

Amos
Amos 7:10-17
SS Lesson for 07/30/2017

Devotional Scripture: Ps 119:1-8

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Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reminds us to appreciate Amos's circumstance relative to God's call of **Amos**. The **study's aim** is to show that God's call is not determined by our circumstances. The **study's application** is to understand that God's call is a sovereign appointment, not necessarily a natural result of our circumstances.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Amos 7:14-15

14 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, Nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheepbreeder And a tender of sycamore fruit. 15 Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, And the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

In chapters 3-6 Amos had documented the reasons for God's judgment against Israel—legal injustice, economic exploitation, religious hypocrisy, luxurious indulgence, and boastful complacency. Because of these covenant violations "the LORD God Almighty," the great suzerain Warrior at the head of His armies, would crush His rebellious vassal. (Only in chaps. 3-6 does the title "the LORD God Almighty" occur in Amos.) Individuals who repented might yet be spared, but the nation as a whole was irrevocably doomed. In chapter 7 Amos began to describe the results of this coming judgment. Through a series of five visions (7:1, 4, 7; 8:1; 9:1), he pictured God's total destruction of the land, its buildings, and its people. Throughout this section of the book (7:1-9:10), two phrases stand out—"sovereign LORD" (7:1-2, 4 [twice], 5-6; 8:1, 3, 9, 11; 9:8) and "My people" (7:8, 15; 8:2; 9:10). As the sovereign Lord over all nations, God has absolute freedom of action in His universe. He was especially at liberty to implement His will against the people who had spurned His special grace (cf. 3:2).

7:1. In the first of five visions Amos saw God actually **preparing swarms of locusts** at the nation's most vulnerable time of the year! (The Heb. expresses the prophet's amazement at such a thing; cf. "behold" in NASB.) The locusts were being loosed on the land **after the king's share had been harvested and just as the second crop was coming up**. The king had the right to claim the first cutting of the grain for his military animals (cf. 1 Kings 18:5). The "second crop"—either what grew after the first cutting or a separate late planting—was the final growth of the season before the summer's dryness. If it were lost the people would have nothing to eat until the next harvest. A locust swarm was one of the most dreaded plagues of the ancient East. As a swarm made its ravenous way across the land, people despaired because it was an enemy against whom they were helpless. When the plague was past, suffering and death by famine followed. This misery was intensified in Israel, for locusts were recognized as God's instrument of punishment for covenant violations (Deut. 28:38, 42; cf. Amos 4:9; Joel 1:1-7).

7:2. In his vision Amos saw that the locusts **stripped the land clean** of all vegetation—both seeded crops and wild growth. Knowing that the nation would die if this vision became a reality, Amos begged the **sovereign LORD to forgive** the people of their sins. Though Israel was unrepentant, though her guilt was overwhelming, and though the punishment was just, Amos nevertheless pleaded with God not to bring this punishment on the nation. **Jacob** would never **survive** it. Jeroboam II's proud people might think themselves invulnerable (6:1-3, 8, 13; 9:10), but when viewed in the face of God's awesome might and wrath they were in reality **so small**, so helpless, so pitiable. By calling Israel "Jacob," Amos perhaps meant to remind God of His early commitment to the ancestor when he was at Bethel, a site still hallowed by his descendants (Gen. 28:10-22; Amos 3:14; 4:4; 5:5-6; 7:13). Jacob is mentioned in 3:13; 6:8; 7:2, 5; 8:7; 9:8.

7:3. Moved by the prophet's prayer, **the LORD relented** and promised that the swarm of locusts would **not happen**. (The word "relent" suggests a turning away and a relief from an earlier decision because one has been deeply stirred by the appeal of another; cf. Ex. 32:11-14.) The nation was not forgiven, but this particular punishment was withdrawn. Amos did not ask for forgiveness again (cf. Amos 7:2 with v. 5), for some judgment on Israel was inevitable. But by his prayers he was able to affect what form that judgment would take. **7:4.** In a second vision **the sovereign LORD** showed Amos a second terror—a **judgment by fire**. God intensified the blazing summer heat till all grasslands and trees became tinder dry. Then fires

broke out and spread in every direction with incredible speed (cf. Joel 1:19-20). Attempts to combat the sweeping inferno were futile, for **the great deep**, the subterranean waters that fed all springs (Gen. 7:11; 49:25; Deut. 33:13), had **dried up**. With the source of all waters consumed, the rivers and streams disappeared, and the flames raged unchecked until they had **devoured the land** (cf. Deut. 32:22).

7:5-6. Again, distraught by the vision, Amos begged God to **stop**, and **the LORD relented** a second time. Neither would fire be the means by which He would punish the nation (see v. 3). For the third time the prophet was shown a vision of judgment. This time the sentence was unalterable.

7:7-8. The LORD held in His hand a plumb line. A plumb line was a cord with a lead weight used by builders to make sure that walls were constructed straight up and down. A plumb line was also used to test existing walls to see whether they had settled and tilted, needing to be torn down. God was **setting a plumb line** (possibly the covenant Law and its requirements; cf. Isa. 28:17) **among His people Israel**. The nation had been built “true to plumb,” but now was out of line and needed to be torn down. God quickly precluded any appeal from His prophet. The matter was settled; He would **spare them no longer**. This was the form His judgment would take (see Amos 7:3, 5-6).

7:9. Having failed the test of the plumb line, the nation’s chief “structures”—both religious and political—would be demolished. **The numerous high places** (hilltop shrines) **of Isaac** would **be destroyed**. Like “Jacob” (see 3:13) and “Joseph” (cf. 5:6, 15; 6:6) “Isaac” was a name for the Northern Kingdom. The larger official **sanctuaries of worship**, such as Bethel and Gilgal, would **be ruined** (cf. 3:14; 4:4; 5:5-6; 7:13). **And the house** (political dynasty) **of Jeroboam II** would crumble under the stroke of God’s **sword** (cf. 2 Kings 14:29; 15:10). The incident recorded in verses 10-17 is integrally tied to Amos’ third vision (vv. 7-9) in two ways. First, it reveals the immediate historical reaction to the vision’s content. The fact that certain words appear in both the vision and the incident, but nowhere else in the book after 1:1 (viz., “Isaac” in 7:9, 16; “sanctuaries” and “sanctuary” in vv. 9-11), indicates that the episode was an immediate response to the revelation. Second, the historical incident is linked to the vision because it represents a concrete example of the “plumb line” in operation, this time as a test of individuals. The vision had revealed that Israel’s institutions, both religious and political, had failed the test and would have to come down. Now, in the incident with Amaziah, the sovereign Lord drew near to measure two men—one a prophet, the other a priest. One was accepted; the other was not. One heard and obeyed the voice of the Lord; the other refused to hear.

7:10-13. As **Amos** began publicly to recount his vision of ruined sanctuaries and dynastic demise, he was challenged by **Amaziah the priest of Bethel**. Bethel was one of the two state sanctuaries established by Jeroboam I when in 931 B.C. he broke from Jerusalem and the kingdom there (1 Kings 12:26-33). In order to unite the 10 tribes around his rule, Jeroboam I created a new shrine and a duplicate religious system. The purpose of the calf, altar, priesthood, and festivals of Bethel was to give credence and stability to Jeroboam I’s Northern Kingdom. In Amos’ day the shrine at Bethel was **the king’s sanctuary and the temple** (lit., “house,” but frequently used as a synonym for “temple”; cf. 1 Kings 6; 8:6-66; 2 Chron. 2:1) **of the kingdom** (Amos 7:13). Besides being the site where Jeroboam II worshiped, it was, more importantly, the religious symbol which rallied political commitment to the kingdom. As the temple in Jerusalem drew devotion to the lineage of David, so the existence of Bethel implied God’s sanction and support of the Northern monarch. To denounce Bethel and its system of worship (cf. 3:14; 4:4-5; 5:5-6, 21-26; also note 7:9; 9:1) was to attack the very foundation of the kingdom. Amaziah was evidently Bethel’s chief priest, in charge of worship and personnel (cf. Jer. 20:1-2; 29:26). Hearing Amos’ forbidding words against the sanctuary and the monarch, Amaziah **sent a message to Jeroboam** charging Amos with **raising a conspiracy against the king in the very heart of the Northern Kingdom**. He warned Jeroboam that **the land** could not **bear** such repeated messages of catastrophe: the people would be demoralized or sooner or later some dissident rebel would be prompted to fulfill the predictions. On previous occasions a prophet’s words against a king had been followed by internal revolt and by a change in dynasties (1 Kings 11:29-12:24; 16:1-13; 2 Kings 8:7-15; 9). Amaziah refused to acknowledge in any way the divine source of Amos’ prophecies, choosing instead to view him as a political agitator. In his report to Jeroboam he prefaced the threatening quote (Amos 7:11) with, **This is what Amos is saying**, rather than with, “This is what God has said.” In quoting Amos, the priest deliberately omitted the prophet’s words about God’s claim of personal action, “with *My sword I will rise against... Jeroboam*” (v. 9). Amaziah substituted the simple fact, **Jeroboam will die**. He reported Amos’ words in a form designed to incite the king, twisting the prediction of the dynasty’s fall (v. 9) into a threat against Jeroboam himself (v. 11), and highlighting the announcements of national **exile** (v. 11; cf. 4:3; 5:5, 27; 6:7; cf. 7:17). Amaziah chose to see Amos as a menace to the status quo rather than as a messenger from the God of Israel. Having dispatched his letter to the king, **Amaziah** then confronted **Amos** with the strong directive, **Get out, you seer!** Claiming authority

over the activities **at Bethel**, the priest ordered Amos to **go back to his home in Judah** (cf. 1:1) and **do his prophesying there**. A “seer” (7:12) was another name for a prophet (1 Sam. 9:9; 2 Sam. 24:11; Isa. 29:10). This title called attention to the prophet’s activity of beholding or “seeing” visions (Isa. 1:1; 2:1; Obad. 1; Micah 1:1; Nahum 1:1; Amos 1:1). These visions were “seen” by the prophets mentally and spiritually. Amaziah, reacting to Amos’ “visions” (7:1, 4, 7), used the word in a derogatory sense. His scornful advice to **earn your bread** in Judah implied that Amos was a professional predictor who made his living selling prophecies (Micah 3:5, 11; cf. the women of Ezek. 13:17-20 who prophesied “out of their own imagination.... for a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread”). The stress in Amaziah’s words fell on the location or geography of Amos’ activity: “Go to *Judah*, earn your bread *there*, do your prophesying *there*, but don’t prophesy anymore *at Bethel*.” In his authority as the king’s priest he commanded Amos, “Leave *Israel!*” Amos’ response, however, was that a greater Authority had commanded him to prophesy *in Israel*.

7:14-15. Amos denied that his ministry was self-generated, insisting that it was solely the result of God’s initiative. Amos had not chosen the calling of **a prophet nor** had he trained for it by becoming **a prophet’s son** (i.e., a member of a prophetic school under the tutelage of a “father”; cf. 2 Kings 2:1-15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1-7; 9:1). On the contrary, he had been profitably and contentedly occupied as a **shepherd**, and as a grower of **sycamore-fig trees**. (For a discussion of Amos’ occupation, see “The Prophet” section in the *Introduction*.) But one day **the LORD took** him—the same verb is used for God’s calling the Levites (Num. 18:6) and David (2 Sam. 7:8; Ps. 78:70)—**from tending the flock, and** the Lord (the words “the LORD” are repeated in Heb.) commissioned him to **Go, prophesy to My people Israel**. In the NASB the contrast is heightened between Amos’ threefold denial of self-seeking (“I”... “I”... “I,” Amos 7:14) and his threefold assertion of “the LORD’s” authority (vv. 15-16). God had commanded him not only what to say but also where to say it. The authority was not Amaziah’s, but the Lord’s. The place, therefore, would not be Judah, but Israel. The Lord had spoken, and Amos would prophesy as He directed (cf. 3:8; Acts 5:27-29).

7:16-17. Now this same **LORD** had a **word** for the priest who had dared to forbid what He had commanded (cf. 2:11-12). Because Amaziah had rejected God’s word **against** the nation, he and his family would suffer the full fate of the nation. When the divine sentence of **exile** was carried out (cf. 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:11; 9:4), he would be among those swept **away from their native land**. His **wife** would be forced to make a living as a **prostitute in the very city** where once she had been among the most distinguished women. His posterity and name would come to an end as **the sword** claimed the lives of his **sons and daughters**. His estate would **be measured and divided up** among foreigners (cf. 2 Kings 17:24; Jer. 6:12), and he himself would **die in a pagan** (lit., “an unclean”) **country**. He would be stripped of his office, bereft of a shrine, and defiled by the unclean food of a heathen land (cf. Ezek. 4:13; Hosea 9:3-4). Had Amaziah responded differently, had he repented at Amos’ word, he might have been spared (Amos 5:4-6, 14-15). But instead he chose to align with an earthly monarch, to embrace the national mood of pride and security, and to assert his authority against God’s messenger. So the Lord quietly withdrew the plumb line. He would spare Amaziah no longer.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

We know nothing of the Prophet Amos outside of the prophetic book that bears his name. What we discover about him in that book is rather amazing. The book begins with just a brief notation of the time in which he prophesied. This is followed by a prophetic word of judgment directed at the nations surrounding Israel and then turning to focus on the northern kingdom of Israel itself. Amos's call to the prophetic ministry is mentioned only in hindsight by Amos as he addressed Amaziah, the priest of Beth-el. Beth-el was one of the centers of the false religion followed by the apostate Israelites of the north. Amos's words to Amaziah highlight the unusual circumstances of the prophet. One writer stated, "Of all those called of God to prophesy, Amos might well have appeared the most unlikely" (Twombly, *Major Themes from the Minor Prophets*, BMH). In fact, in answer to Amaziah's demand that he no longer prophesy at Beth-el, Amos acknowledged that he lacked the credentials of many prophets. He was not known as a prophet, as were Habakkuk (Hab. 1:1) and Jonah (2 Kings 14:25; Jon. 1:1). He was not the son of a prophet and thus expected to follow in his father's footsteps. Neither was he a priest like Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:3). And unlike Jeremiah, he had not been called while in his mother's womb (Jer. 1:5). In many ways, Amos was a nobody. He described himself as a "herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit." While some have suggested Amos was a prominent man in his community, there seemed to be nothing special about him. He tended sheep and cattle and cultivated sycamore trees for their fruit. He was not a prophet by profession but a simple farmer and herdsman. He lacked the credentials that would naturally give authority to his message. Amos declared that the Lord had taken him from his flocks and given him this simple message: "Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." This is what gave his message authority and gave him

boldness to continue to speak God's message in the face of opposition. Jeroboam II was the king of Israel at this time (Amos 1:1). He was one of Israel's strongest kings, and the nation enjoyed peace and prosperity during his reign. This, combined with the fact that Amos was not from Israel but from Tekoa in the southern kingdom of Judah, made his call to prophesy to the people of Israel all the more unusual and seemingly unlikely to bear fruit. Why would they listen to this undistinguished "foreigner" announcing doom when they were flourishing? Yet Amos boldly spoke God's words. The faithfulness and boldness of God's servants come not from who they are but from who God is. The One who sends is the One who empowers and provides. Yes, God uses people who are well known and trained, people like Paul and Daniel; but He also uses regular people like Peter and Amos. And He uses people like us if we will go in His power, knowing He has sent us with a message the world needs to hear.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

A young man in seminary was very talented. So talented that he believed that it was only fair that he offer his services as a minister of the gospel to the highest bidder. He spent time poring over data to discover which denomination offered the highest average salary. He was more than willing to tailor his doctrine to the beliefs of those willing to pay him for it! In contrast, we all know individuals who serve faithfully in full-time ministry as a vocation. There is certainly nothing wrong with a preacher's being paid a living wage as compensation for his work (1 Corinthians 9:7-14). There need be no conflict between earning a living and being an obedient servant of God. Although we would hope that the attitude of the man above is rare, those who choose vocational ministry struggle with a difficult question: Is there a difference between a professing and a professional follower of Christ? During his task of proclaiming judgment, the prophet Amos was confronted by a man who was paid for being a priest but who did not profess God's truth faithfully. Their conflict is insightful.

Amos was one of the many prophets whom God raised up during the period of the divided monarchy (931-722 BC) in Old Testament history. His ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah as king of Judah and Jeroboam as king of Israel (Amos 1:1). Commentators generally refer to this Jeroboam as Jeroboam II to distinguish him from the Jeroboam who was the first king of northern Israel after the nation divided. Both Uzziah and Jeroboam II experienced lengthy reigns: Uzziah (also known as Azariah) from 792 to 740 BC and Jeroboam from 793 to 753 BC (dates are approximate). Spiritually, however, the kings were quite different. The Scriptures record that Uzziah "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 26:4; an exception being the incident noted in 26:16-21). Jeroboam, by contrast, "did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kings 14:24). In fact, no kings of the northern nation of Israel were considered good or godly. This is an important reason the northern kingdom fell under God's judgment much sooner than did the southern kingdom of Judah. Prophets like Amos came on the scene to sound the alarm and warn of coming judgment. Many Bible students date the start of his ministry around 755 BC, toward the conclusions of the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam. Amos himself seemed an unlikely candidate for the prophetic task. He was a simple shepherd and fruit farmer from a village in Judah (Amos 7:14, part of today's text), but God sent him to shepherd his wayward people of northern Israel. In the warnings prior to today's text, Amos prophesied God's condemnation of various locations around Israel, including the southern kingdom of Judah (1:3-2:5). That was followed by a long, scathing indictment of Israel. Injustice was rampant there, and God intended to correct that problem (4:1; 5:7, 10-12; etc.). A major factor in the spiritual decline of northern Israel was the idolatry encouraged by Jeroboam I when he set up golden calves to be worshipped in the towns of Bethel and Dan. He did so to keep his residents of the northern kingdom from traveling to Jerusalem, worshipping at the temple, and reaffirming their allegiance to the house of David (1 Kings 12:26-30).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Challenge (Amos 7:10-13)

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words.

11 For thus Amos has said: 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.'"

12 Then Amaziah said to Amos: "Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy.

13 But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is the royal residence."

The charge (10-11)

A charge of being a trouble maker (1 Kings 18:17)

17 When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?"

A charge of prophesying against the city (Jer 26:8-11)

8 But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the Lord had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die! 9 Why do you prophesy in the Lord's name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate and deserted?" And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. 10 When the officials of Judah heard about these things, they went up from the royal palace to the house of the Lord and took their places at the entrance of the New Gate of the Lord's house. 11 Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people, "This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears!"

A charge of subversion (Luke 23:2)

2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king."

A charge of teaching about Jesus (Acts 5:27-30)

27 Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!

A charge of stirring up riots (Acts 24:1-6)

Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. 2 When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. 3 Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. 4 But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly. 5 "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect 6 and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him.

The rebuke (12-13)

The Bible teaches that rebuke is good for the wise man (Prov 9:8-9)

8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. 9 Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.

Rebuke is needed so that others will be warned (1 Tim 5:20)

20 Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

When God rebukes, it is a testimony of His love (Rev 3:19)

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

Rebuke of discipline (Heb 12:7-11)

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Rebuke that does not lead to death (Ps 118:18)

18 The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

The Authentication (Amos 7:14-15)

14 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit.

15 Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'

Human inadequacy (14)

Man is only competent in God (2 Cor 3:5)

5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

Man must depend and rely on God (2 Cor 1:9)

9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

Man cannot boast of his wisdom or strength, only in God's power (Jer 9:23-24)

23 This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.

Man's abilities comes only from God who works in us (Phil 2:13)

13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Man can do all things through God who gives us strength (Phil 4:13)

13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

God's commission (15)

A commission to do something specific (Acts 22:6-10)

6 "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' 8 "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 9 My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. 10 "'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. "'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'

A commission that requires being set apart (Acts 13:1-3)

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

A commission through appointment (Luke 10:1)

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

A commission that cannot be run from (Jonah 1:1-3)

1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." 3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

A commission that sometimes results in volunteering (Isa 6:8)

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

A commission to be done without knowing the outcome (Heb 11:8)

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

The Prophecy (Amos 7:16-17)

16 Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord: you say, 'do not prophesy against Israel, and do not spout against the house of Isaac.'

17 "Therefore thus says the Lord: 'your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by survey line; you shall die in a defiled land; and Israel shall surely be led away captive From his own land.'"

Rejection of God's Word (16)

Rejection of God's word is rejection of God Himself (1 Thess 4:8)

8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Rejection of God's word bring condemnation (John 12:48)

48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.

Rejection of God's word causes it to leave the hearer (Matt 10:14)

14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.

Rejection of God's word should never be done (1 Thess 5:20)

20 do not treat prophecies with contempt.

Rejection of God's word bring disassociation (2 Thess 3:14)

14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

God's punishment for rejection (17)

Rejection that causes disasters (Prov 1:24-26)

24 But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, 25 since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, 26 I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you —

Rejection that brings eternal damnation (Acts 13:46)

46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.

Rejection that takes away entrance to the kingdom of God (Matt 21:42-43)

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" 43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

Rejection of the truth causes God's wrath (Rom 2:8)

8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

Rejection causes the fearful expectation of judgment (Heb 10:26-27)

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

Rejection that brings punishment (2 Thess 1:7-9)

7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable

Verse 1

Sovereign Yahweh showed Amos a mass of locusts swarming in the springtime after the first harvest and before the second. The Lord was forming this swarm of locusts. Ideally the very first crops harvested in the spring went to feed the king's household and animals (cf. 1 Kings 18:5). The crops that the people harvested later in the spring fed their animals and themselves. If anything happened to prevent that second harvesting, the people would have little to eat until the next harvest in the fall. The summer months were very dry and the Israelites had nothing to harvest during that season of the year. Locusts swarming indicated that they were about to sweep through an area and destroy all the crops. There was no way to prevent this in Amos' day. Locust invasions were a perennial threat, and they were a method of discipline that God had said He might use if His people proved unfaithful to His covenant with them (Deuteronomy 28:38; Deuteronomy 28:42; cf. Joel 1:1-7; Amos 4:9).

Verses 1-3

1. The swarming locusts 7:1-3

Verses 1-9

A. Three short visions of impending judgment 7:1-9

The three visions in this section are similar and may have followed one another in quick succession. The first two describe methods of divine judgment from which Amos persuaded God to turn aside, and the last one the method He would not abandon to judge Israel.

Verse 2

In his vision Amos saw the locusts strip the land of its vegetation. Then he prayed and asked the sovereign Lord to pardon Jacob (Israel) for its covenant unfaithfulness. Jacob was only a small nation and could not survive such a devastating judgment if the Lord allowed it to happen as Amos had seen in his vision. Amos' view of Israel as small and weak stands in contrast to that of Israel's leaders who believed it was strong and invincible (cf. Amos 6:1-3; Amos 6:8; Amos 6:13; Amos 9:10). Israel occupied a large territory under Jeroboam II, second only in its history to what Solomon controlled, but it was still small in relation to the larger empires of the ancient Near East. Amos may have meant that Israel was small in the sense of helpless. God had promised to take care of Jacob when that patriarch encountered Yahweh at Bethel, now a center of apostate worship in Israel (cf. Genesis 28:10-22). Perhaps that is why Amos appealed to God with the name of Jacob (cf. Amos 3:13; Amos 6:8; Amos 7:5; Amos 8:7; Amos 9:8).

Verse 3

In response to Amos' prayer, the Lord relented and said He would not bring a completely devastating judgment on Israel, at least then. He would be merciful and patient and would grant Israel more grace (cf. Exodus 32:14). The prayers of righteous individuals, like Amos, can alter the events of history (cf. James 5:16-18). Some things that God intends to do are not firmly determined by Him; He is open to changing His mind about these things. However, He has decreed other things and no amount of praying will change His mind about those things (cf. Jeremiah 7:16; Jeremiah 11:14; Jeremiah 14:11-12; Acts 1:11; Revelation 22:20). It is important, therefore, that we understand, from Scripture, what aspects of His will are fixed and which are negotiable. The same distinction between determined choices and optional choices is observable in human interpersonal relations. Good parents, for example, will not permit their children to do certain things no matter how much the children may beg, but they do allow their children to influence their decisions in other matters. [Note: For further discussion of this issue, see Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches about Prayer*, pp149-52; idem, "What Prayer Will and Will Not Change," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, pp99-113; John Munro, "Prayer to a Sovereign God," *Interest* 56:2 (February 1990):20-21; and Robert B. Chisholm, "Does God 'Change His Mind'?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:608 (October-December 1995):387-99.]

Verse 4

Sovereign Yahweh also showed Amos a vision of a great fire that was burning up everything. Like a great drought it consumed all the water and all the farmland (or people) in Israel (cf. Amos 1:9-10). What he saw may have been a scorching heat wave that resulted in a drought. The "great deep" is a phrase that refers to subterranean waters that feed springs (cf. Genesis 1:2; Genesis 7:11; Genesis 8:2; Genesis 49:25; Deuteronomy 8:7; Ezekiel 31:4). So intense was the fire that Amos saw that it dried up even these underground water reservoirs. Great heat with consequent drought was another of the punishments that the Lord warned of for covenant unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy 28:22).

Verses 4-6

2. The devouring fire 7:4-6

Verse 5-6

Amos prayed virtually the same prayer again asking the sovereign Lord not to send such a judgment because Jacob was small (cf. Amos 7:2). Again the Lord relented and determined that it would not come then (cf. Amos 7:3). He would not discipline Israel with a locust plague or with a raging "fire."

Verse 7

Amos saw a third vision. The Lord was standing beside a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand. The wall was probably a city wall rather than the wall of a house. [Note: George Adam Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets Commonly Called the Minor*, 1:114; Ellison, p66.] Niehaus believed Amos saw a wall of tin, symbolic of Assyria's power, and the Lord standing above the wall judging it. [Note: Niehaus, p456. See also Chisholm, *Handbook on . . .*, pp397-98.] A plumb line was a string with a weight on the end. People used it, and still use it,

to determine if a vertical structure is completely straight. God was testing something by a true standard; His judgment is not arbitrary.

Verses 7-9

3. The plumb line 7:7-9

Verse 8

The Lord asked the prophet what he saw, and Amos replied that he saw a plumb line. Then the Lord explained that He was about to test Israel as a builder uses a plumb line. The true standard by which He would judge Israel was undoubtedly the Mosaic Law, the covenant that He had given her by which God measured her uprightness (cf. Exodus 19:6). The Lord further announced that He would not spare the Israelites from His judgment any longer; Amos' prayers for Israel would not turn away His punishment as earlier (Amos 7:3; Amos 7:6). The nation was so far out of plumb that God would tear it down.

Verse 9

The method of judgment God would use would not be locust invasion or fire but the sword. An enemy would invade Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 28:49-50). This enemy, as Yahweh's agent, would destroy the outdoor high places on hilltops and the temple sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel where the people worshipped God and idols, namely, all their worship centers. Amos probably used "Isaac" simply as a synonym for "Jacob" and "Israel." Another view follows. "Amos seems to have in mind the special veneration for Isaac which members of the Northern Kingdom displayed in making pilgrimages south to Beersheba (cf. Amos 5:5; Amos 8:14), Isaac's birthplace." [Note: Hubbard, p210.] The "house of Jeroboam" probably refers to the dynasty of Jeroboam II, but it could refer to the nation of Israel as headed by Jeroboam I. Jeroboam II's dynasty came to an end with the assassination of his son and successor Zechariah (2 Kings 15:8-10). These three visions appear to have come to Amos in close succession. The final compiler of Amos' prophecies, probably Amos himself, undoubtedly grouped them because of their similarity. They are obviously alike and together present a picture of judgment mercifully deferred twice but finally brought on Israel. They clarify the method of Israel's punishment, namely, defeat by an enemy's invading army, and they show that judgment would come after God's patience with the nation had been exhausted.

Verse 10

Amaziah, who was one of the apostate priests who served at the Bethel sanctuary (cf. 1 Kings 12:26-33), felt that Amos was being unpatriotic in what he was prophesying. So Amaziah sent a message to King Jeroboam II charging Amos with conspiring against the king within the land. He felt that Israel could not afford to endure Amos' prophesying any longer. Previously internal revolt against a king had sometimes followed a prophet's pronouncements (cf. 1 Samuel 16:1-13; 1 Kings 11:29-39; 1 Kings 16:1-13; 1 Kings 19:15-17; 2 Kings 8:7-15; 2 Kings 9:1-28; 2 Kings 10:9).

Verses 10-13

1. The challenge 7:10-13

Verses 10-17

B. An intervening incident 7:10-17

The event described in this pericope evidently followed and grew out of the preceding visions that Amos announced (Amos 7:1-9). Certain key words occur in both sections of the book but not elsewhere in it: Isaac (Amos 7:9; Amos 7:16) and sanctuary (Amos 7:9-11). Also the historical incident is a concrete example of God's plumb line in operation, but here it judged individuals. The prophet Amos passed the test, but one of the priests of Bethel, Amaziah, failed the test.

Verse 11

Amaziah reported that Amos was saying that the king would die by the sword and that the Israelites would definitely go into exile. While we have no record that Amos said these exact words, they do represent fairly the message that Amos was announcing (cf. Amos 7:8-9). By claiming that Amos was predicting Jeroboam's death, the priest was personalizing the danger of Amos' ministry to the king and was emotionally inciting him to take action against the prophet. Amaziah regarded Amos' prophecies as simply the prophet's own words. He had no respect for them as messages from Israel's God but viewed them only as a challenge to the status quo.

Verse 12-13

Amaziah then approached Amos and told him to move back to Judah and to earn his living in his home country (cf. Amos 1:1). By referring to Amos as a seer (another term for a prophet, cf. 1 Samuel 9:9; 2 Samuel 24:11; Isaiah 29:10), Amaziah was probably disparaging the visions that Amos said he saw (Amos 7:1-9). [Note: See Stuart, p376; and E. Hammershaimb, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary*, p116.] By telling him to eat (earn) his bread in Judah, he was hinting that Amos needed to get a "legitimate" job rather than living off the contributions he received for prophesying (cf. Genesis 3:19; 2 Kings 4:8; Ezekiel 13:17-20; Micah 3:5; Micah 3:11). Amaziah told Amos to stop prophesying in Bethel (emphatic in the Hebrew text) because it was one of the king's sanctuaries (places of worship) as well as one of the king's residences (places of living). Bethel, of all places, was an inappropriate town in which Amos should utter messages of doom against Israel, from Amaziah's perspective. Amos had become an embarrassment to the political and religious establishment in Israel.

Verse 14

Amos replied that he was not a prophet by his own choosing; he did not decide to pursue prophesying as a career. Neither had he become a prophet because his father had been one. In Amos' culture it was common and expected for sons to follow in their father's line of work, though this was not true of genuine prophets. It is possible that Amos meant that he was not the son of a prophet in the sense that he had not been trained in one of the schools of the prophets under the tutelage of a fatherly mentor (cf. 2 Kings 2:1-15; 2 Kings 4:1; 2 Kings 4:38; 2 Kings 5:22; 2 Kings 6:1-7; 2 Kings 9:1). [Note: B. Smith, p139, n56.] Rather Amos had previously earned his living in a totally unrelated occupation. He had been a herdsman and a nipper of sycamore figs. The term "herdsman" refers to someone who bred livestock, not just a shepherd who looked after animals. A nipper of sycamore figs was one who pierced sycamore figs so they would be edible. "The fruit is infested with an insect (the *Sycophaga crassipes*), and till the "eye" or top has been punctured, so that the insects may escape, it is not eatable." [Note: W. R. Smith, cited in Samuel R. Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos*, p212.] "Or, the term may refer to the practice of slitting the sycamore-fig before it ripens-a process that ensures that it will turn sweet." [Note: Niehaus, p463. Cf. Wolff, p314.] Thus Amos had a respectable agricultural business background before he moved to Israel to prophesy. He had not been a "professional" prophet like many of the false prophets. He had not always made his living by being a prophet but only functioned as a "called" prophet. Therefore, Amaziah should not think that Amos came to Israel to prophesy because that was the only work that he could do or to make money.

Verses 14-17

2. The response 7:14-17

Verse 15

Amos had come to Israel having been sent there by Yahweh to prophesy (cf. Numbers 18:6; 2 Samuel 7:8; Psalm 78:70). The Hebrew text repeated the words "the LORD" for emphasis. God had given him a definite commission, and Amos had left his former occupation to obey that divine calling (cf. Acts 5:27-29). Amos' ministry and his location were God's choosing.

Verse 16-17

Amos then announced a prophecy from the Lord for Amaziah. Because the priest had told the prophet to stop doing what Yahweh had commanded him to do (cf. Amos 2:12), Amaziah's wife would become a harlot in Bethel. She would have to stoop to this to earn a living because she would have no husband or sons to support her. Her children would die by the sword. This may also imply the end of Amaziah's family line. Amaziah's land would become the property of others, presumably the Assyrians, and he himself would die in a foreign, pagan land. All these things would evidently happen when the foreign enemy destroyed Israel. Stifling the word of God proved disastrous for Amaziah, as it still does today. Finally, Amos repeated that Israel would indeed go into exile, the message that Amaziah had reported that Amos was preaching (cf. Amos 7:11). Amaziah had told Amos to stop prophesying, namely, to stop preaching (Amos 7:16). "Preaching" is from a verbal root meaning "drip" (Heb. *natap*), as the heavens drip rain (Judges 5:4; cf. Amos 9:13). The idea is that Amos should stop raining down messages from heaven on his hearers. True prophets were people who spoke fervently for Yahweh. [Note: Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, p63.] "Amaziah's loyalty was to Jeroboam, who probably appointed him as priest at Bethel. Amos's loyalty was to God, who sent him to prophesy against Israel. Conflict between Amaziah and Amos was inevitable since their loyalties were in conflict. Primary loyalty to God in their service to Israel would have eliminated conflict between the king, the priest, and the prophet. The answer to conflict among God's people is always to place loyalty to God above all else." [Note: B. Smith, p136.]

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Amos was under intense pressure to modify or silence his message rather than risk offending the high officials in the northern kingdom; the pressure the church faces today is similar (compare Matthew 15:12-14; Acts 4:18-21). The pressure may tempt us to ask ourselves, “Who am I to judge another’s conduct?” Amos shows how to meet such a challenge: it is a matter of calling. When Amaziah asked, in effect, “Who do you think you are?” Amos had a ready answer. We must be prepared to do the same (1 Peter 3:15). Amos knew who he was, and he knew his task. God expects the same of us (Matthew 28:19, 20; 2 Timothy 2:15). A simple review of how God has worked and desires to work in your life may result in your becoming an Amos to the lost of your community.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. People will often become defensive when they are told about God's judgment (Amos 7:10-12)
2. Sharing God's truth can cause us to be unwelcomed by sinners (vs. 13)
3. We do not need a title in order to be called by God (vs. 14)
4. God's servants speak by His authority (vss. 15-16)
5. We should not allow anyone to stop us from delivering God's message
6. Rejecting the pronouncement of judgment does not stop it from happening (vs. 17)