankind to retrace their path, with every encouragement being given to assist them up the road to holiness and life, but certain things will have to be made right. What a man sows, he will reap (Gal. 6:17). This principle applies to the world, as well as to the consecrated. The opportunity of retrieval is marvelous because the deed is worthy of eternal death. God, in His mercy, will grant the opportunity for the world to walk up the highway of holiness (Isa. 35:8).

Amos 2:9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

When did God destroy the Amorites? He destroyed them when their iniquity came to the full. He waited until their judgment was ripe, so the Israelites were kept in bondage in Egypt until that time. As Genesis 15:16 states, "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

Therefore, when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the Amorites still existed, but their iniquity was full. Their extermination started in the days of King Saul. Saul and David both did a good job, but that was quite late in history compared to the Exodus, when the iniquity of the Amorites was full. At the time of the prophecy of Amos, the Amorites had already been destroyed, but not Ammon, Gaza, Moab, Lebanon, Judah, Israel, etc.

When the "roots from beneath" were destroyed, the Amorites as a people no longer existed. Thus it is possible for the roots to be left after the fruit is destroyed, but destruction of the roots would be complete national destruction. Jude 12 uses this terminology for a Second Death class in the Gospel Age: "twice dead, plucked up by the roots."

Notice that *God* was speaking. He said that the height of the Amorites was "like the height of the cedars" of Lebanon, which were noted for their height. This form of hyperbole, or exaggeration, is permissible. God was taking the perspective of the people, who viewed the Amorites as enemies. In other words, their attitude with regard to opposing the Amorites was, "We might as well forget them, for they are too strong and powerful." God condescended to the Israelites' level in giving this perspective. The same explanation applies to the report of the spies, who said the inhabitants of the Promised Land were more numerous and stronger than the Israelites and were like giants (Num. 13:32,33). David faced the giant Goliath with *faith*. And so, by *human* strength, the Israelites could not have overcome the Amorites.

The word "Yet" at the beginning of verse 9 signifies that in spite of the sins of the Israelites, God destroyed the Amorites. Even though, from a technical standpoint, the Israelites were not worthy of being spared, God destroyed the Amorites. Verses 10 and 11 will review some of the things God has done for Israel.

God had had it! The ten tribes would go into exile, and the majority would die a violent death at the hand of Assyria. The lesson for the Israelites with regard to the Amorites was, "Do you think *you* will escape this type of judgment?"

Q: Was God saying the following to Israel through Amos? "Your iniquity has come to the

full—just like the Amorites. Consider their example. The Amorites were tall in stature and seemingly a strong, invincible nation, but they were cut down. Now your iniquity is full, and the same thing will happen to you.”

A: That is right. The judgment was set; it was irrepressible.

Amos 2:10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

Amos 2:11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD.

God was reviewing some of the things He had done to help Israel in times past. He was showing His care for and interest in them as a people. Incidentally, the Amalekites were the first enemies Israel encountered after leaving Egypt.

Amos 2:12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.

The subject matter of verse 12 deals with the prophets and the Nazarites.

Comment: The Israelites “commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.” Amos had this very experience. “Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court” (Amos 7:12,13).

Reply: Yes, and this was the general experience of all the Lord’s true prophets in the history of the nation of Israel. The people did not heed the prophets’ admonitions and counsel.

Comment: The Nazarites took a vow not to drink wine, so for the nation to tempt them away from their vow was a serious violation of principle.

Reply: Yes. In a remarkable incident, some Rechabites in Jeremiah’s day were tempted but remained faithful to their Nazarite vow, which had been followed by their family for several generations (Jer. 35:5-7). Jehonadab (or Jonadab), who went up into the chariot with Jehu, was the son of Rechab, who had commanded his posterity to obey the vow (2 Kings 10:15).

What is the difference between the condemnation here in Amos, where Nazarites were tempted to drink wine, and Jeremiah 35:2, where a *true* prophet set wine before Rechabite Nazarites to tempt them to drink?

Comment: Jeremiah was not trying to lead the Rechabites astray, for it was God’s providence to test their sincerity and thus point out Israel’s unfaithfulness.

There are different ways of tempting: (1) tempting with an evil purpose to lead someone astray and (2) tempting to bring out a person’s good qualities and steadfastness. For example, God said to Moses, “Let me destroy this people, and I will make of you a great nation.” Moses pleaded for Israel and was willing to die himself if Israel would be saved. However, God knew that His statement would bring out a sterling facet of Moses’ character. Thus a person can be tested for his or her own good or welfare, and that was the case when Jeremiah tempted the Rechabites. God knew they would refuse to break their vow. Jeremiah could then use the illustration that the Rechabites had withstood the temptation. In contrast, although God pleaded with the Israelites as a Father, they ignored His advice and admonitions. The

Rechabites were sincere and faithful to the instructions of an *earthly* father, while the Israelites were not faithful to the *heavenly* Father. Jeremiah was drawing a comparison to show how far off the mark the professed children of Israel were. The object was to awaken Israel from negligence and slumber.

Incidentally, why doesn't anyone accuse God of being anti-Semitic? The very ones who are so careful about the Bible, both in Jewry and in Christendom, contradict their own reasoning on many of these subjects.

Comment: With regard to the command to "Prophecy not," the same command was given by the Israelites in Isaiah 30:8-11 when they sought help from Egypt. The people said "to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us."

Reply: When Jeremiah went down to Egypt with those who fled there after Gedaliah's assassination, his words were considered nonsense. Strong criticism is sometimes valid. We should ask, "Is it true? What is the motivation?" Both Jeremiah and Amos were mouthpieces of God. And Jesus spoke the words of the Father when he criticized. Today people are often so fearful of speaking truth on different issues that they stifle their own conscience by automatically feeling it is wrong to criticize.

The Rechabite family was a powerful illustration. Yet, in spite of all the sins of Israel and Judah, the Lord offered the opportunity of retrieval.

Amos 2:13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

Comment: The KJV margin corrects verse 13 to the active voice: "Behold, I will press your place, as a cart full of sheaves presseth." The NIV also corrects the emphasis: "Now then, I will crush you as a cart crushes when loaded with grain." And the RSV reads, "Behold, I will press you down in your place as a cart full of sheaves presses down."

Reply: The Lord would do the pressing, which, by implication, was retribution for what He had endured. Incidentally, in the Middle East, we sometimes wonder if the wheels will fall off the overloaded carts pulled by donkeys because the weight of the sheaves of corn is so terrific.

Amos 2:14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:

Amos 2:15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.

Comment: Verses 14 and 15 referred to the coming Assyrian captivity. The strength of Israel would be as nothing. The people would be fearful and panicky. Those who thought they were strong would find themselves weak and helpless in the face of the foe. Even those who had horses would be rendered powerless.

Reply: No one for whom the punishment was intended would escape. The relatively few survivors were all taken captive.

Q: Was a lot of strength needed to pull "the bow"?

A: Yes. The northern kingdom was self-confident. The value of the bow depended upon the

strength of the one stringing it. The greater the strength, the farther the arrow would fly, and the better the chance the arrow would find its mark. Since the bow and arrow are a weapon of offense from a distance, the one shooting the arrow can be more or less safe from retribution—like a sniper who can shoot long-distance. The account is saying that no matter what form of offense would be taken in warfare against the Assyrians, the energy of those in the ten tribes would seem to miraculously diminish. The physically strong would find they were weak because of fright. Swift runners would be paralyzed, that is, unable to run.

Amos 2:16 And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

Fear can do two things: (1) Some are rendered powerless and numb. (2) Others get so panicky that they flee as fast as they can, dropping their armor because of the weight. We do not know how we will react until we are tested.

Q: Does “in that day” indicate an antitype in our day in the near future?

A: Chapters 1 and 2 of Amos, with a past historical fulfillment of judgments against the Ammonites, Moabites, Philistines, etc., correspond to Psalm 83, and thus will have a fulfillment, yet future, against the Arab nations and peoples surrounding Israel.

Q: Psalm 83 shows that Israel will have an astounding victory prior to the problem with Gog and Magog. However, here in Amos, Israel and Judah were both defeated. What is the thought?

A: Psalm 83, yet future, includes all of the other nations, whereas Israel and Judah received judgments in the past—Israel was defeated at the hand of Assyria, and Judah at the hand of Babylon. Notice that Egypt is not mentioned. The omission may be providential because the judgment on Egypt is prophesied to occur another way (see Isa. 11:15; 19:1-18).

Amos 2:9-16 tells some of the things God did for Israel in the past and what the nation could expect in the future as a result of their negligence.

Comment: These verses seem to have a spiritual application because the command in verse 12 is, “Prophesy not.”

Reply: Yes, the true prophet will be told not to prophesy.

Comment: The latter verses seem to show that those in Christendom will be defeated. We are thinking more from a Christian perspective.

Reply: The spiritual application would have to be along those lines for the simple reason that at the end of the age, the Holy Remnant will escape harm in Gog’s invasion, and Amos was prophesying utter defeat—that *all* would have this experience. In other words, the saving of the Holy Remnant does not fit here. When the ten tribes were taken into captivity by Assyria, no distinction was made between the righteous and the unrighteous. The whole ten-tribe kingdom went into captivity. But with Gog and Magog, Israel will be victorious through the small Holy Remnant. God will save Israel.

With regard to the prophets, the spiritual application would pertain to spiritual Israel. But there will also be a natural application in the near future, prior to Jacob’s Trouble, as regards Moab, Ammon, etc.

Amos 3:1 Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

The “children of Israel,” the “whole family,” would be all 12 tribes. All 12 came out of Egypt.

Amos 3:2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Amos was now speaking a message that concerned the whole nation. “You only have I known” embraced both Judah and Israel. Guilt is often proportionate to the degree of light. Thus the degree of understanding makes any act of disobedience that much more reprehensible, but one should not go to the other extreme and conclude that ignorance is bliss. One should not be fearful of knowing too much because of the greater responsibility. Being *willingly* ignorant also brings culpability.

Comment: Deuteronomy 7:6 specially emphasizes God’s relationship with Israel. “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.”

Comment: *Because* God was dealing with Israel, He would punish them for disobedience. The hope was that they would repent.

Comment: Verse 2 can be used to prove that God shows partiality under certain circumstances. Another example is that the gospel went westward, not eastward. And even receiving the truth of the Harvest message through the Pastor’s writings would be partiality.

Many Scriptures can appear to conflict if they are not properly understood in context. God expects us to be impartial in *judgment*. For example, evil is evil regardless of who commits it, but there can be partiality in other issues. God and Jesus discriminated, and so do we. Today’s laws do not permit discrimination between male and female, but the Bible says not to suffer a woman to teach in a public fashion (as an elder or minister). That discrimination is proper. Another area of discrimination is making a distinction between the consecrated and the unconsecrated—for example, in ecclesia voting and decision making.

Comment: Verse 2 is helpful in witnessing a comforting message to the Jews. It is sometimes hard for them to look back historically because the road has been difficult. They wonder how God can still be dealing with them. But even in their time of favor, God said He would punish them for their iniquities.

Reply: The word “therefore” in verse 2 is very important and should be read with emphasis. After God has done so much for His people and they turned their backs to Him, is it not reasonable that He will punish them? *God is reasonable*. He was saying in effect, “I have dealt exclusively with you, and you have ignored me. *Therefore*, it becomes necessary for me to visit some form of retribution upon you.”

Comment: That same principle is stated in the New Testament: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6).

Reply: That text shows God’s reasonableness, especially since He is trying to qualify Christians for a position in the Little Flock. The consecrated must be tested and developed, and love punishes where necessary.

Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

The “two” are God and Israel.

Comment: This verse has been misapplied in the past to tighten the restrictions between brethren.

Reply: Verse 3 is talking about a personal relationship between Israel (or an individual) and the Lord—not between an individual and an organization or between two individuals.

What did this statement imply for Israel down the road? The implication was that because of Israel’s sins and disobedience, God would have to punish them and turn His back on them in a period of disfavor. No longer could He be patient and deal with them. It was essential for Israel to go into captivity because the nation had ignored the warnings about their sins. A separation had to take place because God and Israel were not agreed. The *nation* (not individuals) was not in agreement with God, for the people were worshipping Baal, a heathen god.

Comment: That same principle applies today. “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD” (Isa. 52:11). “But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?” (Psa. 50:16). The unconsecrated do not have the same privileges as the consecrated. One must be agreed with God through a covenant of sacrifice.

Amos 3:4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

Amos 3:5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

Amos 3:6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

What about the last question? The reference is not to moral evil but to a calamity. God had said to Israel, “If you do such and such, this is what will happen.” He was the custodian of their welfare; therefore, when calamity, disaster, hard times, or judgment came, He had allowed it because it was deserved and was meant for their good.

“Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” What would this question mean to the Christian? It would be like his saying, “When things do not prosper, when I have trials, are they intended to teach me a lesson, or are they designed to test my faithfulness? I must examine myself, for what a man sows, that shall he reap.” In other words, we can sow for good, and we can sow for bad. Good deeds and habits prosper us spiritually, and for bad deeds and habits, we suffer the consequences. With regard to suffering experiences, the Apostle Peter established a principle that can be along either of two lines. (1) Sometimes we receive punishment because we did something improper or wrong. (2) At other times, we get hard trials for our development and good. For example, if we have a difficult trial of illness, we should regard it as part of God’s discipline to prepare us for a place in the Kingdom. If God sees the necessity for permitting an accident, sickness, etc., then the experience is profitable to us if it is rightly received. But we should always examine ourselves to see if the trial has been permitted because of wrongdoing. We should ask in prayer, “Why am I having this experience?” If, with an honest and open heart, we cannot see a basis of wrongdoing, then we should consider the experience preparatory for being fitted for a place in the Kingdom. Paul suffered *much*, and the suffering worked for his good. He had many thrashing (hard beating) experiences. “Blessed are those who suffer for *righteousness’* sake” is the principle.

Comment: An introverted individual can falsely blame himself or herself in cases where the test is simply one of faithfulness. The mind can imagine that an experience is a punishment. The Apostle Peter said, "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (1 Pet. 3:17).

Reply: Yes. However, if we determine that the suffering is for evil doing, then we should try to have the proper remorse and repentance, make restitution, and look for help to correct the fault, act, or deed.

Verses 4-6 are a series of questions, all of which are answered, "No!" The lion does not roar unless he has a prey; he roars to paralyze his victim. The young lion in his den cries when he has food. (To the contrary, baby birds incessantly chirp for food; they no sooner swallow a morsel than the chirping begins all over again.) A "gin" is a trap. If the trap has no bait, it is not a temptation. A snare taken up from the earth is the kind that springs upward with a noose around the neck when an animal steps on it. The trumpet sounds an alarm when the enemy is approaching, signaling great danger and alerting the people to prepare to defend themselves.

The implication of verses 4-6 is that when these things happen, there is a *reason*. Calamities occurred near the end of Israel's national existence, because they were disobedient and not doing God's will. Thus He was giving the Israelites an opportunity to pay attention. Amos was saying, "You are having these experiences to wake you up," but the people did not get the point and the captivity occurred.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

God revealed "his secret unto ... the prophets," that is, unto Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jonah, all of whom were contemporaries. These prophets publicly *roared* on behalf of God. Their role was a hard one, for they had to say a lot of unpleasant things. They had to rebuke kings, priests, false prophets, and assemblies of the Lord's people at feasts. God spoke to the prophets, and the prophets spoke to the people. Just as the lion roars in the forest and the bird is taken up by a snare, so God warned His people through the prophets. The problem was that their ears were *deaf* to the words of the prophets.

God did explain to Israel—and to us—a lot of truths: warnings, comforting statements, etc. Therefore, we cannot charge God with not informing us. If we want to know His will, *He will let us know*. But if we do not like the person, agency, or channel God uses to admonish us and, therefore, do not recognize the instrumentality He has chosen, it is not His fault. Rather, it is because we are not really hungry to understand His Word so that we can obey it.

God said to the consecrated, "They shall be *all* [that is, *everyone*] taught" (John 6:45). All of the consecrated will get instruction, but will they recognize and hear it? As a people, Israel did not. Only a remnant heard. God is discharged of any lack of compassion for or interest in His people because *He will let a matter be known*. Some get the message only when a jackass speaks to them, as was the case with Balaam. But at that point, it was too late for him to avoid the danger he was getting into through bad advice to heathen people.

Verse 7 is a remarkable statement. At all times—now, tomorrow, and on into the future—God will see that His people are informed to the degree of their development and according to their current circumstance or location. All of the consecrated get opportunities for instruction and a providence to suit them in their environment.

Comment: Sometimes people miss the warning because they only want to hear smooth things.

Comment: The Prophet Daniel spoke beautifully of the Heavenly Father: “He revealeth the deep and secret things” (Dan. 2:22). Through Daniel, God revealed a number of “secret things.”

Comment: The principle of verse 7 applies to the Book of Revelation and the message now due for the Christian.

Comment: Abraham was told in advance about Sodom and Gomorrah because God knew he would be faithful.

The Scripture that the truth would shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day is sometimes interpreted to mean that truth does not change, but we do—that the truth is the truth, but our ability to see it changes (Prov. 4:18). To a certain extent this is true, but truth is as a light, and the path of the just is as a *shining* light that grows brighter and brighter.

Amos 3:8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

The “lion” is God. “Who can but prophesy?” In other words, “How can we remain still?” As Christians, we have a responsibility to speak out. Jeremiah said the Lord’s Word was a burning fire in his heart (Jer. 20:9). He had resolved to keep his mouth shut for a while, but he just could not.

Amos was speaking about himself and saying in effect, “The Lord has revealed His secret unto me, and I must prophesy.” Paul said, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel,” and “I have not shunned to declare ... all the counsel of God” (1 Cor. 9:16; Acts 20:27).

Comment: Philippians 3:15 does not specifically pertain to prophecy, but it is along the lines of the same principle: “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing you be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” In one way or another, God personally informs one who is not living up to his full responsibilities, but we must recognize His voice in order to get the lesson.

Amos 3:9 Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof.

Amos 3:10 For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

Amos 3:11 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

Ashdod was the capital city of the Philistine territory. What does the word “publish” in verse 9 signify? Amos asked a helper to go out and proclaim the message in Ashdod and in Egypt while he continued his message there in Israel. Jeremiah similarly had Baruch as a helper proclaiming his message in nine or so other nations. When King Zedekiah sent Seraiah, the chief priest, to Babylon as an emissary, Jeremiah instructed Seraiah to publicly throw a scroll in the Euphrates River. Therefore, “publish” does not mean that Amos went personally to Ashdod and Egypt but that he sent another to proclaim the message for him on the Lord’s behalf; that is, God commissioned Amos with the responsibility to see that these remarks were

uttered in several leading cities (“palaces” plural) in Egypt and Ashdod. For example, the Philistine territory included Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, and Ashkelon. Thus the message went forth in all—more or less—of the Philistine territory and Egypt. Proclaiming the message in several places prevented the ruling element from smothering the message.

The message to the Philistines and the Egyptians was, “Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria.” Why were they to assemble themselves on the mountains of the ten-tribe kingdom? They were to witness the sins and injustices of the Israelites and to see God’s judgments. When the ten tribes were threatened by Assyria, they looked to Egypt for help. Although Egypt sent a large armed contingent to aid Israel in the threatening siege by Assyria, the ten tribes were defeated, and the Egyptians forsook Israel and returned to their homeland. The bulk of the prophet’s message was that the ten tribes would be taken into captivity by Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, and later by his successor, Sargon. The earlier Tiglath-pileser captivity was primarily of the 2 1/2 tribes on the far side of Jordan. Later the remaining 7 1/2 tribes were taken into captivity by Shalmaneser. The Assyrian king Sennacherib threatened Judah but was eliminated as an enemy by a miraculous victory for Judah. Sennacherib fled for his life, and 185,000 Assyrians died overnight. Still later Nebuchadnezzar took the two-tribe kingdom captive, plus Ammon, Moab, etc. Thus the sequence was Tiglath-pileser, the ministry of Amos, Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. In the days of Amos, the Tiglath-pileser captivity had already taken place, for the prophet’s ministry occurred later when the 7 1/2 tribes were taken captive by Shalmaneser. Therefore, the purpose of Egypt’s assembling on the mountains of Samaria was to protect Israel, but Shalmaneser’s force was so overwhelming that the Egyptians fled back to Egypt.

In verse 11, the pronoun “he” was the king of Assyria, and “thee” would be Israel. “Thy strength” referred to the strength of the ten-tribe kingdom, and “thy palaces” meant the palaces of the ten-tribe kingdom. Israel’s relying on Egypt for help was unavailing.

Because of the nature of his message, Amos was well known in both Judah and Israel, although he prophesied basically to the ten tribes.

Amos 3:12 Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.

Damascus was the capital of Syria. Assyria was larger than Syria and more distant, being an empire. When the Assyrian forces came down against Israel, with Syria there to help, the forces of Egypt and Ashdod forsook Israel. The king of Assyria utterly defeated Israel and Syria. Hence the “two legs” may be thought of as the northern kingdom (Samaria) and Syria (Damascus). These were two legs of a sheep, a corporate body. The “shepherd” (God) rescued the “two legs,” that is, just a remnant of each. The “ear” probably refers to the ten tribes because Amos prophesied primarily to the northern kingdom. In effect, Amos was saying that Samaria and Damascus and their inhabitants would be destroyed, and God, the Shepherd, would rescue a remnant of both. (Under the Law, a true shepherd risked his life to defend the flock, and to prove that he had tried to defend the sheep against a wolf or another predator, he had to bring back a piece of an ear, a leg, etc., as evidence.)

Comment: David told King Saul how he had slain a lion and a bear to protect a lamb (1 Sam. 17:34-37).

Comment: A spiritual shepherd of the Lord’s flock must prove to God that he has done his best to save the consecrated.

Reply: Yes, that is true, just as Jesus laid down his life for the flock.

Comment: A watchman must watch and warn.

Reply: Elders and other bishops of the soul have a responsibility to defend the Lord's sheep to the extent possible under given circumstances.

"So shall the children of Israel be taken out." Survivors ("a piece of an ear") were taken captive to Assyria because God, the Shepherd, rescued them. And this will also be true of the Holy Remnant, who will be rescued at the time of Jacob's Trouble.

In verse 12, what is common to both "a bed" and "a couch"? Both are a place of rest and are associated with leisure. Hence the bed and the couch are symbols of wealth, luxury, and the upper class. In other words, the upper class of Israel and Damascus would not escape judgment. All classes of society would receive judgment.

Q: For verse 12, the Revised Standard says the words "in Damascus" are uncertain in the Hebrew, and even the King James margin gives an alternate translation. Was the smallness of the remnant being emphasized?

A: No, the King James is correct in using "Damascus." The KJV is an excellent translation on the whole—better than the modern translations. The RSV is basically a copy of the KJV but stated in modern words. The NIV is a copy of the RSV with words added and subtracted. The NIV and RSV are helpful, but the KJV is better overall.

Q: Why would God save Syria, the enemy of Israel?

A: At that time, Syria was more sympathetic to Israel. Under the Pentateuch, those who curse Israel will themselves receive a curse, and those who bless Israel will receive a blessing.

Amos 3:13 Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,

Amos 3:14 That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Beth-el: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to ground.

When the king of Assyria defeated the ten tribes and took the remnant captive, the false religion centered in Dan and Bethel ceased. "Horns" represent power whether on a true or a false altar. Cutting the horns off the altar symbolically demeaned the false religion and said in effect, "Where is your [false] god?"

Amos 3:15 And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

Not only would the general populace be taken captive, but also the rulership. Not only would the common houses be rifled and plundered, but those of the wealthy too. Only the wealthy could afford both a winter and a summer house. Herod had a couple of residences, one being at Masada.

King Ahab had a palace of ivory, meaning that his palace was filled with furniture made of ivory. "Out of the ivory palaces," words of a hymn, refer to Jesus' coming to this sin-cursed earth. Ivory is a symbol of wealth because of its rarity, beauty, and cleanliness. The term "great houses" also refers to the residences of the wealthy. The upper class would receive judgment.

Amos 4:1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

Verse 1 is based on the analogy of cows, *female* animals. Bashan was a fertile, productive area that supported cattle with its herbage, or grass.

This message was directed to the northern kingdom. Many Bible commentaries say that the kine represent women and that thus the message is directed to the women of the northern kingdom, the “mountain [kingdom] of Samaria,” the ten tribes. The focus of attention was the northern kingdom with its scenic, fertile, green land that supported cattle. However, there is a complication, for the “kine ... oppress the poor ... [and] crush the needy,” and women in ancient times were not notorious for oppressing the poor because they were not in positions of authority.

The idea of fertility and productivity suggests that wealth and possessions breed indolence and luxury. Rome, an example from history, was noted for its warriors and the masculinity and brutality that were involved in its conquests. Later in history, when Rome depended on barbarians from the north as mercenaries, it lost its masculinity and became effeminate and soft. It was Rome’s luxury that bred indolence and lack of sensitivity. The wealthy fed upon the people of the land—they oppressed the poor. The “kine” got their wealth by eating the “grass,” that is, the common people.

Q: The kine “say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.” Is the implication that the women exerted an influence upon the men to oppress the poor by demanding more and more luxury?

A: That would be true according to some of the Bible commentaries. However, the prophecy is directed to Samaria and the kine of Bashan, both of which were related to the oppression of the poor and the crushing of the needy.

The drinking of wine is implied, because wine is a symbol of luxury. The wealthy enriched themselves at the expense of the poor.

Q: Does verse 1 liken the men to kine because they were becoming soft in their luxury?

A: The “masters” utilized the kine, but the people followed the leadership like sheep. For example, the corrupt media today goes into all kinds of demoralizing facets. Heroes and villains crash cars, run down people, etc., whereas they should be held accountable for their actions. The general populace absorbs these corrupt values by viewing the media. The people are suppliant in the hands of the leaders. The leaders oppress the poor by giving orders to others (the kine) to feed on them. The cows are responsible, but the leaders are even more responsible for giving the orders to feed on the grass, the common people.

“Let us drink.” The pronoun “us” would be the well-fed kine and the masters, who lived off the poor, the grass. The condemnation was against those in high places, as well as the underlings, who cooperated with the wrongdoing.

Q: Is Bashan related to Antichrist, for Papacy oppresses the poor and crushes the needy?

A: Yes, when we spiritualize these verses.

Amos 4:2 The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.

The analogy here is to fishing and marine life. Verse 2 suggests that the humiliating captivity into Assyria was imminent.

God would “take [1] you [the ten tribes] away with hooks, and [2] your posterity with fishhooks.” First, God took away the ten-tribe kingdom and later the two-tribe kingdom. Some in the northern kingdom who saw the trouble coming fled with their household goods to the southern kingdom; those who escaped the king of Assyria fled to Judah.

Amos 4:3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.

The first part of verse 3, “Ye shall go out at the breaches,” suggests an opening in a net. A fisherman uses a gaff (“hook”) to help pull the fish out of the water. A gaff effects a *forceful* extraction of the fish from the water, their normal habitat. The implication was that the northern kingdom would be *forcibly* extracted from its normal homeland and taken to a new situation of severity and harshness.

The RSV and the NIV do not translate “palace” but leave the Hebrew word untranslated as “Harmon,” which means “harem.” First, the ten tribes and later the two tribes would become part of the “harem.” Usually when an enemy entered the land, the primary target was the men of war and the male children. There was selectivity with the women. Some were raped and murdered, and some were taken captive to be personal slaves and part of the harem of the king’s palace.

The majority in the ten tribes were killed by Assyria. Those who escaped into Judah got their judgment later. Those who were taken into captivity were treated as slaves.

Amos 4:4 Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:

Amos 4:5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet used *sarcasm* in verses 4 and 5. Instead of looking to the true God in their need, the ten tribes looked to their false gods.

Q: Is the RSV accurate for the end of verse 4: “Bring ... your tithes every three days”?

A: No. There was a tithing every three years under the Law (Deut. 26:12). The purpose of the tithe was to benefit the stranger, the Levite, the orphan, and the widow so that they could “eat within thy gates, and be filled.” On the third year, the tithes of all three years were brought.

When Jeroboam instituted the worship of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, the Lord’s pictures and types were used. Certain practices were stolen from the Law and used for the false gods. What the people were accustomed to do for the true God was now done for the false gods. And much of Catholicism is a copy of the Old Testament—incense, robes of the high priest, feasts, etc. At the same time, it is said that the Jews were rejected and Catholicism is the fulfillment of the Law. The priesthood made up monetary penalties for sin, whereas the Old Testament set a value (say, 25 percent) for what was stolen, plus the replacement of the stolen goods. The Law was a type to be *spiritually* fulfilled, not literally fulfilled to benefit the coffers. Tithing was made literal to get the income. God was indignant that His religion would be adapted to false gods.

With the ten tribes, instead of the tithes benefiting widows and orphans, they were used to enrich the wealthy through lands, estates, etc. Ostensibly, the tithes looked good, but they were not properly used. Instead of helping the poor, they impoverished the poor—just the opposite. And in the antitype, instead of benefiting the poor, the tithes have helped to increase the power and wealth of the false Church. In the Tabernacle sacrifices, the bullock was a symbol of the future Savior, who would die to cover the people’s sins. Instead, calf idols were made and used to promote adultery and fornication and to get money for the false religion.

The prophets had to be so much in tune with God’s will and thinking that when they were told to give a message, it would be given with the proper spirit, inflection, and emotion. For instance, if the message was one of indignation and judgment, the prophet had to genuinely thunder. “Offer a sacrifice ... with leaven” was delivered in a truly sarcastic tone. So was “proclaim and publish the free offerings”! Not only were those offerings not free, but they were extorted from the common people, who then bragged about their supposed freewill offerings. Their attitude was the exact opposite of Matthew 6:1, “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them.” The right hand is not to know what the left hand is doing.

“This liketh you” means “this you like [to do].” The people had pleasure in doing these things.

Amos 4:6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Amos 4:7 And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

“Cleanness of teeth” was a symbol of hunger and famine.

Verse 7 does not contradict verse 6, for at *different* times, God spared one place and cursed another. This was done continuously. At another time, the place previously spared was cursed and vice versa. God chose this method to discipline and awaken Israel to their lack of obedience. The punishments in verses 6-11 were all taken from the Law, which plainly said the Israelites would be blessed for obedience and punished for disobedience. “Shall there be evil [a calamity] in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” (Amos 3:6).

Comment: If the nation had learned from these sporadic and selective rebukes, the coming harsh judgment at the hands of Assyria would not have been necessary.

Reply: The reason the judgments came piecemeal—one “piece” blessed, the next “piece” cursed, and then vice versa—was to help Israel see that the happenings were of divine displeasure. If they had *all* suffered each time, the people would have said it was happenstance. The very selectivity of the judgments was saying, “Wake up! Wake up! You have been grossly negligent!” Probably when a judgment occurred in a particular place, it followed a known incident of wrongdoing in that location. The judgments were based not only on Leviticus 26 but also on a current instance of disobedience. The people should have been able to draw the lesson. The judgments were selective at any given time, but *all* were guilty. The proof is the expressions “want of bread in *all* your places” and “cleanness of teeth in *all* your cities.”

When people live in an atmosphere of false teaching, the blindness is very strong. That is why Israel failed to recognize these natural calamities as judgments from God. Wrong doctrine can make one blind and deaf to truth. This is also true today with regard to false religion.

Withholding rain from the ten tribes “when there were yet three months to the harvest” was significant because rain at that time was critical for the crops to properly develop for harvest. Fruitage of the earth will not develop without rain. At the end of the three months, the Israelites should have been able to reap their harvest. The withholding of rain was selective, but *all* places felt this judgment *sooner or later*. The NIV has “field” for “piece.”

Amos 4:8 So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

The NIV is better: “People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink, yet you have not returned to me, declares the LORD.”

Comment: Back there the people did not have the news media of today. Word of the sporadic judgments of withholding rain spread as the thirsty inhabitants wandered from town to town to get water. As news reached each town, the people dwelling therein became responsible for getting the lesson by observing what had happened to others.

Various judgments were inflicted, so that if a city had enough rain, it received a locust plague or a pestilence or some other judgment instead. Hence all the people received a judgment of one kind or another for wrongdoing. The very selectivity of a particular kind of judgment should have made them realize it was from the Lord.

Amos 4:9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Comment: In verse 7, the contrast was that one city had rain and another did not; that is, the judgment was a *lack* of rain. Now here in verse 9, the opposite condition occurred as a judgment: an *overabundance* of rain that caused mildew. The city that at first felt it was being blessed with rain then got more and more until the crops were ruined. Or the city received a locust plague. The “palmerworm” is a developmental stage of the locust (see Joel 1:4).

Reply: In one case, there was diminution (lack of water), and in another case, there was excess (floods). Whichever occurred, the crops were destroyed.

God is interested in *spiritual* development with the new creature, whereas material, or *temporal*, blessings showed the Lord’s favor with the Jew, and the withholding of these showed disfavor. Our spiritual development suffers if we do not hearken to God’s instructions.

Amos 4:10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Comment: The punishments that would befall Israel for disobedience included plagues of sickness and disease (Deut. 28:58-60).

Reply: “Pestilence” was a plague of disease or sickness.

The Israelites could have horses, but they were not to put their trust in them. And they were not to have horses in the Temple environs. Horses were like money. Money in itself is not evil, but the *love* of money is the root of much evil.

“I ... have taken away your horses.” This was selectivity too. Humans are far more precious

than horses, yet humans were slain with the sword, and horses were captured and kept alive. Horses were taken as a booty of war, but the people were killed.

The “stink” of the camps came up to the Israelites’ nostrils because of all the slain corpses. Even with the calamities, the people did not repent and return to the Lord. Conditions are similar today.

Generally speaking, consecrated Christians are spared the severest trials when natural disasters occur. Why? The reason is that to lose everything would affect them adversely as new creatures by distracting from spiritual matters. To have to get a new home, a new job, etc., would affect them for years. However, for those who have been a long time in the way, such calamities may be permitted because of the level of character development. At that point, patient endurance may become the trial. “Let patience have her perfect[ing] work” (James 1:4). From a certain perspective, patient endurance is even more important than love because patience crystallizes and solidifies character *if* the trial is properly received.

Amos 4:11 I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

The word “some,” although supplied, is proper, for it shows selectivity, with some survivors being plucked from the fire. In other words, the people were on the brink of total destruction, and the Lord delivered some—like Lot. Amos was speaking for God and then inserted the parenthetical clause “as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.”

The Gilead portion of the ten tribes received considerable damage before the visitation of judgment came on the rest of the ten-tribe kingdom. Amos served before the Assyrian captivity. He was giving lessons of the past and particularly of the present. Instead of learning the lessons, the ten tribes were getting worse and worse, so it was now necessary for God to pluck some of them out of the land and take them as captives to Assyria.

Amos 4:12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

“Prepare to meet thy God” is a reminder of the Israelites’ experiences at Mount Sinai. When Israel was taken out of Egypt, the people murmured. At Mount Sinai, God awesomely spoke to them with fire, earthquake, thunderings, etc., and Moses’ face shone.

The ten tribes would prepare to meet their God when they went into captivity, which was a severe experience away from their homeland with new gods and not knowing how many family members had perished. At that time, the people would want to return to the old paths. If they were penitent, God would forgive them and bring them back to their homeland. “Prepare to meet thy God” was the final experience to bring them to their senses—God had had enough!

In spite of all these sins and the strong language, God forgave the people as a *nation*. This will happen with the world of mankind too. In spite of all their evils and blasphemies, God will call them forth from the grave and give them the opportunity to walk up the highway of holiness to life and complete salvation and happiness. God could have forgotten the mass of people and just favored the few (Abraham, Isaac, etc.), but that is not His plan.

Amos 4:13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high

places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.

What a majestic verse! The God of Israel was the *Creator of earth*. How could the people pursue their sinful ways? It is remarkable that the God of the Bible did not just give them up. All will have the opportunity to get life in the Kingdom, even though a number will end up in Second Death.

God's great and miraculous power in nature, displayed day after day (such as the rising and setting of the sun), becomes commonplace and is rarely considered. But, as the first chapter of Romans shows, ignoring the light of nature brings responsibility and is one reason God can bring judgment on all. Nature condemns man if man does not reverence God.

The "high places" refer primarily to the heights of nature, to God's largeness compared with the smallness of earth. Isaiah said the earth is literally like dust in the balances, like a tiny speck that can be blown away with a puff of wind. God walks leisurely and serenely on the wings of the wind, which to us is a *powerful* force. To Him, the clouds are like pavement. As Jesus walked on the water, so God walks on the wind as if it were solid. And He casually takes steps beyond and ahead of the wind.

The eagle is a very heavy bird. Because of its body weight, one wonders how it can fly. However, the wings are so strong that they can sustain the eagle in flight. Many birds flap their wings at great speed in order to fly, but the eagle—a big, heavy bird—*appears* to fly in a slow, casual manner yet passes the others in its speed. The principle is the same with walking on the wings of the wind.

A secondary thought of the "high places" would be the heathen altars of Gilgal, Bethel, Dan, and so forth.

Amos 5:1 Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.

In one word, chapter 5 concerns a *lamentation*.

Comment: Verses 16 and 17 seem to describe the actual lamentation as it would affect the people. A lamentation is an extreme form of grief—a wailing. "Wailing shall be in all streets.... And in all vineyards shall be wailing." "Wailing" is mentioned three times in these two verses.

Reply: The whole chapter is a lamentation, ending with verse 27. Even though chapter 6 starts with "Woe," it is a proper break, for another situation is discussed.

Amos 5:2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.

In what sense was Israel a "virgin" in this context?

Comment: The fact that God married Israel shows the nation had a desirable quality initially, that is, until whoredoms were committed with other religions.

Reply: Yes. Verse 2 refers to a former estate rather than to the present condition in the prophet's day. How Israel had fallen from her former condition! We are reminded of Jeremiah 51:7, "[Mystic] Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the LORD's hand," but how she has fallen!

"She is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up." The ten tribes would be taken

into Assyrian captivity, and then the land would be forsaken and deserted.

Q: Some would use this verse, especially the clause “she shall no more rise,” to prove that Israel will never again have favor. Would the rising “no more” be just within this context, at this particular time in history?

A: Yes, that is one way to view the matter. The condition of wayward government that existed at the time Amos was speaking will not reoccur in the Kingdom Age. Another way to view verse 2 is to carry the picture to mystic Babylon. That system will never again rise, but the people are not necessarily included.

The implication is that it was just a matter of time before the northern kingdom would go into Assyrian captivity. Then 137 years later Judah would go into Babylonian captivity for 70 years. Adding the two captivities together means that it was more than 200 years before Cyrus issued the decree for the people to return to their homeland. And even then, the returnees were primarily from Judah and the tribe of Levi. Some returned from the ten tribes but relatively few. They never returned as the ten tribes but instead became the “lost tribes of Israel.”

The time was nearing for the end of God’s special dealing with Israel. The crown would be taken off Zedekiah and “be no more, until he come whose right it is” (Ezek. 21:27).

Amos 5:3 For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

Comment: Verse 3 sounds like the end of the age when only one-sixth of the enemy Gog will be left. This is one proof that a spared remnant is a *small* portion or percentage of the whole. The word “remnant” is used in verse 15. In Amos’s day, the remnant would be one-tenth.

From a natural standpoint, the remnant percentage was small. The northern kingdom was noted for its great population: Ephraim for its ten thousands and Manasseh for its thousands. In fact, Ephraim was so numerous that the name was applied to all ten tribes, but only a remnant went into Assyrian captivity.

Amos 5:4 For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:

Comment: The judgment was irrevocable, but those individuals who repented and truly sought the Lord would not die—they would go into captivity and thus live.

A principle is involved here, especially from the spiritual standpoint. The *system* will go down—it has passed the point of no return—but *not as individuals*. Verse 4 shows the Lord’s mercy. And that brings up another point, as follows.

Sadly, some of the consecrated have been derelict and have strayed. The Bible says that the Lord can save unto the uttermost, but that statement applies particularly before consecration. One may have led a very sinful life prior to consecration, but when the individual consecrates, the Lord forgives those sins. Nevertheless, retribution comes upon the individual for the *willful* part of those sins. The Apostle Paul is an example. Because he consented to the stoning of Stephen, he received retribution after consecration. In other words, it was necessary that Paul pay for this sin prior to his own death. But if one goes astray *after* consecration, habit takes over. The tendency is to think, “Oh well, I’ll change my way later.” This thinking is dangerous, however, for death can come at any time, and the person must diligently apply himself to retrace his steps and to change his conduct *before death*. At death comes the judgment. Whether or not one even gets life depends on the whole picture. One who is running the race may be

way ahead of the pack, but he *must finish faithfully* in order to get life. The finish determines the destiny (Ezekiel 18). Bad habits are very difficult to break. The ministry of Amos is an example in history. The Lord continually, by the Prophet Amos, offered Israel a door of opportunity for mercy and forgiveness, but because the people's lifestyle did not change, only one-tenth of them escaped destruction from Assyria.

Q: Is the principle the same in the Second Psalm? Verses 10-12 read, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." On an *individual* basis, if one in a position of power truly sought the Lord in the coming conditions, he might be spared and live on into the Kingdom.

A: Yes, that is exactly the point.

The lesson for the consecrated is that they should not live confidently as regards the future because it is day by day. Each day is a separate experience.

Amos 5:5 But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.

Bethel was noted for its golden calf and for being a center of rival and false worship. Gilgal, too, was a center of false worship. What about Beer-sheba?

Comment: Israel is sometimes described as extending "from Dan even to Beer-sheba," Beer-sheba being the southern extreme on the edge of the desert (Judg. 20:1). If any of the inhabitants of the ten tribes tried to flee by going to Beer-sheba, they would be searched out, and judgment would reach them.

Reply: Yes, those who escaped the immediate attack were ferreted out later.

There is another standpoint with Beer-sheba, which means "well of the oath." The name refers back to Abraham, who was considered the father of all 12 tribes. With regard to being spared in the coming judgment, there could be no deathbed repentance, as it were. When Assyria was actually attacking, some could then see that Amos was a true prophet, whereas earlier they had criticized him as a doomsday prophet. They then recalled what he had predicted and saw it coming to pass. To repent at that time—*after the fact*—did not cause their lives to be spared.

Beer-sheba had a good beginning. If the people figuratively tried to go back to that situation after the fact, or if they literally tried to go down to Beer-sheba—either way their lives were not spared. It was like the one who grabbed the horns of the altar yet was ordered slain by Solomon. The altar was the last hope of forgiveness.

The old man uses very subtle reasoning. Sometimes the distinction between the new mind and the old ways cannot be readily discerned. Some think, "I will change my course down the road," but that day never comes. The change should be made NOW, as soon as possible. Procrastination is the way of the flesh.

Amos 5:6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el.

The "house of Joseph" was another name for the ten tribes. Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph's two sons. Ephraim was on the west side of the Jordan River, and half of Manasseh

was on each side of the river.

The golden calf of Bethel was taken into captivity earlier than the people. This removal symbolized the nearing end of the ten-tribe kingdom. The message was, “Seek the Lord and repent *now*, because repentance at the last minute will be too late.”

Amos 5:7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

Wormwood means “bitterness” and “gall.” When bile from the gall bladder comes up into the mouth, there is a tremendous bitterness. Wormwood does the same thing but is even stronger in the mouth. Jesus was given a very bitter mixture of vinegar and gall to drink.

Comment: The RSV couples verses 6 and 7 together with a comma, setting them off as a separate unit. Thus the instruction to “seek the LORD” was particularly directed to those who were perverting judgment and righteousness.

The name Gilgal (verse 5) was a play on words. Gilgal was a place of judgment, and “gal” can be changed into “gall,” so “turn[ing] judgment into wormwood,” or *gall*, was a play on the name Gilgal. The people went to Bethel for help and justice, but the perversion of justice and callousness resulted in gall. Instead of the judgment being one of mercy, it became one of condemnation and retribution.

Amos 5:8 Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:

Comment: This verse is similar to the last verse of chapter 4. The people were seeking after other gods. God was saying, “I am Jehovah, the God who made the mountains and controls the sea.”

This chapter is one of lamentation and judgment. If the advice to seek the Lord was acted upon, then the judgment could be favorable. When the door of repentance and hope closed, the judgment was unfavorable and retributive.

The “seven stars” are the Pleiades. In Job 38:31, God asked, “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?” Judgment comes from the north, and the north is the Pleiades. Of course science will not agree with this statement. Because man views the heavens from the perspective of the earth, he is very limited in his judgment. Those who accept the Bible as God’s Word have their vision enlarged, even on natural things. For instance, much history in the Bible is not recorded in secular history. We learn a lot about King Nebuchadnezzar, for example.

The Pleiades is the center of all universes and galaxies, but we could never prove that statement from earth because of our limited perspective. Man is high-minded to think he can search out the beginnings of the universe. God is above all—everything is beneath Him. Therefore, the information in the Bible is the true perspective. Even Einstein admitted that the spectrum from which we view science is a very narrow band.

The Pleiades is the seat of both judgment and mercy; it is the throne of the universe. “God is love,” and the “sweet influences” of the Pleiades refer to love as God’s basic character (1 John 4:16). When the permission of evil is no longer tolerated, God’s love will predominate, and His universe will be in harmony with Him. At that time, mercy and pity will no longer have to be extended. (Mercy implies wrongdoing for which one is forgiven. Pity is exercised in conditions

of sickness and suffering.) At present, during the permission of evil, mercy, which is a facet of love, is the only way of hope. Love has many, many facets.

Orion is the constellation of the hunter with a belt and a sword. Orion emphasizes the *power* aspect of God. Job 9:9 states that God “maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.” Orion represents God’s ability to accomplish that which He intends to do. Amos was saying, “A judgment is imminent. The Maker of heaven and earth is talking to you, but you are not heeding His voice. The judgment cannot be stopped. The best thing you can do is to repent NOW.”

Comment: God removed the Amorites when their iniquity came to the full and gave their land to the Israelites. Now Israel was sinning in fullness and would be removed from that same land through a severe judgment.

Comment: According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, Orion means “strong” in the Hebrew. God overruled the very name of the constellation.

Reply: Yes, God has overruled many things—even the flat nose of the Sphinx. Incidentally, Napoleon did not deface the nose in 1799. The nose was marred earlier.

“And turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night.” Both positive and negative aspects are given in verse 8. The Pleiades is the positive aspect, showing God’s mercy and the sweet influence aspect, which are equated with day(light), and the night represents the negative exercise of God’s power in putting down that which is wrong.

“That calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.” Pouring out upon the earth refers to the cycle of rain and also floods, especially Noah’s. Ecclesiastes 1:7 reads, “All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” All the storms (rain, hail, snow, etc.) have their origin in the great body of water, to which they return. God established the sands of the sea to act as a barrier. Jeremiah 5:22 tells that God “placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it.” The sea cannot pass that barrier, even though it dashes against the barrier. God made the tides, which pull the water back, yet the very God who established the barrier can make the seas go over that barrier, as He did in the Flood of Noah’s day. God’s power can be used for good (rain) or for unfavorable judgment (flood). It is sad that the sin-sick world does not give God His due respect. “The LORD is his name.”

Everything in nature is a servant of God. The Bible speaks of the constellations as if they had ears and could sing. Each of the stars has a separate identity, even from appearance’ sake.

Comment: The majestic hymn “This Is My Father’s World” speaks of the “music of the spheres.” The last verse of chapter 4, the parallel Scripture for verse 8, uses the phrase “God of hosts.” In chapter 5, verses 14-16 and 27 all use that same term.

Reply: “Lord of Sabaoth” means “Lord of hosts” (Rom. 9:29). Earth’s armies are *nothing* in comparison. All the stars, planets, and suns—too numerous for man to number—are in God’s plan and have names. These inanimate things are God’s army, and they obey Him. God’s plan embraces eternity.

Amos 5:9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come

against the fortress.

Q: Is verse 9, which is connected to verse 8, still talking about God’s power—the things He has done and can do?

A: Verse 8 tells of God’s inherent power and capability to handle any situation where judgment is to be given. The word “flash” in the RSV suggests the judgment was imminent. “Who makes destruction *flash* forth against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.”

Q: Does verse 9 mean that God has the power, if He chooses to use it, to bring to naught anything fortified—in short, that He is over all?

A: Yes. How pathetic it is that Jehovah has to reason this way with fallen humanity, coming down to their level and pleading for them to reason on His behalf! He could inflict judgments continually, but the beauty of the truth is the explanation of the permission of evil. This doctrine explains what would otherwise be innumerable problems (the Holocaust and world wars, for example). It gives humanity a lesson in how depraved they can be if they do not listen to His counsel. By withholding continual judgments, God gives the consecrated an opportunity to walk by faith. Faith is the calling of this age. When we hear of atrocious deeds, our humanity would like to see judgments inflicted against the perpetrators, but *at present*, God does not operate that way. In the next age, all the injustices and sins of this age will be repaid—even in minutiae. In His Word, God reasons with us, as well as with Israel. If we have faith in His Word and promises, we can wait patiently for the Kingdom.

Comment: We are being prepared to be good judges, to judge righteous judgment even in the smallest matters.

Amos 5:10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

Comment: Judges sat in the gate. The bulk of the ten tribes had no respect for those who spoke out for principle and truth.

Reply: And no doubt Amos himself gave sermons near the gate—just as Jesus and Paul went to the synagogue and, taking advantage of the liberty, expressed their views. Everyone had to go past the gate to enter the city, so the gate was a convenient forum for a message to be heard. Lot sat in the gate as a judge, and Boaz went there (Gen. 19:1; Ruth 4:1).

Not only did all the prophets speak of restitution, but also they *rebuked*. Those who rebuke today from the platform are generally not invited to speak again. If Paul were here today, what would he say to the Church of Laodicea—STRONG THINGS!!!

Comment: All of the New Testament books, including the epistles, contain rebukes.

Reply: All who “live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Conversely, those who do not suffer persecution are not living godly.

Amos 5:11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

“Burdens of wheat” meant oppressive taxation. Taxes were often paid in goods. “Houses of hewn stone” were the houses of the rich. Through trampling on the poor and burdensome

taxation, the wealthy got nice homes and pleasant vineyards. Also, long-range planning was implied. One who builds a mansion plans to live in it for a long life. Some of the ruins at Samaria indicate fabulous mansions of the wealthy designed to last not only for their lifetime but also for the lifetime of their progeny. Amos was saying their efforts were wasted. The “pleasant vineyards” were planted in an artistic way with trellises and shade arbors. In other words, the wealthy were living indolently and were expending huge sums on themselves rather than being satisfied with a modest income and home.

Amos 5:12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

The judgment was primarily directed to the ten-tribe kingdom.

Amos 5:13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

The “prudent” common people were not reproved under the corrupt circumstances. A prophet and/or one consecrated to the Lord was responsible for speaking out, but not the average person. The poor saw the injustice and realized that if they spoke out, they and their families would be penalized. The advice to them is given in verses 14 and 15; that is, “Wait on the Lord and be patient. God will take care of the situation; suffer it to be so for the present.”

Comment: The common people saw the futility of taking their cases to the corrupt judges, so they suffered the wrong instead.

Amos 5:14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

Comment: Verse 14 is like Zephaniah 2:3, “Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger.” Zephaniah 2:3 and verses 14 and 15 use the word “may.”

Reply: The poor were not all godly people. To oppress or unjustly treat any person is wrong whether done by rich or poor. Therefore, the advice to the unconsecrated was to be patient, for in time God would redress the situation. The great bulk of the people are not vicious and mean-minded, for a minority controls society. There is meaning to the phrase “the silent majority.” Today many churches mistakenly think it is the Christian’s duty to enter politics and try to legislate righteous laws, to be a voice in the government, and thus to correct the evils. However, we see the futility of man’s efforts to straighten out matters and the necessity of making our calling and election sure along character lines. Then in the future, if we are faithful, we will be able to rectify and redress the evils. The thoroughly consecrated—back there and now—have to rely on God’s providences. The Morning Resolve says, “I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord’s providence may permit because faith can firmly trust Him, come what may.” That is the proper attitude for the consecrated. But for the worldly ones who just want to do what is right, the advice of verse 14 is applicable—it may be that the Lord in His providence will favor such individuals.

Amos 5:15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Q: How do we harmonize verse 10 (the judges rebuke in the gate and speak uprightly) with verse 15 (God asks the people to “establish judgment in the gate”)?

A: Corrupt judges (the majority) took bribes; only a *small* minority spoke uprightly. Amos took

the opportunity to reprove the nobility and the princes, as well as the corrupt judges in the gate. The common practice was for the judges to take bribes and unjustly judge the poor and not give them their due.

Comment: As stated elsewhere, the instruction is to “*hate the evil, and love the good.*”

Amos 5:16 Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to Wailing.

Amos 5:17 And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.

The lamentation was “Alas! alas!” A “husbandman” was a farmer. Back there almost everyone had grapes and a garden, even though small. “Wailing” would start privately in the home and then become public and demonstrative in the streets and public square. The hope was that those in authority would redress the situation, but the situation was hopeless.

Amos 5:18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

Some were wishing for “the day of the LORD.” This desire would be like praying for the Kingdom to come but not realizing that hard judgments must first take place. In the prophet’s day, there had to be a form of retribution on the nation.

Amos 1:1 mentions Uzziah, and Amos 7:10 speaks of Amaziah, the priest of Bethel who sent a message to Jeroboam II about Amos. These personalities establish the time of Amos’s ministry. Thus we know the Assyrian captivity would occur shortly.

The day of the LORD would be “darkness, and not light.” Some Christians and brethren feel that we will just glide into the Kingdom, that the Kingdom will be established gradually. They generalize Jacob’s Trouble as either having taken place or taking place. Such will be very surprised when some prophecies are fulfilled. It was the same situation in the prophet’s day, when some looked forward to the judgment day as a liberation to better conditions. But on whom was the judgment to fall primarily? The *wicked*: the rich, the wealthy, the proud. And in Amos’s day, as well as today, the *false* prophets prophesied good things all the time and contradicted the true prophets, who prophesied hard things. We must be careful we do not make restitution the gospel. The gospel is making our calling and election sure. As a general message, the gospel is a *mixture* of bitter and sweet.

Comment: Revelation 10:10 gives the principle; namely, the message is sweet in the mouth like honey and bitter in the belly.

What is spoken out of the mouth can be detrimental to the speaker. Of course none of us can speak perfectly, but we are responsible, nevertheless. All of us must give an accounting for our stewardship, but especially teachers, who have the greater responsibility.

Comment: Amos 8:11 indicates that part of the problem was a famine “of hearing the words of the LORD,” of hearing the truth.

Reply: There was no scarcity of prophets (perhaps hundreds) but a paucity of *true* prophets, of whom there were about three: Amos, Isaiah, and Hosea.

Amos 5:19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

Amos 5:20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

And so it would be when the ten tribes received judgment. They would go from one dilemma to another.

Comment: The people would find no protection either inside their houses or outside. There would be no escape.

Reply: Yes. The advice was to seek goodness, meekness, and righteousness—and not evil—and maybe one would be hidden from the trouble.

Verse 19 shows the hopelessness of trying to extricate oneself from the trouble. The judgment would reach down to the individual—back there and in the future.

Amos 5:21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Comment: Because of the people's wrong heart condition and the perfunctory nature of their sacrifices, the sacrifices were displeasing to the Lord.

Comment: Of three translations (RSV, NIV, and KJV), only the King James uses the word "smell," but that is a good rendering because if the offering is pleasing to the Lord, it is a sweet savor in His nostrils.

Reply: Yes, the Lord characteristically speaks this way. The language of this verse is *strong*.

Amos 5:22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

It cost the individual something to offer a bullock, lamb, etc., but if the offering lacked proper reverence and esteem for God, it was not acceptable.

"Though ye offer *me*." While adherents of the heathen religions offered to various gods with different names, yet many were trying to appeal to the one God of nature, the God of the earth. For example, the Arabs worship Allah, the one God, but what is associated with the religious services makes the worship and offerings unacceptable. Israel's offerings were ostensibly to the One supreme God, but because the worship was tainted by innovations, additions, and substitutions, it was obnoxious in Jehovah's sight. The people preferred the ceremonies associated with alien religions. For one thing, under *their* rules, those of the ten tribes did not have to go to Jerusalem, whereas to be acceptable, the offering had to be done in that city. This is also true with Catholicism. Its adherents are trying to worship God and Jesus, but associated with the service are Mariolatry, statues, etc., which are not acceptable *no matter how good the motive is*. However, those in the system who mentally reject all of this paraphernalia and approach God in a broken spirit and with a contrite heart, pleading for mercy, can be heard on rare occasions. Sermons have been given that God hears only the prayers of the consecrated. Generally, that is the rule, but there are exceptions.

"Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your *fat* beasts." The people offered good, fat, rich sacrifices, but they were not acceptable because of a wrong spirit and a lack of reverence—even though the prayer was ostensibly offered to God.

Q: What did Gilgal and Bethel represent?

A: Catholicism and Protestantism.

The widow cast two mites into the treasury out of her living, her *necessities*, whereas rich individuals, who cast in much more, not only wanted to be seen of men but also gave of their *surplus*. At the other extreme were radical cases where people cast in *all* their living, which was like jumping off a pinnacle and expecting the Lord to catch them before they hit the ground. As Christians, we must be careful of extremes.

Amos 5:23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

Comment: In their music, the people were more interested in noise and rhythm than in a message or reverence. The music was empty and shallow.

Reply: Amos 6:5 says they chanted to the sound of the viol and invented instruments like David. But there was *reverence* attached to David's music and dancing. If one sings off-key but with sincerity and truly to the Lord, the song is pleasing to Him, and those of skilled voice should not look down on the individual. On the other hand, the most skilled voice can be displeasing to the Lord if used with the wrong spirit.

Comment: One antitype would be the Gregorian chants of the Catholic Church.

Reply: Mass is sometimes sung in Latin. Arabs and Jews chant too. And Protestants have musical programs, theatrics, and featured singers. There is nothing wrong in having someone sing a solo, but singing should not be used to please the public rather than to please and worship God. When George Beverly Shea sings, every word is understood. Others sing beautifully, but only fragments are understood. The Apostle Paul said it is better to speak a few words with meaning than 10,000 words without understanding (1 Cor. 14:19).

Comment: The contrast in this verse is the difference between singing praise to the Lord and singing as entertainment. The singing here seems to be repetitive and for Israel's own aggrandizement and pleasure rather than to praise the Lord.

Reply: God knows if the singing is done from the heart and for the right motive. The principle will be the same with the Holy Remnant. After being saved out of Jacob's Trouble, they will mourn as for an only son because of what was done to Jesus. The contrition will be so sincere that even the world will recognize it is truly from the heart. This contrition will go a long way to erase any stigma among the Gentiles, who will say, "Who are we not to regard that which God has accepted?"

One of the most beautiful hymns for its music is "Ave Maria," but new words are needed. The principle in verse 23 is similar—what sounds good to the ear can be offensive to God.

Amos 5:24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Comment: Failing to do justice and righteousness is one reason the people's sacrifices were not accepted.

The words "judgment," "run," and "righteousness" are significant; that is, let judgment be a *continuing* matter. Torrential water rushes through wadis after a flash flood, and then the

wadis are dry for long periods of time. A river, however, is a continuously flowing stream. God was appealing to the people to exercise judgment and righteousness.

Amos 5:25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

Amos 5:26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

Comment: Many sacrifices were offered during the 40 years in the wilderness. However, the people were a mixed multitude, and many still harbored thoughts of and desires for the heathen gods of Egypt. These individuals did not make a full, whole-hearted offering unto Jehovah. Incidentally, there was a previous tabernacle and a previous type of religion before the Israelites arrived in Sinai—but not with all the detailed instruction and measurements.

Q: Was the “star” of their god the “symbol” of their god?

A: Yes. For example, the Muslims today have a symbol to represent their faith.

Comment: Acts 7:39-43 reads, “Our fathers would not obey [Moses], but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.” In the context of Amos, the ten tribes were carried away to Assyria, which was beyond Babylon.

The answer to the rhetorical question of verse 25 was negative. Even in the Wilderness of Sinai, when the Israelites were ostensibly obeying the Lord and offering sacrifices for 40 years, they were, at the same time, carrying a “tabernacle” of Molech, the heathen fire god. In leaving Egypt, the Israelites did not discard all the false religious practices they had been exposed to. Also, a mixed multitude accompanied them—the people who left Egypt were not all Israelites. The mixed multitude brought idols and false practices with them.

Of course there was not a literal tabernacle of Molech in the wilderness, for Moses would not have permitted such a thing. Amos was deliberately exaggerating. The thought is that at the *same time* the Israelites bore the Ark of the Covenant in the desert for 40 years and went through all the sacrifices and burnt offerings, they were carrying along the tabernacle of Molech in their *hearts*. Thus there is a little sarcasm here.

God was asking, through Amos, “Did you offer sacrifices and offerings unto ME for 40 years in the wilderness?” Ostensibly they did, but underneath were desires for heathen practices.

Comment: The roots of this lack of whole-hearted devotedness to the Lord in Amos’s day went way back to the Sinai wilderness period. The effects were cumulative, and now it was time for the Assyrian captivity, as stated in verse 27.

Amos 5:27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.

In Assyria, the ten tribes were widely dispersed. Later the two tribes were taken to Babylon.

Amos 6:1 **Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!**

“Woe to them [the wealthy class of the ten tribes] that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria [the capital of the ten tribes], which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel [the common people] came!” Those who were “named chief of the nations” are called “the notable men of the foremost nation” in the NIV.

Amos was a prophet chiefly to the ten tribes. He was contemporaneous with Hosea and Isaiah and prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel (Amos 1:1).

Those of the ten-tribe kingdom felt that they were God’s elect and that Samaria was the true capital of the nation of Israel—like the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:7-26). She implied to Jesus that the promises were to the ten tribes. Jesus replied, “Salvation is of the Jews” and “We know what we worship,” meaning that Jerusalem was the proper capital of Israel. The ten tribes, because of their wealth, large numbers, influence, and intercourse with other nations, felt they were more properly representative of the promises to the nation than the two-tribe kingdom. And Catholicism, because of its antiquity, large numbers, etc., feels it has a higher prestige than Protestantism. The ten-tribe kingdom pictures Catholicism, and the two-tribe kingdom portrays Protestantism. Amos was particularly addressing both the natural (or literal) and the nominal spiritual “ten-tribe kingdom.”

Comment: Isaiah 28:1 is similar: “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!”

Reply: Yes, and “wine” is mentioned in Amos 6:6. Spiritually and literally, the ten-tribe kingdom felt a superiority and pride over Judah.

Amos 6:2 **Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?**

Calneh, established by Nimrod, and Hamath, north of Israel, were heathen cities outside of Israel (Gen. 10:9,10). Both are mentioned in Isaiah 10:9. Hamath is referred to in 2 Kings 18:33,34 in connection with Rab-shakeh and Sennacherib in the days of Isaiah. Sennacherib’s army was threatening Jerusalem, the two-tribe kingdom, but God miraculously delivered the city from destruction.

The implication was that these great cities (Calneh, Hamath, and Gath) had already received judgment—a past event. Earlier Amos prophesied of another judgment to come on Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, and Ashkelon—a judgment that would be more devastating (Amos 1:6-8).

“Be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your [Israel’s] border?” Since a past judgment had been inflicted on these three cities, God was asking Israel, “Are you any better than these three?” Notice that “be they,” in italics, is supplied in the King James. The pronoun should be “you.” A judgment was coming on the ten-tribe kingdom, and Amos was saying, “Who do you think you are, Israel? Do you think you are greater than the others who experienced calamities? Their deities were of no avail.”

Amos 6:3 **Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;**

Comment: In other words, “You who live for the present and do not believe the judgment is near are causing the injustice and violence to increase.” Many have this same attitude today.

Reply: Israel was dealing with the short term and not the ominous future. The people were living for today. The same is true of evildoers at the present time. They put far away from their minds the thought of coming judgment, for they do not want to think about it. Noah was ridiculed and treated sarcastically before the Flood, but the Flood did come. The violence in Amos’s day was entrenched, deep-seated, and an everyday occurrence.

Amos 6:4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

Verse 4 is a picture of luxury, ease, and indolence—the Laodicean spirit! With the wealth came sensuality and moral degeneration.

Comment: The fact that the animals were *young* (lambs and calves instead of sheep and bullocks) indicates luxury. The wealthy ate the choice, tender, young animals.

Amos 6:5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David;

Comment: Verse 5 could be misunderstood. David was approved for his music because it was reverent.

Reply: David’s songs were from the heart. His repentance, joy, and worship were acceptable to the Lord. In the Gospel Age, the services, praise, and singing of God’s elect are most acceptable.

Amos 6:6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

“That drink wine in bowls.” Wine should be drunk from *small* glasses, not *large* bowls. Drinking from bowls not only led to drunkenness but also indicated luxury and excess.

“And anoint themselves with the chief ointments.” Anciently, ointments were expensive and precious. Verse 6 is describing a display of waste and luxury on the part of the wealthy. The spiritual lesson is of the danger to the new creature as one’s income rises. As Jesus said in Mark 10:23, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” The thought is not that the wealthy cannot make their calling and election sure, but that since the road is narrow, having much of this world’s goods makes it more difficult. Conversely, if a wealthy person is faithful unto death, his reward is correspondingly higher because of overcoming more.

The “affliction of Joseph” refers to his unjust treatment from his brothers who sold him into slavery. In other words, the wealthy were ignoring the plight of the common people; they were insensitive and hardened. The ten brothers were jealous of Joseph because he received more favor from Jacob and because of his dream with regard to (1) the sun, moon, and 11 stars bowing down to him and (2) his brothers’ sheaves of wheat bowing down to his sheaf (Gen. 37:1-11). The brothers were guilty not only of putting Joseph in a pit but also of selling him into slavery, thinking they would never hear from him again. It is interesting that the ten tribes were of Joseph. Ephraim and Manasseh were a large portion of the ten tribes. In fact, Ephraim was so numerous that all ten tribes were sometimes referred to as “Ephraim.”

Amos 6:7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

The wealthy, nobles, princes, etc., of the ten tribes would go into captivity first. “The banquet of them that stretched themselves” refers to those who lived luxuriously, wantonly, and indolently—a lifestyle that was comparable to lying upon “beds of ivory” (verse 4).

Amos 6:8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

“The excellency of Jacob” was the pride of Jacob. The people were extremely proud because of (1) their temporal prosperity, (2) the multiplicity of their gods and places of worship, and (3) their military conquests. They credited their material wealth and military triumphs to themselves, and not to God. Why was Jacob’s name used? Since Jacob died and was buried in Hebron (in Machpelah’s cave) in *Judah*, what really was meant is “the pride of Jacob’s offspring, Ephraim and Manasseh” (Gen. 49:29,30; 50:13). Ephraim was the most numerous tribe, and Manasseh had a large population too. The antitype is the Roman Catholic Church, which claims to be (1) older, (2) blessed because of numbers, and (3) superior because of elaborate cathedrals, art, statuary, etc.

“I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city [Samaria, the capital of the ten tribes] with all that is therein.” Amos issued a threat; namely, the destiny of the ten tribes would be destruction and captivity. As a prophet, he empathized with the message and was disgusted with the behavior of the people in the ten tribes.

Comment: Amos frequently used the term “God of *hosts*,” and so did Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The Israelites should have been in awe of this term.

Reply: That was especially true of Isaiah, who was a contemporary of part of Amos’s ministry.

NOTE: When Amos was called to be a prophet (Amos 1:1), he was a shepherd in Tekoa during the reigns of King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam II of Israel. But Tekoa was in *Judah*. Amos was called from *Judah* to be a prophet to the *ten tribes*. The implication is that conditions were so bad in the ten tribes that no one from there was fit to be a prophet. Therefore, Amos was called out of his own domain.

Amos 6:9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

Amos 6:10 And a man’s uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.

The “uncle” who would do the burying was a relative, but not one of the “ten men” of verse 9. “Bones” indicate a decomposed body, so there would be a stink. Since burning the corpse was contrary to the normal procedure, the suggestion was that the “ten men in one house” might die from a pestilence.

An uncle would come to dispose of the remains in the house. As he entered the door and called out, “Is anyone here?” a person hiding in a remote part of the house would reply, “No.” The uncle would then say, “Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the

Lord.” Why not? The coming judgment would be so severe that the people, who now commonly approached the Lord, would then be fearful they were not in the right condition to be acceptable. They were very far from the Lord in their conduct. The severity of the judgment would make them think, “If we mention the Lord’s name, there may be further vengeance.” The survivors would reverence the God of Israel and realize the reason for the judgment.

Comment: There is a comparison with the end of the present age. If, back there, the people who were not really trying to serve God reacted with fear and reverence, how much greater will be the reaction with the Holy Remnant, a right-hearted element, when they are delivered out of Jacob’s Trouble!

Reply: Yes, we can see the instructional value of judgment when people realize it is tied in with calamity.

Amos 6:11 For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.

All would be affected by the coming judgment: the houses of both the wealthy and the common people.

Amos 6:12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

“No” is the answer to both questions, for to do so would be foolish. The KJV is correct with regard to the word “oxen.” Why were these illustrations brought in? Amos was saying, “Doesn’t common sense teach you that if you are immersed in evil practices, a judgment will be enacted against you? One does not run horses upon rock lest he injure them. Do you think you can continue in evil and be immune to judgment?”

“Gall” is bitter. When associated with hemlock, it would be like drinking poison. The ten tribes had turned judgment into bitterness and death, which would be the result of drinking hemlock. However, drinking gall has a numbing effect almost like novocaine; it stupefies or deadens the system—and also the subject if continued. To fulfill Scripture, Jesus merely tasted the vinegar and gall and then declined to drink further. He did not want to deaden the pain or dull his senses but to drink the cup to the full.

Amos 6:13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

In other words, “You rejoice in that which is not a reality. It is a figment of your imagination and lacks substance.” Israel’s confidence regarding the present and the future was not substantiated by the Lord of hosts.

“Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?” The people attributed everything (temporal prosperity, military conquests, etc.) to their own strength. They prided themselves that with their own strength, power, and ingenuity, they had prospered and should not worry about the future.

Amos 6:14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness.

“But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation [Assyria], O house of Israel, saith the LORD

the God of hosts.” The ten-tribe kingdom would be subjugated from Hamath to the Arabah, “the river of the wilderness,” which is quite far south on the Jordan River—that is, the entire ten tribes would be subjugated from north to south. If the whole nation of Israel were being described, including the two tribes, the term would have been “from Dan to Beer-sheba.”

Amos 7:1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shown unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king’s mowings.

Chapter 7 begins a new setting. Amos had a series of five visions, of which this vision was the first.

God showed Amos, in vision, a plague of grasshoppers in the “latter growth after the king’s mowings.” The “king’s mowings” happened in the spring. As soon as the crop came forth, the king got the first mowing as a form of taxation. The tithe was supposed to be for the Lord, but the king took the “cream of the crop,” the firstfruits, as it were. After this mowing, the crop continued to grow, and the people could harvest this latter growth for themselves. But in the vision, when the latter growth was ready to be harvested for the sustenance of the common people and their families, there occurred a locust plague, which affected their very survival.

Amos 7:2 And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

Amos was so affected by what he saw in the vision that he cried out, “O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!” (See the RSV.) These words were repeated after the second vision (Amos 7:5).

Comment: The phraseology is touching: Jacob “is *so small*.” Amos knew that without God’s help, the nation would be nothing.

Reply: Amos knew that the boasting of the people was just hot air—all words, no substance.

Amos 7:3 The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.

God heard and relented because of His feelings for Amos. God’s personal address to the prophet was unusual and would have been very comforting because Amos was having a lonely experience. He had come from Judah and was told to speak hard things to the ten tribes.

Amos was telling the people about his dream. “In the vision, locusts ate up the crop after the king’s mowings. I prayed to God that this would not happen, for it would threaten your very survival. God heard me.” Amos remonstrated like Abraham, who had tried to reason with God: “If there be in Sodom forty-five righteous, ... thirty, ... twenty,” etc. (Gen. 18:27-32).

Amos 7:4 Thus hath the Lord GOD shown unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.

Amos 7:5 Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

Amos 7:6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

“This also shall not be” implied that God had previously called off a judgment at the request of

Amos, that is, the plague of locusts, or grasshoppers, shown in the first vision (verse 3). Here, too, in the second vision, Amos intervened and asked God to be merciful to “small” Jacob (yet the ten tribes had bragged repeatedly about their numbers, wealth, and power). God exercised forgiveness twice.

“The great deep” is the ocean. In the second vision, the fireball catastrophe “devoured” the ocean and “part” of the land, that is, the ten-tribe part of the nation of Israel.

Amos 7:7 Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

This third vision was of a plumb line, which is God’s righteous standard. The following Scriptures are pertinent.

“Judgment also will I lay to the *line*, and righteousness to the *plummet*: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place” (Isa. 28:17). A plumb line hangs straight down, being always perpendicular to the ground.

“But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the *line* of confusion, and the stones of emptiness” (Isa. 34:11). If the plumb line represents righteousness, uprightness, etc., the “line of confusion” refers to the lawlessness and confusion of the people, who did not follow the righteous standard. In other words, the righteous standard exposed the failures and sins of the people. Stated another way, their lack of living up to the righteous standard was exposed, and the effect was confusion.

“The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a *line*, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together” (Lam. 2:8). The plumb line hung straight down, exposing the crooked wall of Jerusalem, and thus it showed that the city was not living up to God’s standard. Jerusalem was supposed to be a place of information and guidance in civil and religious (or moral) matters, for the Temple was there.

“Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a *line* shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem” (Zech. 1:16). In the future, Jerusalem will meet divine standards in both civil (government) and religious (Temple) matters. All will be done according to God’s will.

“The Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.” Whether the Lord stood on top of the wall or beside it, the plumb line now showed that the wall was crooked. Originally the wall was straight, having been built with a plumb line, but it had deteriorated and was no longer upright, no longer in harmony with God’s will. When Joshua entered the Promised Land, the nation was set up according to divine standards. The Law was read every seven years. But as time went on, the wall began to lean and then got more and more crooked.

“I will stretch over Jerusalem the *line* of Samaria, and the *plummet* of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down” (2 Kings 21:13). This Scripture will be discussed under verse 9.

Amos 7:8 And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:

This is the first time God called Amos by name. Here was an intimate reassurance that the prophet was doing his job. When Aaron and Miriam felt that Moses should share some of the responsibility of government with them, they spoke unkindly, implying that Moses was power hungry and taking too much upon himself. God angrily asked them, “Where do you get the nerve to criticize *my* servant Moses, with whom I speak face to face?” Since God had put the power into Moses’ hands, the criticism was a criticism of God Himself.

Q: In the first and second chapters of Amos, God said over and over again, “For three transgressions and for four, I will do such and such.” God was referring to the heathen nations surrounding Israel. They had three opportunities, and on the fourth, their judgment came. Here with Israel (Christendom in the antitype), there were only *two* opportunities and then the judgment. Was this because Israel had more light and more advantages (the Law and the prophets)—and hence more responsibility? And in the antitype, Christendom has more responsibility.

A: Yes. It would be “four times and you are out” with regard to the heathen nations, and “three times and you are out” for Israel and Christendom.

God would “not again pass by them any more” in the sense of repenting of judgment. He would no longer spare the ten tribes from judgment.

Amos 7:9 **And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.**

Why were the ten tribes called “Isaac”? This title can be tied in with the antitype. Just as Papacy claims the antiquity of going back to the Apostle Peter and thus that Catholicism is the true religion, so the ten tribes felt they had a higher form of religion with their multiplicity of altars and innovations than what the Lord had authorized in Jerusalem. The ten tribes claimed to go back to Isaac to show their antiquity and the authenticity of their roots.

Isaac had such respect for Abraham and God that he obeyed, even knowing he would be sacrificed. The disobedience of the ten tribes was in direct contrast to Isaac’s obedience, yet they claimed him. The northern kingdom identified themselves with Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, yet all three were buried in Judah.

Q: Ezekiel 21:14 comes to mind about the sword being doubled thrice. Again the thought is of final judgment coming the third time. Would that text relate, at least in principle, to the three visions here in Amos, and perhaps also in antitype?

A: Yes. In both cases, the judgment was irrevocable. Twice God gave Christendom space to repent, but the opportunities were ignored. The third time, yet future, the judgment will come.

Comment: With *both* the ten tribes and the two tribes, there was the principle of judgment coming the third time.

Now we can consider 2 Kings 21:13 with regard to the “line of Samaria” being stretched over Jerusalem, or Judah. The plumb line showed how far the conduct of the northern kingdom had deviated from God’s upright standard and thus that judgment was necessary and irrevocable. Samaria did receive judgment, and more than 100 years later, the same plumb line showed that Judah was wanting and that a necessary and irrevocable judgment was coming.

“I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.” Jeroboam II was the *current* king, so this prophecy touched a sore spot. To speak out so courageously, Amos needed the further

encouragement of being called by name and thus being assured of God's friendship (verse 8).

Amos 7:10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

Amos 7:11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

First, Amaziah sent a message to the king to report what Amos had supposedly said. Then he spoke to Amos (verse 12), saying in effect, "I have reported your words to the king. For your own safety, you had better return to Judah."

If we analyze what Amaziah told King Jeroboam II, we realize that he said Amos was involved in a *conspiracy* (a plot of a *group* of people). According to Amaziah, Amos had said, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword," but that is not what Amos had prophesied. The words of Amos were, "The *house* of Jeroboam will be slain with the sword." The government fell during the reign of the next king—King Hoshea. "The house of Jeroboam" started with Jeroboam I, who had separated from Judah, started the ten-tribe kingdom, and set up golden calves in Dan and Bethel to rival Jerusalem as a place of worship. In other words, the *dynasty* of Jeroboam would collapse—Amos had not prophesied personally against Jeroboam II. Amaziah was a false witness because he wanted Amos to be punished.

Q: Would the principle be like the difference with us when we predict the fall of *Papacy* but do not personally single out the pope?

A: Yes. The *institution* of the Papacy as a false religion is what we are against, and not Pope Leo XIII, Pope Gregory, etc.

Comment: Like Amos, the feet members will be accused of treason and conspiracy.

"Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land." These words of Amaziah were true. Amos had uttered this prophecy.

Amos 7:12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

Amos 7:13 But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

"O thou seer" was sarcasm. "Seer" can be used in Scripture in a favorable sense, but when Amaziah used the term sarcastically, he meant that Amos was a false prophet, or a visionary (predicting something that would not happen). Thus Amaziah downgraded Amos. He was saying, "For your own good, flee back to Judah." Amos had strongly prophesied at Bethel, the heart of the false religion with the golden calf.

"Flee ... into ... Judah, and there eat bread." Amaziah implied that Amos, as part of a conspiracy, was being *paid* to prophesy and that he used his prophecies to earn a livelihood. Understanding Amaziah's intent explains why Amos replied as he did in verses 14 and 15.

"Beth-el ... is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." In some respects, Bethel was not only the center of religion but also the center of government. Samaria was the technical capital, but Bethel was associated with civil government because the "king's court" was there.

Amos 7:14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:

Amos 7:15 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

The nature of Amos's reply was that he was not part of a conspiracy but that God had selected him. He was not a prophet in the customary sense—not by heredity or of the school of the prophets. He was not an “ordained minister,” but he was a true prophet because God had told him personally, as an individual, what and how to prophesy. Amos was saying, “I was pleased and satisfied with my former peaceful occupation, but God told me to leave that comfortable life and go to the northern kingdom. There I was to speak words as He would direct.” Amos was rebutting Amaziah's accusation that he was prophesying for monetary reward or as part of a conspiracy.

Comment: This again sounds like the feet members, who are satisfied to be humble and quiet on the sidelines, but when the time comes, they have to speak out.

Amos 7:16 Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.

Amos 7:17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

Because Amaziah *personally* slandered Amos, God said he would receive a *personal* judgment in two ways: (1) he would lose his wife, for she would become a harlot, and (2) his sons and daughters would die in warfare. Amaziah's property would be confiscated and divided by the conqueror, Assyria, and he would ultimately be a captive and die in that foreign land. Amos courageously prophesied the fate of Amaziah and of the ten-tribe kingdom, which would “surely go into captivity.”

Amos 8:1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shown unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

The fourth vision was of a basket of summer fruit. “*Summer fruit*” is mature and ripe, so spiritually speaking, the nation was ripe for judgment. Hence the maturity and ripeness were unfavorable.

Amos 8:2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

“I will not again pass by them any more”; that is, “I will spare them no longer.” For the second time, God addressed Amos by name.

Amos 8:3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

“The songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day.” Amos was talking to the ten tribes, so the reference was not to the Temple at Jerusalem but to Israel's *false* temple, or place of religious worship. With regard to the *true* Temple at Jerusalem, the singers were men, and no doubt the Psalms were sung. The songs in the false temple were probably sung by women.

Comment: The singing of women has a parallel today with women cantors in the more liberal synagogues.

“There shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.” No wonder the singing would be that of howling and mourning, of groanings and wailings.

Comment: The NIV says, “Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!”

Reply: The “silence” is related to Amos 6:10, where an uncle came back to a house in which ten men had died and no one was there to take care of the bodies. He called, “Is anyone here?” One person was hiding in the house.

Q: In chapter 6, the silence was attributed to the survivors’ fearing they were not in the right heart condition—the troubles were so disastrous that they were in awe. Would the thought also be that the dead bodies were so numerous that the survivors became numb to the situation?

A: Yes, the wailing became silence because of the many dead bodies.

Amos 8:4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

This unpopular proclamation by Amos was addressed to the leaders.

Comment: Based on the context, verses 4-6 applied to Amos’s day, but these verses also apply to the incorrigible in the Kingdom, the clue being “*new moon*,” that is, the New Covenant.

Reply: Yes, there is a double application: historical and future.

Amos 8:5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

“When will the new moon [the New Covenant] be gone”?

Comment: In the *natural* application in Amos’s day, the merchants were impatient for the sabbath to be over so that they could continue their deceitful practices for gaining wealth. In the *spiritual* application, verses 5 and 6 express the heart sentiment of the incorrigible who survive by hypocritically and prudently obeying in the Kingdom. Their true characters will be manifested in the Little Season (Rev. 20:3).

Reply: Yes, Amos addressed his generation, saying they were impatient for the religious observance to end so that they could return to sowing the seeds of commercial greed. The future spiritual application is powerful and sobering. It shows that the perversity of fallen human nature can cling to a person. One who associates with and practices evil in the present life will have less hope of recovery in the next age. The present life influences character development.

“When will the new moon be gone” suggests that as this class approach the end of the Kingdom Age, they will be impatient for it to stop so that they can revert to their former practices and methods. They will be harboring these thoughts.

Comment: The incorrigible will hypocritically put on a front, but these habits are deeply ingrained. The openly disobedient will be cut off sooner.

Comment: This class will have a measure of understanding of truth. They will realize that if they pass the test in the Little Season, they will be kings as Adam was and live forever and be able to do what they please.

Reply: Mankind will be properly schooled, and everyone who passes the test at the end of the Millennium will be a king.

Not only will the sabbath be observed in the Kingdom, but any solemn or special holy day will also be a sabbath. In verse 5, the “sabbath” refers to the Kingdom Age, which is part of earth’s antitypical seventh thousand-year “day,” or period. We are in the early part of the sabbath now.

There will be selling in the next age. One proof is Ezekiel 45:12, which gives the monetary denomination to be used. People will work in the Kingdom, with every man being under his own vine and fig tree, but conditions will be different. Today one can lose a home if he does not have a salary, whereas there will be economic security then. Work and trading will be done.

Q: Will there be a Jubilee cycle in the Kingdom?

A: Yes, although the details are not given. There will be literal sabbaths throughout eternity; however, the sacrifices will probably cease. The sabbath was originally given to the human race before the Law, in honor of the rest of God. When the Law was given, “do this” and “don’t do that” requirements were added. Abel offered a lamb, but under the Law, details of how to offer the sacrifice were instituted.

The incorrigible class will desire to return to their previous habits and practices, but they will be unable to do this during the Kingdom Age. They will be impatient to again make “the ephah small, and the shekel great” and to falsify “the balances by deceit.” Making the ephah small refers to the *quantity*, that is, to decreasing (and thus cheating and skimping on) the measurement. The measure can be either liquid or dry. An example would be to sell less than a pound as a whole pound. In times past, a scoop was used to get the grain out of a barrel. Making the scoop smaller than the alleged measurement was deceitful. The NIV makes three clear distinctions for verse 5: “skimping the measure, boosting the price, and cheating with dishonest scales.”

“Making ... the shekel great.” In today’s language, the “shekel” would be the price. To practice all three things mentioned in the previous paragraph would lead to an incorrigible character. What one sows now will affect behavioral attitudes in the future and can jeopardize one’s chances for getting life.

“Falsifying the balances by deceit.” Scales were used in the past. Some scales had two plates on which weights were placed. If the weights on the one plate were lighter than listed, the amount of food, etc., put on the other plate to balance the weights would be less than it should be. In other words, *false weights* were used. A simpler way of cheating was to put a finger on one side to make the food seem heavier than it was.

An “ephah” was a false or skimpy quantity or measure. The “shekel” signified an inflated price. “Scales” would be false weight.

The “new moon” was the first day of a month in the lunar (Hebrew) year. There will be a monthly observance in the Kingdom—and afterwards too, we believe. The sabbath of rest every seventh day, in which no servile labor is done, will be conducive to religious thinking. The inauguration service for the Third Temple, which will continue for a week, will be literal with bullocks and goats. The Passover will be observed at least during the Kingdom, and there will be a Feast of Ingathering. Every year people will go representatively up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. The New (Law) Covenant will have some additions and some deletions from the old Law Covenant, but the *principles* will remain the same because they are both of the *same God*.

Amos 8:6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

Q: What do “poor” and “needy” mean with regard to the Kingdom, since no one will be materially poor at the end of the Kingdom?

A: These terms refer to the previous (or present) life, for no one will be temporally poor in the Kingdom. Amos was speaking of a greedy and dishonest practice in his day, whereby the poor and needy were deprived. With the spiritual application, there will be “poor” and “needy” in a figurative or spiritual sense. In other words, a “poor” and “needy” class will come forth from the tomb in waves of resuscitation throughout the Kingdom.

People will come forth with the same character that they developed in the present life. To get life, they must be trained under the Kingdom laws so that when the test of the Little Season comes, they will have developed a character that will withstand the wiles of Satan, who will then be loosed. The trial will be severe. Even today some people are satisfied with the humblest and simplest things (for example, watching birds or planting flowers). Such are not of the temperament that seeks to build up an estate or business. These “poor *in spirit*” will be overjoyed to have an eternity to pursue “simple” interests. In contrast, other people want to earn and amass a lot of money and to have an expensive house and car in order to call attention to themselves. Generally speaking, the poor *in spirit* in the Kingdom will be the ones who are poor *in spirit* now. It is possible for a poor-in-spirit person to be wealthy, but usually that is not the case.

“Buy[ing] the poor for silver” meant slavery. A slave up for auction was bought for silver, that is, for small change. The thought is that the rich paid very little for the services of a human being.

“That we may buy ... the needy [*human beings*] for a pair of shoes.” What an attitude of contempt! Rich people often look on the poor as nobodies. There is little regard for the feelings and value of fellow human beings.

“That we may ... sell the refuse of the wheat.” What greed! The dust and refuse were sold as wheat after the kernel had been removed.

Amos 8:7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

The “excellency of Jacob” is the “pride of Jacob” in some of the other translations.

Comment: This verse ties in with Amos 6:8, which also mentions the “excellency of Jacob.” The ten tribes prided themselves on their temporal prosperity, their multiplicity of gods, and their military conquests. But the very things that made them proud were actually their sins.

Reply: What from their standpoint was their excellency was actually their downfall. The abundance and prosperity went to their heads.

Amos 8:8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

Another word for “tremble” is “shake,” that is, from an *earthquake*. Ezekiel said there shall be a great shaking in the midst of the land. Consider, first, the application in Amos’s day and then the prophetic application yet future. A *natural* earthquake is suggested.

In the prophet’s day, “the land” was the people of the northern kingdom. They would tremble because of consternation, confusion, and fear. “And every one mourn that dwelleth therein.” All in the ten-tribe kingdom would be affected by this catastrophe.

“And it shall rise up wholly as a flood.” In an earthquake, shaking is the most common effect, but some have observed that the land ripples like waves. When an earthquake occurs, one can actually see the rolling of the land surface. Here the earthquake would be a figurative “flood” of water, whereas the land was literally doing the rising or rippling.

“And it [the land] shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.” From another standpoint, the catastrophe would be the coming Assyrian invasion, which would lay waste the land, despoil it, and empty it of its inhabitants, many of whom would perish and some of whom would be taken captive.

With regard to the “flood of Egypt,” the Nile flooded its banks annually prior to the Aswan Dam. The three-month flood period was called the “Inundation.” Especially in ancient times, the water came up close to the Great Pyramid. Rich silt from the upper Nile was deposited on the banks each year. In building the Pyramid, workers utilized the Inundation to float the stones down the Nile on barges to near the Pyramid. Then the stones were drawn by ramp up to the Pyramid plateau.

Verse 1 mentioned a vision of summer fruit, the fourth of five visions Amos had. There is a future prophetic aspect as well.

Amos 8:9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

Verse 9 is a reference to the Crucifixion, when the God of nature manifested anger. (There may be a future fulfillment of this phenomenon again in Jacob’s Trouble.) The land was dark for the three hours that Jesus suffered on the Cross. A remarkable contrast occurred: The day started out *clear* and then *darkened* at noon. If the day had started out cloudy, this phenomenon would not have been so pronounced. An ash cloud from the earthquake caused the sun to be darkened. It was the “best of times, the worst of times.” It was best in that Jesus was there and the Jews had opportunity to accept him as the Messiah. It was the worst in that the nation rejected him and severe judgment came in AD 69-70.

Amos 8:10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

“And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation.” Consider the

“feasts [being turned] into mourning.” The prior songs of joy and feasts will become mourning and lamentation. This verse pinpoints the time, yet future, when Israel will be at peace (the *false* peace after their astounding victory against their Arab neighbors and just prior to Jacob’s Trouble). The Israelis will be dwelling safely with “unwalled villages” after the Arab situation is settled by nuclear warfare (Ezek. 38:11). As a tiny country, Israel will have to preempt the Arabs; that is, they will have to strike first to prevent their becoming nuclear victims. In their desire to annihilate Israel, the Arab nations will not think twice about the safety of the Palestinians. The *false* peace occurs *before* Jacob’s Trouble; the *true* peace occurs *after* Jacob’s Trouble. Jacob’s Trouble will be with the hordes from the north, not with the surrounding Arab nations, who now occupy Israel’s attention. At present, the Israelis are worried about the Arab terrorists in their immediate environment (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, etc.), not about the terrorists up in Turkey, Russia, or Iran. When the immediate Arab nations are defeated, Israel will greatly rejoice and have special festivities. But this jubilation will be turned into mourning when they see the great cloud of enemies coming down from the north.

“I will make it as the mourning of an only son.” The Holy Remnant will mourn in the future when they are miraculously delivered from Jacob’s Trouble and realize Jesus was their Messiah (Zech. 12:11-14). The word “son” is supplied but is correct. As the Jews flee from the enemy through the split Mount of Olives, they will see a huge three-dimensional hologram vision of the Crucifixion, which will convert them suddenly. All who flee through the valley that the earthquake opens up will see the vision, but the Holy Remnant will survive, while the unrighteous class of Jews and the enemy (Gog) will perish. The Temple platform must be leveled and then raised up by the earthquake in preparation for the building of the Third Temple. Just as the literal Temple veil was rent in twain by an earthquake when Jesus died, so the veil will be figuratively rent when the God of Israel manifests His anger in the future earthquake. Many things will happen at one time: the sky will turn dark at noon, the earth will be tumultuously ripped open by the earthquake, buildings such as Dome of the Rock will collapse, etc. Many prophets refer to these events. SUDDEN DRAMA will occur!

“And the end thereof as a bitter day.” It will be “bitter” with mourning when the Holy Remnant recognize their responsibility in having earlier rejected Jesus as Messiah. When Joseph, as prime minister, revealed his identity to his brothers who had sold him into slavery, they feared greatly. Some honest and true Jews in Israel, loyal to God, will not have their eyes of understanding opened to see Jesus as Messiah until the hologram vision occurs. Others are gradually, even now, having their eyes of understanding opened, and the understanding costs them something. Many, like Nicodemus, hide their true feelings, and some declare their belief and suffer for it.

“And I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.” The paragraph break at verse 11 is proper. Another picture begins.

Comment: Jeremiah 6:26 fits the setting here with the word “bitter,” and the word “spoiler” ties in the setting with Gog and Magog. “O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.” The word “suddenly” adds to the drama and helps to explain why fear will come upon the people.

Reply: The reference to an “only son” applies to Jesus’ revealment in the future. At the time Jesus was crucified, the earthquake and the natural signs caused great concern, even though the nation had rejected him. Many of the scribes and Pharisees would have wondered, at least temporarily, “Did we do the wrong thing?” Some of the priests subsequently became disciples, suggesting they knew they were responsible and hence went through a period of true

repentance.

The “bitter day” will be like a bitter pill to swallow. Joseph’s brothers feared when he revealed his identity to them, but he allayed their consternation in speaking comfortably to them, so it was like a bitter-sweet experience. The bitter pill was followed by their being brought to the Lord’s bosom in reconciliation. The Holy Remnant will have this experience.

Q: Does all of Amos 8:1-10 have a future application? If so, the summer fruit would be a picture of the future ripeness of Israel for judgment.

A: Yes, but the judgment will work out both ways. Another fruit picture is Jeremiah 24 with regard to good and bad figs. The bad figs are judged to the grave and later brought forth. The good figs are acceptable.

Comment: The “many dead bodies” of verse 3 show the Holy Remnant will be *small*.

Reply: Yes. The “many” will not be acceptable. This message is not given today because it is unpopular. The Jews do not want to hear about another holocaust. However, the future holocaust will be selective, whereas the previous one was *man’s* inhumanity to Jews and to some Christians and other ethnic groups.

Q: Will verse 7, “The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob,” fit into the false peace period of the future when the Jews will have confidence in themselves and their own power, which will be obnoxious to the Lord?

A: Yes. The summer fruit is ripe for judgment, but the fruit is both good and bad, both bitter and sweet. Those who repent and are converted in the bitter experience will be the spared Holy Remnant.

Amos 8:11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

Amos 8:12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

Q: Do verses 11 and 12 have multiple applications? There was a famine for the Word of the Lord during the Diaspora, as shown by the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, but is there also a future application when some will desire information after the Little Flock is off the scene?

A: Yes. Verses 11 and 12 show a desire for scriptural instruction. This element will panic and want divine instruction when they see the enemy horde (Gog) preparing to enter the land. Those desiring information will not necessarily be the righteous element, for their desire will be based on fear with regard to what is happening. The time setting is *shortly before* Jacob’s Trouble because once Jacob’s Trouble begins, events will occur so rapidly that there will be no time to seek information. The ominous enemy horde will be on the horizon. Ezekiel 38:16 says a great “cloud” will cause this anxiety. The “feasts” and “songs” of joy will cease (verse 10).

Q: During parts of a three-year period, the sons of the prophets will ask Elisha where Elijah has gone and will search for his body. Do verses 11 and 12 apply to a narrower period of time, that is, to the *end* of that three-year period?

A: Yes. The ominous enemy cloud will already be on the horizon. Generally speaking, though

not in every instance, the Holy Remnant, as a class, will have already received the message. In other words, prior to Gog's coming down, the Holy Remnant will be receptive to information. Verses 11 and 12 describe a panic situation in which the inquirers will ask, "Is there a way out?" Several Old Testament Scriptures mention this panic period, but at that time, instruction will *not* be given. Isaiah 10:28-32 describes the enemy going from city to city to city, getting closer and closer to Jerusalem.

Comment: The rest of the Gentile nations will be in anarchy at this time.

Those who earlier turned a deaf ear to scriptural messages and were stubborn will lack information at this time. When they see the enemy actually approaching, they will panic. A drowning man looks for help, but that does not mean his character and heart condition are right.

"They shall wander from sea to sea [from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea]." In other words, they will wander from west to east (or from east to west, as we would say).

"They shall wander ... from the north even to the east." This statement is an anomaly, for we usually say "from north to *south*." "They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and *shall not find it*." Hence this class will not be informed.

Q: Would the "north even to the east" direction indicate that Gilead will be seized in Israel's sound defeat of her Arab neighbors shortly prior to Jacob's Trouble?

A: Gilead will be acquired later and not through warfare. When Israel is so overcrowded, people will break into Gilead. This former territory of the 2 1/2 tribes across Jordan is actually in the deed as part of Israel's rightful territory. Gilead will be inhabited in the Kingdom Age.

Nevertheless, the class that wants information may inquire in Gilead. The "north to *east*" direction is strange. In other words, this class will look for information wherever they can get it. The only thing to the east is the Jordan River and beyond.

Q: When the Philistines invaded and Samuel died, there was no word from the Lord. In panic, King Saul went to the witch of Endor for information. Would this future panic-stricken class likewise seek information from wise men of the East?

A: If information is sought after the nuclear warfare—for example, if Damascus and other capital cities were obliterated—there would be utter confusion in those nations. If Israel drastically defeats its Arab neighbors, the Jews could just walk in and take territory. Perhaps this class will seek information there. Who knows? Verses 11 and 12 are describing panic-stricken, blinded people, not the Holy Remnant. Traditionally, the East is known for wisdom. If this class of Jews does seek information from the East in this sense, they will not be looking to God.

The setting of verses 11 and 12 is immediately prior to Jacob's Trouble, following almost three years of all kinds of trouble. Jews who have not been thinking of God in their daily living but have been concentrating only on pleasure, sports, business, etc., and thus are not familiar with their own heritage, will perhaps seek information from a "witch of Endor" or guru type. Isaiah 8:19,20 does suggest that occult sources will be consulted for information. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter, should not a people seek unto their God?... To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We usually apply this Scripture to the nominal Church only, but it could have additional ramifications. The

context mentions wandering in hunger through the land. There is definitely a spiritual application for the nominal Church, but there seems to be an application to natural Israel as well. Information will be sought everywhere but the right place—and too late!

Q: Won't the communications and transportation network be disrupted? How could the Jews seek information outside of their own borders at that time?

A: Confusion and trouble will be worldwide, but that does not mean there will be no food or communication at all.

Comment: Another translation uses the word “staggering” instead of “wandering.”

Reply: The people will be seeking information, so the stumbling is figurative. They will not know where to go—they will be without direction.

Comment: At this time, the fallen angels will be very active. Materializations could add to the confusion.

Reply: Even the Great Company will be phasing out at this time because Jacob's Trouble will be imminent, and they will not be on the scene for that event. Satan will take the scapegoat out into the wilderness. Two parts (Little Flock and Great Company) will be cut out of the land, and the third part (Israel) will go through fire and a great purging process (Zech. 13:8,9). This future holocaust will be selective, whereas the holocaust of World War II was not.

Comment: Part of the responsibility of the Great Company after the Little Flock is gone will be to give an instructional message to Israel. Therefore, when verse 12 says the unrighteous class of Jews will not find information, it means that the Great Company will be off the scene or almost so.

Reply: Yes, a precise small period of time is being referred to.

Amos 8:13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.

Comment: The “fair virgins and young men” are the strongest in society. The elderly, young children, and infants usually perish first. This prophecy shows the severity of conditions.

Reply: It is true that young adults usually fare better. All strata of society in Israel will be affected. The young adults will be looking for information, but they are not accustomed to looking to the God of Israel. They have been cultured to look to their own false gods.

Amos 8:14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

At Dan was the northernmost god, a golden calf. The other golden calf was at Bethel, farther south, as set up by Jeroboam. Here the two are referred to as Dan and *Beer-sheba*, instead of Dan and Bethel.

This Beer-sheba marked the southern extremity of the *northern* kingdom. (“Beer-sheba” is usually the one at the southern end of *Judah*, at the Negev desert.) In the ten-tribe kingdom, Bethel was the southernmost extremity of a focalized place of worship. Jacob's Bethel corresponds to this Bethel of the northern kingdom. A covenant was made with Jacob in Bethel, and a covenant was made with Abraham in Beer-sheba. In other words, there was a Beer-sheba in the ten tribes and a Beer-sheba in the two tribes. Proof of this statement is that

the ten tribes would not have gone to the southern edge of Judah to worship. Bethel, the place where Jacob had his dream of a ladder, is the important location Jeroboam selected as the site for the golden calf. The capital of the ten-tribe kingdom was Samaria, but at this time in Amos's ministry, royalty (the king) had a residence in Bethel, which was convenient for him to participate in the false religious services. The ten tribes thought of Jacob as being more faithful than Abraham. Of course for the two-tribe kingdom, Jerusalem was both the religious and the political capital. However, the king of the ten-tribe kingdom had a palace in Bethel, even though the capital was Samaria.

Q: Does the expression “even they shall fall, and never rise up again” indicate that all false religion will cease worldwide? The nominal Church will cease earlier, prior to Jacob's Trouble.

A: The Christendom picture is one application, but there is another application with regard to the natural ten-tribe kingdom and also the soon-to-come end of the age. Those who so harden themselves in the present life will have an extremely difficult time repenting, even when they are given a full opportunity in the Kingdom Age. By hardening themselves now, they are greatly jeopardizing themselves with regard to the future. Notice that in this context, the people were not hardening themselves against Christ but against *God Himself*. With Christ, the hardening can be a case of blindness and inbred culture that he is a false Messiah. But to look elsewhere and not to worship God is a very serious situation. As a rule, this class will fail to get life. Of the incorrigible in the Kingdom, Proverbs 24:16 says that a sinner given seven opportunities will fail. Another Scripture about the incorrigible is Isaiah 26:10, “Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.” Such individuals will not have the proper reverential attitude in the Kingdom Age.

Only the Holy Remnant will be praying to God and have the right heart condition prior to Jacob's Trouble. And theirs will not be a deathbed repentance, for they will hearken earlier. The witness to Israel will eventually bear fruit by strengthening the Holy Remnant class.

Amos 9:1 I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

“I saw the Lord standing upon [by] the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them [the people—RSV and NIV] in the head, all of them.” In this fifth vision, Amos would have seen the Lord as a *huge* figure. What is the significance of the Lord's standing “by” the altar? (The Hebrew verifies the use of “by” in the NIV.) The altar would have been a *pagan* altar, and the vision showed that judgment was coming.

When the Lord said, “Smite the lintel of the door,” etc., He was talking to Amos. In other words, Amos was expected to forward the message in the vision, but what action did he take? The prophet reasoned that he would have to go to Dan or Bethel (probably the latter) and pronounce this very strong and unfavorable message at the site of the altar. He would select a day when many people would be present so that the audience would be large—probably at some feast or observance. Amos knew there would be repercussions, but he wanted to discharge this responsibility.

The smiting of the lintel and doorposts of the false religious worship was figurative, not literal. Since the Lord was standing by the altar in the vision, He was speaking religiously, but the religious and the political were so intertwined that both civil and religious leaders would be affected. Isaiah 6:4 reads, “And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and

the house was filled with smoke.” In this vision of Isaiah, the “house” had both a religious and a political connotation. Here in Amos, the smiting meant that the religious and civil leadership would come to an end. Paul prophesied similarly in Hebrews 12:26,27 from the standpoint of Mount Sinai; namely, everything that is movable will be removed, and everything that is not movable will remain. This prediction, too, pertained to both civil and religious. The laws Moses gave to the people were both civil and religious.

Therefore, the shaking of the posts signifies the ultimate removal. Earthquake tremors are the precursor of an actual earthquake that later erupts violently. In the vision, the Lord was angry, and tremors were occurring, forecasting destruction sometime in the future. The ten-tribe kingdom would be dissolved both religiously and politically.

“Cut them [the people] in the head, all of them.” The leadership, the upper strata, the “head,” would be destroyed. This removal would affect the common people as well.

“And I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.” A great slaughter would occur, especially of the guiltiest. “I will slay the *last* of them” suggests that others would be killed by other means, such as hunger and anarchy, and that some would flee to outlying areas. But the escapees would die by violence (“the sword”). Any attempt to escape the judgment would be futile except for a small not-as-iniquitous remnant. When the king of Assyria came down, he butchered many, many people.

“He that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.” Those who fled would be searched out and killed. Their flight would be to no avail. There would be no escaping the judgment even for deserters.

Amos 9:2 **Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:**

“Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them”; that is, even if escapees should flee into tombs and sepulchres to hide below ground, they would be found and killed.

Comment: If people *live* in tombs in the City of the Dead outside Cairo, then we should not be surprised that escapees would try to hide in tombs.

“Though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down.” Some would climb cliffs and almost inaccessible heights in an effort to escape, but they, too, would be found and killed.

Amos 9:3 **And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:**

“And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence.” The top of Mount Carmel is riddled with caves, but again the hiding would be to no avail. The Assyrians had such hatred for the Jews that they would search them out even here. They wanted to utterly destroy the ten-tribe kingdom, which had been such a thorn in their flesh. God would permit this slaughter because He was fed up with Israel’s sins.

“And though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.” To escape the slaughter, some would submerge themselves in water and breathe through a pipe or reed protruding above the surface. This attempt to hide would also fail.

What a hard message for Amos to give! And Amaziah, the priest, had clearly told him to “prophesy not again any more at Beth-el” (Amos 7:13). Amos was a humble shepherd, not one of the regular prophets, but he was chosen for this mission. His name appropriately means “burden bearer.”

Amos 9:4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

To avoid being killed, some would raise a white flag of truce and go to the enemy, but the enemy would put them to death. Whatever means of escape they tried would be to no avail.

Amos 9:5 And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

Over and over Amos called Jehovah “the Lord GOD *of hosts*.” Amos 8:8 also used the term “flood of Egypt”—a reference to the Nile flooding its banks each year. All the people would mourn. Verse 5 suggests that although not every person would die, every family would have a casualty. Similarly in Egypt, each family mourned the death of the firstborn. Primarily affected would be all those of the ten tribes who were bordering on incorrigibility in their false religion and disassociation from God.

Amos 9:6 It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.

The word “stories” means “spheres” (KJV margin), “worlds,” and “*galaxies*.” The galaxies are not only numerous but very far apart. In each galaxy alone, there are trillions and trillions of miles. In other words, many planes of being and many, many spheres will ultimately be inhabited—and the Lord GOD made them all! The beginning of verse 6 refers to various places of future abode, of which we know nothing.

“Troop” means “bundle” (KJV margin); that is, the seas on the earth, as decreed by God, will not pass their set boundaries. But He who set the boundaries and issued the decrees has the liberty to reverse them. At the time of the Flood, oceans emptied and overflowed the land, in addition to rains falling from above. Just as the Lord GOD *of hosts* commands planets, so He controls the waters of the sea. The earth’s surface is three-fourths sea and one-fourth land. Amos was saying, “The Lord standing by the altar is the One who controls the planets and the seas; *He is the One talking to you.*” *Nothing* can hinder or thwart God’s purpose.

Jumping ahead to verse 10, we read, “All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.” ALL who had the nerve to oppose or contradict Amos when he made this dire pronouncement would die, for they were opposing God’s judgment. There is an antitype for our day in regard to a dire prediction of the end of the age.

Amos 9:7 Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?

As instructed by God, Amos declared these words to his contemporaries about 800 BC.

Comment: The Israelites looked down on the Ethiopians (called “Cushites” in the RSV), but God was saying that Israel was no different.

Reply: Yes, Ethiopia was usually thought of in a derogatory sense. Since the Exodus was from Egypt, when did God take Israel from Ethiopia? There was a close relationship between Ethiopia and Egypt, and some of the Pharaohs had more Ethiopian blood than Egyptian blood. In Egypt, the regal line was traced through women. Therefore, one had to be properly married to be the Pharaoh. Many of the Pharaohs had an Ethiopian-Egyptian mixture.

When God took the Israelites out of Egypt, they were in a poor state. Following Joseph’s death, the Pharaohs no longer favored the Israelites, who had been given the land of Goshen, the best land in Egypt, for raising cattle. A caste system had developed, as it were, with the Israelites being slaves and despised shepherds. As a persecuted people, they lacked leadership. In that lowly condition, God called them as His people and drew them out of Egypt under Moses. Here God was reminding Israel of their low-born origin.

“Have not I brought up ... the Philistines from Caphtor?” Caphtor is the island of Crete. The Philistines were called from Caphtor to the Gaza Strip area (to Philistia). What caused them to move to the mainland? Archaeologists tell of a tremendous earthquake on Crete that affected hundreds of miles. Crete was a very advanced and civilized island, but God caused this natural catastrophe to occur so that the Philistines would leave for a new beginning in Gaza. Of Israel God had said, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). Hence it was not in this sense that God called the Philistines—they would not be His special people. Rather, Divine Providence decided that this generation of Philistines would inhabit the Gaza area, so that at a later time, they would have an effect on Israel. Philistine cities include Ekron, Ashdod, Gaza, and Ashkelon.

“Have not I brought up ... the Syrians from Kir?” Today ancient Kir is known as Kars in Turkey. Kars is something like Nimrut Dag with statues near the top of a mountain, but in Kars, the statues are larger, showing it was an ancient civilization and a center or capital. Just the head alone makes a human being seem miniaturized, so the full height of the statues is very tall. The Syrians’ origin was Kir (Kars), and from there, they were brought south. Syria became a part of Assyria, which is a larger area. Like the Ethiopians, the Syrians were called for a purpose. God brought them to where they are located today. God knows how people will act genetically, so He sets the stage in His plan.

In summary, God has dealt with other peoples. Now He was talking to the northern kingdom through Amos. The ten tribes had the name “Israel,” which originally comprised all 12 tribes. In principle, verse 7 was saying: (1) God is in command, (2) He could have used any of these other peoples instead of Israel, and (3) the nation of Israel fell from its previous estate when the ten tribes separated from Benjamin and Judah—or, stated another way, the separation of the ten tribes marked the beginning of their decline because they immediately set up rival centers of worship with golden calves. As 200 years went by, they sank lower and lower. Now, in their fallen condition, the ten tribes thought they were God’s people because they had the name “Israel,” wealth, and the majority of the people. They arrogantly applied the promises to themselves, whereas in reality, they had deteriorated to the condition of these other nations whom they regarded with disdain. Through Amos, God was castigating the ten tribes for feeling confident in their relationship to Him. God was saying, “You are just like these other nobodies. You have sunk to their level.”

Comment: In Matthew 3:9, John the Baptist enunciated the same principle: “Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.”

Amos 9:8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.

The “sinful kingdom” was the northern kingdom. The antitype is Papacy, or Catholicism, which prides itself on numbers, has the name “Catholic” (universal), and supposedly has Peter as the first pope with a lineage of popes up to the present. Papacy is confident of being the true Church, the mother Church, but as a system, it is the “sinful kingdom” in the Lord’s sight.

“And I will destroy it [the sinful kingdom] from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.” In the antitype, the sinful kingdom will be destroyed forever “from off the face of the earth.” But Amos was speaking of the literal ten-tribe kingdom, which will not be utterly destroyed and is called the “house of Jacob,” a term that is meaningful. After Jacob wrestled with the angel, God said He would no longer call him Jacob but “Israel,” which means “prince with God.” Based upon this incident, the ten-tribe kingdom was called the “house of Jacob,” even though Jacob was buried in Judah in Hebron (Gen. 32:24-30). The ten tribes liked to pride themselves that they were of Jacob (rather than Abraham), and they thought of him as their cardinal patriarch. The woman of Samaria said *Jacob drank at that well* (John 4:6,7,12). As we look to George Washington as the father of our country, so the ten tribes looked to Jacob. In short, then, the fortunes of the northern kingdom would not be completely annihilated.

Amos 9:9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

In Hebrew, this verse is stated in a way that can have two different applications depending on intonation. When the ten tribes were overthrown by the king of Assyria, those who were taken captive were so scattered that they became known as the “lost tribes of Israel.” They were sold on the open market as slaves. In contrast, the two tribes were taken to the river Chebar, a specific location.

Usually the emphasis is put on the *dispersion* of the northern kingdom, the thought being that the people would be sifted like corn in a sieve among all nations (Germany, Austria, France, etc.) in the Diaspora. That thought is correct, but the wording intentionally gives a *twofold* application. The most important application is the one yet future in the end time. Instead of the emphasis being on sifting and shaking the corn so that it falls among all nations, the future application emphasizes what is *left* in the sieve: the *Holy Remnant*. Verse 9 progresses from a past application to a future application, from the Diaspora to *individuals*, in that not “the least grain [individual in the Holy Remnant]” will fall on the ground. Not one grain, not one individual in the Diaspora whom God will select as part of the Holy Remnant, will fall to the ground. Inferentially here, and stated plainly elsewhere, all such grains will be regathered to Israel, some before and some after Jacob’s Trouble (in the second regathering). The regathering we see now started in the past and is continuing, but the second regathering, yet future, will be from all nations.

Amos 9:10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

In the antitype, all sinners will die by violence. There will come a time when all of the Little Flock must be cut off. There will subsequently come a time when the Great Company must be off the earthly scene. And shortly afterward there will come a time when all Jews not “written in the book” will be cut off—temporarily (Dan. 12:1). Jesus will inaugurate the Kingdom with a Holy Remnant. The term “not the least grain” suggests that the great majority will go through

the sieve.

In the prophet's day, the sinners said, "The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us." The ten-tribe kingdom was very confident, but Amos was saying that the great bulk would die by the sword of the Assyrians. With the ten tribes, this prophecy was literally fulfilled but not down to the individual; that is, it was fulfilled with a broad-brush stroke. In contrast, the end-time fulfillment will be literal with each individual.

Comment: The NIV translates "evil" as "disaster," which is more accurate, for God does not cause moral evil but can cause a physical disaster.

Amos 9:11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

Acts 15:16,17 quotes Amos 9:11,12 as follows: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

"In that day [after the Church is complete] will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen." What is the "tabernacle of David"?

Q: In Young's *Analytical Concordance*, "tabernacle" is the Hebrew word *sukkah*, defined as "covering," "covert," or "booth." *Sukkah* is used repeatedly in the phrase "feast of tabernacles," and it is also used in Isaiah 4:6, where God speaks of the "tabernacle" He will establish for Israel in the future: "And there shall be a *tabernacle* for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." The word *sukkah* seems to be an embracive term that implies more than just house or lineage. Does the "tabernacle of David" have the thought of a protective arrangement that includes the government and the Ancient Worthies—just as God's protective care was over the Israelites in the past?

A: Yes, there will be protective care. A tent is usually raised up to provide shelter and to serve as a residence.

The "breaches" of the tabernacle of David will be closed up, the "ruins" will be raised up, and God will "build it as in the days of old." The tabernacle of David, as a government, can be thought of as the house of David. God will restore Israel's judges as at the first, meaning that a divine arrangement will be instituted somewhat like that of the past (Isa. 1:26).

Comment: Even though the term is "the *tabernacle* of David," it seems to include the thought of a literal Temple from the standpoint that David's desire was to build a house for the Lord. This would be the fruition of David's desire in a pure sense; that is, it would not be defiled like Solomon's Temple.

Reply: We would read into this verse that the Temple will be restored, but the structure is only emblematic of a government. The Third Temple will be a house of prayer and communication. When the nations go to Israel in the Kingdom, even representatively, a building of some kind must be there. Since the Scriptures clearly teach that a literal Temple will be built, the expression "tabernacle of David" can convey all of the thoughts already suggested. The literal house is emblematic of the restoration of Israel as a whole. The Ancient Worthies are included because the prince will be the most honored person in the Third Temple (Ezek. 44:1-3). Only the prince will be allowed to sit in the closed outer east gate. As the representative of the people, the presiding Ancient Worthy will worship at the inner east gate. In addition, the

Zadok priesthood will officiate in the Temple (Ezek. 43:19; 48:11). Messiah will fulfill the three roles of Prophet, Priest, and King. The Ancient Worthies will be his mouthpieces. The Church will be part of the government, reigning with Jesus. Hence the “tabernacle of David” includes prayer, communication, leadership, guidance, and rulership in the future.

“And I will build it as in the days of old.” The New Covenant will be very much like the old Law Covenant. One difference is that the New Covenant will have tried and true representatives.

God will “close up the breaches” of the tabernacle of David. The future government will be the Ancient Worthies, and the future religious leadership will be the Zadok priesthood. Hence the current leaders, both political and religious (the “breaches,” or openings), will be closed up.

Q: In the Old Testament (for example, in the Book of Nehemiah), “breaches” usually referred to openings in the wall. Ezekiel’s Temple will have a defined area. Could verse 11 be referring to the literal rebuilding of a wall around the Temple?

A: Verse 11 implies that the present site will be *leveled* and *raised up* by an earthquake. Just as the Lord’s true representatives, as individuals, will be installed in office, so the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aksa must be leveled and the true Temple erected on the Temple Mount. Usually verse 11 is given only a figurative application, which is the most important, but a certain fullness is lacking if the natural picture is not seen.

Comment: Jeremiah 30:17,18 describes the restoration of Israel: “For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace [Temple] shall remain after the manner thereof.”

Reply: The Pastor said in *Reprint* No. 3624, entitled “The Life-Giving Stream,” and in Volume 3, page 259, that a *literal* Temple will be built.

Amos 9:12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

“That they [Israel] may possess the remnant of Edom [the Arab nations in the natural picture], and of all the heathen [the Gentiles].” Edom is another name for Esau, who in the Muslim faith is believed to be the seed through whom the Abrahamic promise comes (instead of through Isaac). The Muslims believe the promise comes through Ishmael but use Esau in their writings. The prophecy is that Ishmael will have 12 princes (as Jacob had 12 sons or tribes). Edom was a thorn in Israel’s flesh for a long period of time. Edom was south of Ammon and Moab, near Petra, at the southern end of the Dead Sea and south of the Arnon. Esau did get a blessing but along temporal lines. Jacob’s blessing of the birthright includes earthly blessings, but the chief blessing is spiritual from a *natural* standpoint because Israel will be the chief nation on earth.

The way verse 12 is worded implies that Edom was somewhat kindred to Israel. From a natural standpoint, they are brothers, for they were children of Abraham. All Arabs are of the Muslim faith, but not all Muslims are Arabs.

Comment: The word “possess” (“that they may *possess* the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen”) proves that those who come into the Kingdom arrangement will have to become Israelitish. They will come in under that arrangement.

In Acts 15:17, “That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and [even] all the Gentiles,” the Apostle James gave Amos 9:12, which has a future application, a *current application during the Gospel Age*. James was saying that Gentiles who become Christians, who convert to Christianity, are partakers of the promise. Because Jewish Christians had a hard time accepting this teaching, James quoted Amos 9:12. He was summing up what had been discussed previously with Peter taking the leading role.

In the spiritual application, Edom represents Christendom, and the time setting is the Kingdom. “They” (natural Israel, the Holy Remnant, and the Ancient Worthies) will possess the remnant of Christendom. Israel’s possessing Christendom will be a very humbling situation for the popes, bishops, reverends, evangelists, etc., some of whom have led dual lives in one way or another.

The word “remnant” in verse 12 suggests that the Arabs will have a problem initially, whereby only a remnant will survive into the beginning of the Kingdom. Not only will there be a holocaust of the ungodly of Israel *in Jacob’s Trouble*, but there will be massive destruction of the Arab peoples surrounding Israel *prior to Jacob’s Trouble* (Psalm 83). The Arab remnant is not described as a “holy” remnant. Those Arabs who survive Jacob’s Trouble will witness God’s mighty miracles on behalf of Israel. When they see that Allah has permitted the destruction of their mosque (Dome of the Rock), they will fall into line.

Comment: It may be providential for the future fulfillment of Psalm 83 that the Arabs are being physically separated from the Israelis with this current peace accord. Then, in the future, it will be easy for Israel to defeat the Arabs in their concentrated pockets in Israel.

Reply: In other words, with the Arabs being confined to definite areas, a bomb could be dropped on them without adverse effects to the Jews.

Several Scriptures indicate a tremendous loss of life in the world in the anarchy and in Israel in Jacob’s Trouble. “For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many” (Isa. 66:16). “And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground” (Jer. 25:33). This verse shows the extensiveness of the deaths; they will be “from one end of the earth even unto the other.” “Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth. And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword” (Ezek. 35:7,8). Those who seek righteousness and meekness in the earth, those who keep as separate as possible from all violent acts during the anarchy, will be in a better position to survive the anarchy.

“Which are called by my name.” Spiritually, Christendom is called by God’s name. When the nominal system falls, the people will not all be destroyed, just their religion. Henceforth there will be no more religious deceptions. The deception in the Little Season will be along other Satanic lines. Those who succumb will get certain benefits. By following Satan’s reasoning, they will show that they did not really learn the lessons of the Kingdom under Messiah because of a wrong heart condition. Incidentally, the Old Testament shows that the Great Company will be given as a possession to the Little Flock. In the type, the Levites were set up as a class and given to the priesthood in a formal dedication ceremony (Numbers 8).

Amos 9:13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

Amos 9:14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

Amos 9:15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

When verses 13-15 are considered as a whole, with a broad-brush stroke, they sound optimistic and favorable, especially when verses 11 and 12 are considered too. The prophets often criticized, but generally their later chapters contained good news pertaining to the times of restitution.

Before the spiritual application for the end of the Gospel Age is considered, we will discuss the natural application for the generation contemporary with Amos. When Amos uttered the prophecy of verses 11-15 to the ten-tribe kingdom, the people would have applied it to the time when Messiah would come, especially verse 13. Also, they might have connected it to Leviticus 26:5, which is a promise about the land producing abundantly: "And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely." In other words, verse 13 would have been considered an agrarian picture of great plenitude and a land of milk and honey. The seasons would yield such abundant produce that they would overlap.

Comment: The Israelites were promised enough food to supply them on sabbath days, weeks, and years when they were not to plant or harvest. For example, for the sabbath year, the food plentifully supplied them from the preceding year on through the sabbath year and up to the third year when they could again sow and reap. The forty-ninth year was a sabbath year followed by the Jubilee in the fiftieth year. At that time, there were two years during which the Israelites could neither sow nor reap, so the land fruitage of the previous year supplied them for two additional years, leading them up to the next year when they could sow and reap.

Comment: Joel 3:18 is similar to Amos 9:13. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim."

Reply: The two verses are similar, but Joel 3:18 combines several thoughts, whereas Amos 9:13 just tells about the land. Joel 3:18 also refers to the time of the dedication of the Third Temple, when water will come out from underneath the threshold.

Those who heard this prophecy in the days of Amos applied it to Messiah's Kingdom, a time when there will be food, housing, clothing, health, happiness, etc., for all. The new, or "sweet," wine will be God's pure truth.

Verse 13 can also be considered from another standpoint. Several ingredients are mentioned: plowman, reaper, treader of grapes, and sower of seed. The order, or sequence, in nature is plowing, sowing, reaping, and treading grapes. One must first plow in order to sow, then the reaper gathers that which was previously sown, and finally the grapes are trodden in the second harvest. In other words, first comes the grain harvest, then the fruit harvest.

"And the mountains shall drop sweet wine." Wine comes from grapes. "And all the hills shall melt." There are different types of "melting." From a natural standpoint, this melting, which is favorable, means that streams of water will flow, making the land productive.

“The plowman shall overtake the reaper.” The Pastor said that the “plowman” was the Time of Trouble. The thought was that the Time of Trouble would prepare the way for a beneficial reaping. However, we have a little different thought.

Jesus is the Chief Reaper. In the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, Jesus said to let both wheat and tares grow together until the end of the age, when a reaping work would be done. During the Harvest, reaping is the *predominant* work, not sowing. Nevertheless, sowing is still done based on Ecclesiastes 11:6, “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”

If the reaper here in Amos, in a spiritual sense, represents Jesus and his message and work, the plowman must also be a personality, that is, Satan (and not the Time of Trouble). Thus verse 13 is another Scripture that shows Satan is not bound. At the end of the age, Satan will be given MORE liberty, not less liberty, and even a partial binding would mean less liberty. If one is being bound, he is being straitened—he is not as free as previously. From one standpoint, Satan has been bound in *tartaroo* in earth’s atmosphere ever since the Flood, but his powers and capabilities can be exerted from that position. As Beelzebub, the chief of the demons, the god of this world, he can manipulate and influence by remote control, as it were. However, the binding at the end of the age is more than just the *tartaroo* binding. The time is coming in the near future when Satan will be given more liberty, which he will use to disrupt the Harvest work. Stated another way, Satan is the plowman *behind* the trouble. The “Man of Sin” chapter in the *Second Volume*, under the subhead “Antichrist’s Final End,” pages 358-361, says there will be a *great energetic* effort by Satan at the end of the age. The Pastor did his own translation to give the correct thought. “Whose coming [presence] is after [accompanied by or during] the working [an energetic operation] of Satan with *all power and signs and lying wonders*, And with *all deceivableness of unrighteousness* in them that perish [and with every iniquitous deception for those perishing]; because they received not the *love* of the truth, that they might be saved [preserved]. And for this cause [reason] God shall send them *strong delusion* [God will send to them a deluding power], that they should believe a lie [that they might believe the error]: That they all might be damned [judged] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness [iniquity]” (2 Thess. 2:9-12).

What is the “reaper” doing? He is reaping the true wheat, the very elect. God is looking for the Little Flock, whereas the Great Company is a by-product because of His mercy, forgiveness, and patience. The hearts of the Great Company are basically correct but not their heads. With those who go into Second Death, their heads may be relatively all right but not their hearts—a more culpable situation.

The commission of the Lord’s people in the Harvest is primarily to look for those who are already Christians and help them to see Harvest truths now due and to come out of the nominal system. The secondary work is sowing. When the Pastor spoke of sowing during the Harvest period, he called it “sowing for the new age,” for the Kingdom. This statement was made because, for a while, he thought the door was closing.

Q: According to the KJV margin for “soweth seed,” the Hebrew literally means “draweth forth.” Does this refer to drawing forth the Lord’s people from Babylon, calling them to come out?

A: No, the thought is still of sowing seed. In those days, farmers carried grain seed in a bag slung over their shoulders. The farmer put his hand into the bag, drew forth seed, and strewed it into rows plowed in the dirt.

Although there is a preparing work for the next age, we always hope the seed will rest in one who will consecrate now for the high calling. Therefore, a sowing and a reaping work progress at the same time, even though the main thrust is on reaping.

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.” Verse 13 is tricky. To repeat: the usual Bible Student interpretation is that the plowman of trouble will overtake the Harvest work.

In other circles, verse 13 is usually interpreted to mean a time of plenty, based on Leviticus 26:5, “And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.” There the picture is unquestionably one of plenitude, but not in Amos 9:13, for even though the “reaper” is associated with the “threshing,” there is a contradiction. Leviticus 26:5 says the vintage will reach unto the sowing, which seems to harmonize with Amos 9:13; however, the rest of the verse does not harmonize. Once the first part of Amos 9:13 is correctly understood, then the second half falls into line.

“The plowman shall overtake the reaper.” This statement is *contrary to nature* and, therefore, is meant to stand out as an enigma. This agricultural procedure is not natural, whereas Leviticus 26:5 is. The Leviticus text shows a long season with no interval in between—the barley harvest, the wheat harvest, the grapes, preparation for the cold weather, rains, sowing, etc.—but Amos 9:13 is different. The Pastor gave a spiritual application without explaining the natural because there was no natural application.

The Pastor’s application was as follows. The “plowman” is the Time of Trouble that overtakes the “reaper” (the Harvest work); that is, the Harvest work should continue on until the time when no man can work. This interpretation, that the reaping would be interrupted by the plowman of trouble, was very unusual, and at first, it was the only explanation that seemed to answer the spiritual application of this verse. Moreover, this interpretation harmonizes with what Jesus said—that we must work while it is called day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work (John 9:4). A time of trouble certainly interrupted Jesus’ life, and that is what he was referring to. Up until the time for his crucifixion, he was laying down his life in connection with his ministry.

Let us now reason from the known to the unknown. Verse 13 does not refer to a natural picture; it has only a spiritual application. What or who is the “reaper”? Jesus is the Lord of the Harvest. He said, “In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matt. 13:30). Jesus is the *Chief Reaper*, and the obedient and loyal Church are reapers who assist him.

In the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, he told his disciples that the Harvest was ready: “You say four months to harvest, but I say it is already ripe” (John 4:35 paraphrase). His disciples did do harvest work, but *he* selected the apostles and gathered a nucleus to start the work of the Gospel Age. He gathered out of Israel the cream of the crop. Thus Jesus was the Chief Reaper at the beginning of the Gospel Age until Gethsemane, when he was apprehended. “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,” he said (John 14:30). Jesus had warned his disciples that the night would come wherein no man could work. Although Jesus applied John 9:4 to himself, there is also an application to the Church, for there will come a time at the end of the age when no man can work. And who was the “plowman” at the First Advent? It was *Satan!* Jesus’ time of trouble occurred when Satan’s hour of power came upon him, and he could no longer preach as he had done before. Now Jesus was to acquiesce. According to the Father’s plan, he was not to assert his authority but was to submit meekly as a Lamb because it

was his time to die. Jesus had been active up to that time, but now came the plowman of trouble on *him*, not on Israel. (Israel's trouble came later.) Satan's hour of power came on Jesus, the Chief *Reaper*, and terminated that work.

The Pastor gave the application of the Time of Trouble coming and overtaking the reaper, but that certainly is not happening now. In fact, the reverse is true—there is no better time for tracting and publishing for the promulgation of the truth. The only problem is an apathetic public, not many hearing ears. But opportunities still exist to go out and engage in Harvest work. The response is less because fewer are being called with the smaller number of remaining vacancies. Nevertheless, the reaping ability is not being terminated by trouble.

The trouble referred to here—*powerful* trouble—will end the career of the Church. Then, *later*, will come the great Time of Trouble for the *world*. The Jewish nation said, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). That did occur but not until *after* Jesus' death.

“The treader of grapes [shall overtake] him that soweth seed.” The application is the same. With the treading of the grapes, we are accustomed to thinking in terms of Revelation 14, where grain is contrasted with the grapes of wrath, and the wheat is the harvesting of the Church. In Revelation 14, the wheat represents the Church, and the grapes picture nominal Christendom, which is to be trod in the winepress of God's wrath. But that is NOT the thought in Amos 9:13. There are other grapes besides grapes of wrath. For example, grapes are crushed to make the wine for the Memorial, which the *Church* partakes of. It was right *after* the Memorial that Jesus was apprehended, *after* he had partaken of the wine that symbolized his death. In the Garden of Gethsemane just a few hours later, he was seized. The Memorial was associated with Jesus' most trying experience at the end of his career. Just as Satan's hour of power came after that Memorial, so it will be at the end of this age when the grape class is fully developed on the *true* vine. It will then be time for these grapes to be crushed—the Church's time of trouble. Jesus took the wine, which symbolized the crushing of the grapes; the cup represented his death, or his “blood,” and the next day he was crucified. In that cup, we see the crushing of many grapes—the crushing of The Christ. In this dispensational Scripture, Amos 9:13, the feet members are especially represented.

Q: “Reaping” is a different work than “sowing.” How are both represented at the end of the age? Is it primarily a reaping work with the sowing occurring incidentally?

A: Yes. We should do both. In the morning, we sow the seed, and in the evening, we should not withhold our hand (Eccl. 11:6). That has been the message all down the Gospel Age. The call to repentance and forgiveness does not cease. While the general call ended in 1881 from the standpoint that if all had made their calling and election sure, there would have been no more vacancies in the body of Christ, such was not the case. Therefore, we sow the seed now, as well as before. The only difference is that since a reaping work is to be done now also, we should keep the Harvest work in mind as the *objective* at the end of the age. Now is the time of Harvest, but the sowing is incidental and does not terminate.

Q: Is the “treader of grapes” synonymous with the “plowman”?

A: Yes. Both terms refer to Satan, the instrument being used. As the Chief Reaper, Jesus presides over the reaping class still down here in the flesh. The work of that class will be interrupted at the end of the age. When the reaping work is complete, the plowman will be allowed to come in, just as at the First Advent, Satan was permitted to take Jesus' life. Genesis 3:15 refers to this event as the bruising of the “heel” members. This interpretation of Amos 9:13 harmonizes with many other pictures and is more specific instead of just being generalized as the Time of Trouble.

Q: Would we say that the plowman overtaking the reaper also occurred at the First Advent?

A: That is true in principle, but the application is actually to the Second Advent. The Second Psalm, which is prophetic, zeros in on Jesus' ministry and says in effect, "As he died, so the last members, whoever they are, will similarly die."

With regard to the term "treader of grapes," Satan will tread the true grapes in the Harvest at the end of the age when he has his future "hour of power." Instead of his being bound more and more during the past 120 years, he will get more liberty and be instrumental in the execution of the last body members of the true Church. When the time comes in God's plan for the completion of the Church, Satan will be the unwitting agent. As illustrated with Jesus, Satan's opposition at the First Advent, which resulted in the Crucifixion, was actually a victory for our Lord. Because he was faithful unto death, he paid the ransom price and got a resurrection to the divine nature. Similarly, the rest of verse 13 shows that as a result of the treading of the grapes, new wine will bless mankind. The Church is called to be able ministers of the New Covenant, which will benefit mankind. The Lord has been training a humble people to be kings and priests in the next age. When they finish their course, the results will be a benefaction to the world. "And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isa. 25:6). Different feasts are mentioned in Scripture, and this one is the last. The "well refined" work is the development of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in God's people in the Gospel Age, and that fruitage will benefit mankind. The new wine pertains to the introduction of Christ's Kingdom.

Q: Is the thought that the plowman, Satan, will bring to a close the work of the reaper, and thus the Harvest will close? The treader of grapes, Satan, will persecute the feet members, resulting in the completion of the Church.

A: Yes. In other words, the plowman and the treader are both Satan.

Q: Do the plowman and the treader of grapes both pertain to the Second Advent?

A: Yes. Christ is an example to the Church. When he began his ministry, Satan was there tempting him. When his life terminated, Satan was there again. In saying, "The night cometh, when no man can work," Jesus applied this statement to himself—that the nighttime of trouble would come upon him, and the disciples would be greatly disappointed. When news of Jesus' resurrection came parts of three days later, the disciples were delirious with joy, and they worked far more as his emissaries than previously, when they had been learning. Thus, instead of Jesus' death stopping the work, it enlarged the work. All of the disciples were enthusiastic and KNEW he was truly the Messiah. At the end of this age, the feet members will have the same experience (Psa. 2:1-3). The statement "the night cometh, when no man can work" is fitting for the end of the age, whereas *at no time during the Gospel Age* did God suffer the oil or the wine to stop. The work continued.

"I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel." In verse 14, Amos was telling the ten-tribe kingdom they would be regathered to their homeland following their destruction and captivity. God, in His mercy, would again favor Israel.

Comment: The NIV says, "I will bring back my exiled people Israel."

Comment: This would be the second regathering and not the returning to Israel we are seeing today. The second regathering will take place after Jacob's Trouble.

Reply: Yes, there are two regatherings at the end of the age, one before and one after Jacob's Trouble. The latter regathering will occur in the Kingdom Age.

Comment: Many encouraging and upbuilding verbs are in verse 14: build, inhabit, plant, drink, make, eat.

Reply: Yes, and every man shall have his own vine and fig tree (Mic. 4:4). The message is very encouraging.

Verse 15 states, "And I [God] will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up." Nevermore will the Jew be plucked up after God delivers the Holy Remnant. God has tried His people with regard to faith. Amos lived about 800 BC. In AD 69, when Jerusalem was destroyed, millions died and the rest were plucked up and sold as slaves. In AD 135, the few who had escaped and were not made slaves were defeated. The death penalty was henceforth placed on any Jew who got within sight of Jerusalem. The Diaspora was a long and trying period, but the Kingdom blessings are coming. God's promises are sure!