



Amos 1-3

Tape #7355
Amos 1-3
By Chuck Smith

With Joel, we had no introduction, giving us a background of who he was, when he prophesied, which kings were in power. But Amos, like most of the prophets, gives us sort of an identification as he opens his prophecy. He tells you who he is, where he came from, and basically the time that he was prophesying. Verse one...

These are the words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa (1:1),

That is, he was among the shepherds. He also, we are told in chapter seven, gathered the fruit of the sycamore tree. Now certainly the sycamore tree is not the sycamores that we know here in California. But it is thought to be a form of the fig tree. The sycamores here really don't have fruit. They have that little hard, multi-thorned little seed pod. But, you wouldn't want to try to eat that.

But, Tekoa is south and west of Bethlehem, about six miles, in a little valley. If you have been to Israel, and you have visited what they call the Herodian, from the Herodian, you can see the little village of Tekoa. If you will look pretty much directly south, slightly east, from the Herodian, you'd see the little village of Tekoa. About six miles from Bethlehem, twelve miles or so from Jerusalem. Small, insignificant, the only reason why we even know of Tekoa, is that Amos came from there.

It does exist to the present day, but holding the same name. But a very small little village right on the edge of the wilderness, towards the great cliffs that then go down to the area of the dead sea. So, "He was among the herdmen", the many shepherds, there in the area of Tekoa.

these are the words that he saw [The visions that he had] concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah (1:1),

So, though he was from Judah, as Tekoa is there in the land of Judah, yet God called him to go to Israel to prophecy. It was in the time that Uzziah was the king in Judah.

and Jeroboam who was the son of Joash was the king of Israel (1:1),

So Jeroboam actually began his reign before Uzziah. He had been reigning about twenty-one years, before Uzziah began to reign. He had a total reign of forty one years.

During the time of Jeroboam's reign, the northern kingdom of Israel came to its zenith of glory and power. So going up to the kingdom when it was really flushed with power and glory, he came to them with the word of the Lord and these prophecies. He tells us that the prophecies were...

two years before the earthquake (1:1).

Now during the reign of Uzziah the king, there evidently was a tremendous earthquake. Other scriptures make reference to it. They do not actually give us any dates for this great earthquake, but we are told that the people fled from Jerusalem, as the result of this great earthquake. Zechariah mentions that, "They will flee, as they fled in the days of the great earthquake, and during the reign of Uzziah". So it was something that was well known among the people of those days, still very vivid in their memory, and thus he identifies the timing of this prophecy of two years before this earthquake.

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. Thus saith the Lord (1:2-3);

Now he begins the prophecies against these surrounding nations. But this prophecy, "The Lord shall roar from Zion". We read that in Joel 3:16. There are about four different references in the old testament concerning this time, when the Lord will roar from Zion. Utter His voice from Jerusalem. In the book of Revelation, chapter ten, we have there in the future, this great angel, whose description sounds like the Lord. "He's clothed with a cloud, a rainbow upon his head, his face as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire." These descriptions parallel chapter one, in the description of Jesus, in the book of Revelation. "In his hand, this little scroll that is open, as he sets one foot upon the sea, the other on the earth, and cries with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth."

Many commentators believe that these many prophecies of the Lord roaring as a lion, or roaring, in this case, from Zion is a prediction of that glorious day, when the Lord comes to lay claim to the earth. Like a lion roars in its victory over its prey. So the world has been in rebellion against God for so long, and when Jesus comes with the scroll, and puts one foot on the sea, one foot on the earth, roaring like a lion, and declaring, “The kingdoms of this world, have now become the kingdoms of our Lord!”, you know, just yes! Victory!

So this, they feel is prophetic of that glorious day, that we hope is not very far off. Even so come quickly Lord Jesus, and may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done, in this earth, as it is in heaven!

The scroll is thought to be the scroll that was in chapter five of the book of the Revelation. The title deed of the earth that no one was worthy to open or to look upon, and then Jesus stepped forth, and took the scroll out of the right hand of the Father, who sits upon the throne, and began to loose the seals and open the scroll, as He has rights to the title deed of the earth. He came to redeem the world back from Satan, from darkness.

So, He comes with a scroll that is now loosed, it’s open, the seals are broken. He is claiming now that which He purchased with His own blood. Glorious day as He comes in great triumph, roaring like a lion! Love it, I can’t wait! I’m anxious to hear it!

Thus saith the Lord; [And now he begins the prophecies against the surrounding nations, first of all Syria.] For three transgressions of Damascus, [The capital of Syria.] and for four, [This sort of means the die is cast, there is no changing, these are gonna come.] I will [turn, I will] not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron: But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad. And I will also break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitants from the plain of Aven, [or destruction] 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 (1:3-5).

Going back to II Kings, chapter eight, beginning with verse seven, uh give you a little historic background for this. At the time that Elisha was a prophet, Benhadad was the king of Syria and he sent one of his top generals Hazael, down to the prophet of God to see whether or not he was gonna recover from his illness.

So, Hazael came to the prophet Elisha, and he said, “My Lord wants to know whether or not he’s going to recover from his illness”. Elisha made a very interesting prophecy, he said, “He will recover from his illness, but he will die”. Then he started staring in the face of Hazael, looking steadfastly right into his eyes, until Hazael became embarrassed. Then he said, Hazael said, “What’s happening?”, as the prophet began to weep. He said, “I see the horrible things that you are going to do, as you rip up the women who are pregnant, and as you devastate God’s people”. He said, “Though the king can recover from his illness, I see that you’re gonna murder him, and take over”. He said, “Am I a dog that I would do these things?”

But Hazael went back and the king said, “What did the prophet say?”, and he said, “You were going to recover from your illness”. But then he took a heavy, wet towel, and put it over Hazael, and suffocated him to death. And he took over the nation, and they attacked Israel on the Golan Heights, so that conflict on the Golan Heights, and of course even now they’re in the midst of negotiations, and Syria is wanting the Golan Heights again. Peace for property kind of a thing, or, and it goes way, way, way back! When Hazael came with the Syrians, and destroyed the Israelis, who were there in the Golan Heights, in the area of Gilead, of ancient days.

Because of this horrible massacre of the people, the mercilessness of the Syrian troops, ripping up the women who were pregnant, cutting them open, and taking the infants out, God said, “Because of that, I’m gonna bring the judgement on Damascus, and they will be taken as captives unto Kir. Tiglathpileser fulfilled the prophecy as he came and conquered Syria, and Damascus, and took them as captives, the prophecy was fulfilled.

Then he turns his attention towards the Philistines, and to Gaza.

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

The Philistines were the perennial enemies of Israel. They were the real powerful people who dwelled in the land, prior to Joshua coming in with the children of Israel. When Joshua took the land, that area that

belonged to the Philistines, was given by lot to the tribe of Dan. But they were never able to drive the Philistines out. They had five major Philistine cities, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza, Gath, and Ekron. So the Philistines remained there. Ultimately the tribe of Dan gave up in trying to take that territory, and they moved north, clear to the north end of the upper Galilee region right to the base of mount Hermon, the city of Lachish, and they conquered that area up there, and the tribe of Dan ultimately settled way in the north of the land.

The Philistines were the ones who gave Saul great problems. In fact, Saul was killed in a battle against the Philistines who had moved into the land, and had taken the most of the land of Israel, during the time of Saul. Saul was actually slain clear up in the area of Megiddo, there at mount Gilboa. It was through David and Solomon, that victory was finally achieved over the Philistines.

But God is here, pronouncing judgement. They were perennial enemies, but they're going to cease to exist, as a nation, as a people. They, in their battling against Israel, turned over some of the captives and the people unto the Edomites, who were also perennial enemies.

So God declares, "Thus saith the Lord, for the 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."

But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, [one of the major cities] and him that holds the sceptre from Ashkelon, [just south of Ashdod] and I will turn my hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish saith the Lord God (1:7-8).

You met a Philistine lately? God pronounced that they would perish, and they have.

Thus saith the Lord; For three transgression of Tyrus (1:9),

The city of Tyre, the kingdom of Tyre, that was of course on the southern part of the Lebanese coast, just north of the Israel border. During the reign of David, Hiram was the king of Tyrus, and Hiram was an admirer of David. Loved David, admired him, he loved this young man, and just made a covenant with David. They signed a treaty. This covenant whereby they would support each other, live together peaceably. When Solomon went to build the temple, king Hiram provided the cedars out of Lebanon by a agreement with Solomon. Thus, they lived together in harmony and peace, they had a peace treaty and a covenant. A mutual defense kind of pact, and a, a real peace existed, especially during the time of David and Solomon. But, "For thee transgressions of Tyrus"...

and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, [Much as did the Philistines.] and they remembered not this brotherly covenant (1:9):

They broke that covenant that David had made with Hiram. They did not remember this brotherly covenant.

So I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof (1:10).

That prophecy was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar, who came and destroyed the city of Tyrus, and of course later, by Alexander the great, who destroyed the island city that was built off shore, when Nebuchadnezzar took the onshore city of Tyrus. Then, to Edom, to the south and to the east of Israel. Edom was actually descendants of Abraham also. Descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob.

When their mother was expecting the children, it was a very difficult pregnancy, she prayed and asked God, "What in the world is going on inside my womb?", and God said, "There are two nations inside your womb, and they are diverse from each other". Though they were twin brothers, they were diverse from each other, probably duking it out in the womb, giving Rebecca a horrible time. Ha, ha!

When the first of the twins were born, Esau, he was covered with hair, thus they called him, "Hairy", that's what Esau means, hairy. When his brother Jacob was born, he reached out and grabbed Esau's heel, so they called him, "Yakov", the heel catcher.

You know the story of Jacob and Esau, how that Jacob took advantage of Esau, and Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of pottage, a bowl of lentil soup. How that later, Jacob disguised himself and received the blessing that his father intended to give to Esau. How he fled, because Esau threatened to kill him. This conflict between the brothers passed on to their descendants. There was never a real kind of peace

established between the Edomites, and the Israelites. There was always the bad blood. Now, God is bringing them in for judgement.

That area today is barren wilderness. There are really no major highways or even roads that go into the area. Just a few primitive villages. It was once the area of a thriving civilization. But, God pronounced His judgement against Edom, verse eleven...

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 a sword, and did cast off all pity, in his anger he did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever (1:11):

There was never a true forgiveness. There was always that bitterness, it hung on through the years. Thus...

But I will send a fire upon Teman, [One of the major cities of Edom, and then,] the capital of Bozrah he would [destroy, or] devour the palaces. Thus saith the Lord (1:12-13);

Going across the valley now, over to the area of what is today, Jordan, the area of Ammon. Today, you have Ammon, the capital of Jordan, and uh, "Thus saith the Lord"...

for the thee transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof (1:13);

And here they were doing the same thing as the Syrians. War is a horrible thing! We read today of the atrocities that are taking place in Bosnia. Unthinkable, horrible atrocities. The Germans were guilty of the same kind of atrocities in WWII, the Russians were guilty of them, and I don't know that we were totally innocent. War is a horrible thing. The basest part of man's nature is revealed in warfare. The total depravity of man does not need to be argued in warfare, it's so obvious. So...

they ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border (1:13): [They waged war only to enlarge their territory.] But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, [Rabbah was of course the capital of Ammon at the time.] and with shouting in the day of battle, and with tempest in the day of the whirlwind: And their king shall go into captivity, and his princes together, saith the Lord (1:13-15).

Chapter 2

Then, as we begin chapter two, he turns finally to Moab.

And thus saith the Lord; For the 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 in lime (2:1):

Having conquered the king of Edom, where they were not satisfied just to kill him, but they threw his body in lime, and let it dissolve, even the bones of the king.

But I will send a fire upon Moab, it will devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, with the sound of the trumpet: And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all of the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord (2:2-3).

So the judgement of God that was going to come upon the surrounding nations of Israel. But the prophecies are primarily against Israel. So now he begins the real thrust of his prophecies, as he turns now to Israel.

And thus saith the Lord; For the three transgressions [Well, first of all to Judah, a short one, and then to Israel. "For the three transgressions",] of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment; because they have despised the law of the Lord (2:4),

Now these are God's people, but they have turned away from the law of the Lord. King Uzziah was basically a good king, and he was prophesying during the time of king Uzziah, and you read of his reign, and, and there was a spiritual renewal under the reign of Uzziah. You remember that he was a popular king. He reigned for fifty one years in Judah.

Isaiah was really beginning his ministry around the time of Uzziah. Isaiah declares, "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, sitting on His throne. His glory did fill the temple". But after Uzziah, there were kings and in the succession of kings, they gradually were going down. Ultimately, they had forsaken completely the law of the Lord, and thus his prophecy, of their despising, not only

forsaking, they despised the law of the Lord.

It's a terrible thing when a society gets to the place of despising the law of the Lord. That's just worse than just ignoring. Well, they're not obeying the law of the Lord. That's bad. But if you get to the place where you despise the law of the Lord. We are getting there in these homosexual marches and all. Their, their signs and everything show total disregard for the law of the Lord. A despising of the law of the Lord! I wonder how long will God tolerate this to go on.

they have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err (2:4),

They had false prophets that were encouraging them. Men who were masking as prophets of God, but lying to them. Declaring that God was condoning the things that they were doing. I was hurt, disappointed, and shocked, when I saw that a minister here in Orange County, is now gonna be over the head of the planned parenthood, here in Orange County. Taken the post of director, of planned parenthood. And it hurts, but here they were in the days of Judah, causing the people to err, because of their lies. Giving them false hope, false comfort, false assurance.

But I will send a fire upon Judah, it will devour the palaces in Jerusalem (2:5).

Of course, Nebuchadnezzar came, and he burned Jerusalem. The fire devoured the palaces, the temple was destroyed.

Thus saith the Lord (2:6);

In fact, interesting thing, cause of fire. You can go to Jerusalem today, and you can walk down the path of the excavations made of the city of Ophel, and you can see a strata of ash, about six inches thick. The ash of the city of Jerusalem, that was destroyed by fire, by Nebuchadnezzar. I mean, you can go today and see that strata of ash, and realize, the word of God is certain, and will surely come to pass. "Thus saith the Lord"...

For the three transgressions of Israel, [Now we get to it.] and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because the sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; 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 to the same maid, to profane my holy name (2:6-7):

They were taking advantage of the poor people. Now God is a champion for the poor. God has always required that the poor of the land be taken care of. He was always a champion for the poor. They were taking advantage, enslaving them, selling them. There was, of course, immorality. Fathers and sons going into the same maid.

And they lay themselves down upon clothes that were laid for a pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god. Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; and yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath (2:8-9).

The Amorites were rooted out of the land by the power of God. The, the giants. Remember, when the spies came back, and they said, "There are giants in the land! We were like grasshoppers in their eyes!". God said, "I, I rooted them out of the land".

And I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I led you for forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorites. And I raised up your sons for prophets, and your young men for Nazarites (2:10-11).

God was working in their midst. The young men were consecrating their lives to God, because the vow of the Nazarite, was the vow of consecration. The vow of dedication unto God. "I raised up your sons for Nazarites". The Nazarite vow was not to cut your hair, or not to drink wine. It was a time of real consecration unto God. A, a man would consecrate his life to God, taking the vows of a Nazarite.

Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord (2:11).

He's calling them to bear witness that, yes this is their history, this is what God did. He brought them into the land, they served the Lord. God had His spokesmen in their midst, and the young men were dedicating their lives to God.

But [He said] you gave the Nazarites wine to drink; [Broke the vows, broke their consecration.] you commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not (6:12).

“You refused to listen to them. You ordered them not to prophesy.” I do not know but what we might not be getting close to that point in the United States, where the government will soon seek to restrict things that we say concerning say, the homosexuals, and all. As they are developing the powerful lobby. There’s, there’s talk that we will not be able to attack certain sins from the pulpit anymore. Send me a cake with a knife, with a saw in it would you, when those laws come? Verse thirteen, God said...

I’m gonna press you under (2:13),

We have a poor translation here. Rather than, “I am pressed under you”, it will, is, “I will press you under”. I’m gonna pressure you down, I’m gonna press you under...

as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves (6:13).

Just straining, “I’m gonna just put a real strain on you”.

Therefore the flight will perish from the swift, [“You won’t be able to get away from it, you won’t be able to flee from the trouble that is coming.”] the strong shall not strengthen his force (2:14),

“All of your strength.” Remember they are now in their zenith of their power and glory. They, they have conquered over others. Jeroboam was a powerful general, and, and they’ve conquered over their enemies. But their strength will not strengthen his force.

and neither will the mighty be able to deliver himself: Neither shall he stand that handles the bow; and he that is swift of foot will not be able to deliver himself: [“You won’t be able to run away from the trouble.”] and neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself. [The trouble, or the judgement of God is coming, it will be inescapable.”] And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the Lord (2:14-16).

Chapter 3

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 (3:1),

When He brought them up from the land of Egypt, in Deuteronomy, chapter seven, and also chapter fourteen, God declared that He had chosen them. “A peculiar nation, that He might reveal His grace through them.” So this is what the Lord said...

You only have I chosen, of all of the families of the earth (3:2):

Of all of the nations that were in the world, God chose the nation of Israel, that they might be the instruments of bringing the plan of God’s redemption to man. That they might be God’s instruments to receive the revelation, and to declare the truth of God unto the world. Special privileges, but with special privileges go special responsibilities. “To whom much is given, much is required.” Because of their failure...

therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities (3:2).

God had given them such glorious privileges, having chosen them above all nations and thus their sin is the sin against God, of rebellion against the known will, and law of God, which is a far greater sin than that of ignorance. Sins of ignorance are bad, and they will be judged. But sins of rebellion are going to bring greater judgement. As Jesus said to Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, “Their judgement will be greater in that day of judgement than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, or of the people of Ninevah”. The Lord said...

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

They had despised the law of the Lord, they would not walk in His way. You can’t walk together unless there is an agreement. You cannot walk with God unless there is an agreement. That is, that agreement is my surrender to His will. You cannot walk with God and, and, and be constantly pulling against God, wanting to go your own way! Or, insisting that God come your way. It is not yours to make the terms. God is the one that establishes the terms of our relationship. “Can two walk together except they be agreed?”

The only way you can walk with God is by surrendering to Him as Lord, and turning your life over to Him, and saying, “I want you to govern my life. I want you to guide my life. I want you to take over”. Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you”. The yoke was the thing they put on an ox so he could pull the plow, so he could be directed in the pulling of the plow. Jesus is saying, “I want to take the reins of your life. I want to guide your life”. So, the rhetorical question...

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

The lion only roars when he has got a prey, to strike fear in his heart, only roars when he has captured that prey.

Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where there's no trap set for him? or shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? Shall the trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid (3:5-6)?

The trumpet was blown when the enemy was coming. It was a warning that the enemy was attacking. Of course, when you'd hear those trumpets blow it would, it would strike fear. Sort of like hearing the air raid sirens during the war.

When we were in Hawaii last year for the Harvest Crusade, and Aniki was playing off shore, in sort of a unstable position. They didn't know which direction it was going. About five o'clock in the morning, I heard the civil defense warning signals. Heard those things and said, "Uh oh! Aniki's on its way". You know, and awakened by that. Of course the wind was already blowing at a fierce rate. That sort of gives you a feeling of apprehension. Greg was in the apartment next to us, and they came knocking on the door. They said, "We've figured out, we'll get in the garage, and in the car, and thus we'll be safe, in the safest place from the hurricane". But that gives you sort of a sense of apprehension when, when you hear the trumpet blowing. You know that there's danger. "And the people not be afraid".

shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it (3:6)?

That is, the evil of judgement. God allowed the judgement to come. The Lord has allowed that judgement.

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto the servants his prophets (3:7).

God was giving them advance warning from the prophet, of the judgement of God that was going to come because of their sin.

Now all of these people who set dates for the rapture of the church, use this particular passage of scripture. I should say misuse this particular passage of scripture. They declare that, "The Lord will not do anything, except He actually reveals His secret to the prophets". So they are prophets of God, and God has revealed the secret to them, and they know the date that Jesus is going to return for His church. Beware! Be leery of any date setting for the rapture of the church. It still remains as Jesus said, "No man knows the day or the hour of the coming of the Son of Man". He gave us a series of parables to illustrate the fact that we do not know the day or the hour, and thus we are to be watching, and we are to be ready, because He could come at any time.

So whenever anybody begins a book in the first chapter, and is trying to tell you why we know, what we can't know, according to the word of God, you can just discard the book. You don't need to read the rest of it, because you know that it's false. It's being built on a false premise. You start off with a false premise, and there's no way that you're gonna end up with the truth. But they use this scripture always in their date setting for the rapture of the church, that the Lord will not do anything until He reveals His secrets unto His servants, the prophets. But that had it's local setting and surely does not mean that God is gonna reveal to someone today, the date of His coming, so that they can publish books and be on talk shows, and get the world all excited.

The lion hath roared, and who shall not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, and who can but prophesy (3:8)?

When Jeremiah was thrown in prison for prophesying, Jeremiah determined, "I've had it. I'm not gonna say anything more in the name of the Lord. Here I prophesy in the name of the Lord, and I get thrown in prison. You know, that's no way for God to treat me, after I've been faithful in prophesying"! So he determined, he wasn't gonna prophesy anymore in the name of the Lord, but he said, "His word was like a fire in my bones, and I became weary of trying to hold it back, and I had to speak". Paul said, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!", and Amos said, "The Lord is spoken, and who can, you know who can withhold?" You've got to, you've got to speak it! "Who can but prophesy?"

So publish it in the palaces at Ashdod (3:9),

You remember that's exactly what David didn't want to happen at the death of Saul. He was upset because they would publish in Ashdod, the news that Saul had fallen, and the uncircumcised Philistines, would rejoice over Saul's death. "Publish in the palaces at Ashdod"...

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. For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces (3:9-10).

The northern kingdom was going to come into a chaotic condition, where there would be violence, robbery. It would not be safe to go to the mall. You would fear being assaulted by chariot jackers. Ha, ha! So God is calling their enemies to come and observe what's going on. These people who were to be God's witnesses to the world. But they are stirring up the violence and robbery.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; he shall bring down your strength from you, and your palaces shall be spoiled. Thus saith the Lord; As the shepherd takes 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 (3:11-12).

Now he was a shepherd you remember. He said he was among the herdmen at Tekoa. Now, if you were given sheep to watch, and a lion would attack the flock, and drag off one of the sheep, you as the shepherd, were held responsible for that sheep. Unless you could prove that a lion had devoured it. You might come and say, "Well a lion devoured one of the sheep", but you may have barbecued the thing, or it may have just strayed off and you weren't watching it carefully, and it may have gotten lost, and you just, "Oh let it go! Dumb little sheep!", and forget it. You know.

So, it was important to bring evidence that the sheep was attacked by a lion. So you'd, you'd chase after the lion, and you'd do your best to get a part of an ear or something, from the lion's mouth, in order that you could prove that a lion had actually devoured that sheep. Else, you were responsible for the, to pay for it.

So, "As a shepherd takes out of the mouth of the lion, a couple of legs, or a piece of an ear", as evidence that the lion had, devoured the sheep indeed, "so shall the children of Israel be taken out". Just a remnant, just a part, they'll be destroyed, just, just a part of them as evidence of what had happened.

Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts, That in the day that I shall visit the transgression of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars in Bethel (3:13-14):

There is where they set up the altars to the calves that they had made, for the people of Israel to come and worship in Bethel, saying, "These are the gods that brought you out of Egypt". So in the day when God brings His judgement upon Israel, the northern kingdom, He will also come to Bethel and this altar that has been built will be destroyed.

the horns of the altar will be cut off, and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter house and the summer house; the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord (3:14-15).

As I said, it was a very prosperous time under king Jeroboam. The people had summer houses, and winter houses. Summer houses in the upper area of Samaria, in the hill country of Samaria, but down by the Jordan river, their winter houses. Thus they were very affluent. They had great houses. Beautiful homes. Both summer and winter homes. They had furniture of ivory. God said, "I'm gonna cut it all off. They're gonna be desolate. I'm gonna strip them. Only a piece of an ear, or a part of a leg will remain as evidence that I have destroyed them". So, he continues in his prophecies against Israel.

In chapter four, he continues of the judgement that will come upon Israel, but then in chapter five, as is so often the case, God then laments over the people. He weeps over the calamity that has come to them as the result of their folly. Sad, tragic stories of man's failures to be what God wants him to be.

Oh may God help us. We have been so blessed. We've been so privileged. God has been so good to us! Dare we be so foolish as to turn our backs upon God and say, "We don't need you, or we don't want you. We can get along very well without you. Thank you". God help us! The time of God's judgement I feel, is coming upon the United States, if we continue our current course, it cannot be long before God will bring, and allow judgement to come upon us. It behooves each of us to seek the Lord, to call upon the Lord. To humble ourselves, and pray and to seek His face.

Who knows? Maybe the judgement of God can be forestalled, that we have a little more opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know that in the last days, there will be perilous days, as men will become lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, giving heed to seducing spirits, and becoming involved in every kind of evil and vice. Look around. It's happening. Time for us to get serious before God.

Father, we thank You for the warnings of the Word. We know Lord, that they who do not learn their lessons from history, are due to repeat the same errors. Lord, may we learn, and may we turn from our wickedness unto You, and seek Your face, and renew our vows, and our commitment Lord, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Shall we stand? You know, I think it must have been tough on these prophets to prophesy of the judgements of God that were coming, knowing that the people were just gonna continue that path until judgement came. But knowing that they had that responsibility of God upon their lives to go ahead and to declare the warning to the people, yet knowing that the warning would not be heeded. Must have been hard. Hard indeed. For in those days, there were also hearers of the word, but not doers. People that were deceiving themselves. Say, "Well, I heard, went down and heard Jeremiah today. Pretty good sermon". But, no response, no reaction, no change! Must have been tough.

I pray that God will help us that we will be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves. That we indeed, will turn from a life dominated by our fleshly desires, to a life that is dominated by our spiritual desires. That we will make that covenant with God, that we are gonna walk with Him, according to His terms, obeying, yielding, surrendering our lives, to do His will.

May the Lord be with you and keep you in His love. May He strengthen you by His Spirit. May He give you power over the temptations to indulge your flesh, and may you indeed walk after the Spirit. A life that is pleasing and acceptable to Him. In Jesus' name.