

“All the Prophets Testify”: Amos 9:1-15

Midweek Bible Study – 2026 June 24

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<https://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/prophets>

Invocation & Opening Prayer

Follow-up to last class: pace, depth, other comments or questions?

Outline (the following is adapted from *TLSB* p.1457; we are expanding/collapsing the major divisions as we proceed through them):

- I. Judgment against the Nations (1:3-2:16)
- II. Declarations concerning Israel (3:1-6:14)
- III. Visions (7:1-9:15)
 - A. Visions That Do Not Come to Pass (7:1-6)
 - 1. Vision of the locusts (7:1-3)
 - 2. Vision of the fire (7:4-6)
 - B. Visions That Do Come to Pass (7:7-9:10)
 - 1. Vision of the plumb line (7:7-9)
 - 2. Historical interlude (7:10-17)
 - 3. Vision of the summer fruit (8:1-14)
 - 4. Vision of the Lord beside the altar (9:1-10)**
 - C. Restoration of David's Booth (9:11-15)

Vision of the Lord beside the altar (9:1-10):

9:1 *I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said:* the Divinely-inspired Amos continues reporting the visions the Lord revealed to his eyes and ears. Lessing contrasts the Lord's "showing" in previous cases with Amos's "seeing" in this case. Laetsch notes that the Lord is referred to by title and not by His covenant name. In 7:7 Amos had seen the Lord in some form (we might think of the Pre-Incarnate Son of God). Keil-Delitzsch distinguishes the preceding visions that indicated the judgment from this vision in which the Lord is engaged in the execution of the judgment. Which altar is not specified, perhaps an altar in the courtyard of one the northern kingdom's centers of false worship is meant. Roehrs-Franzmann says "perhaps at Bethel". *CSSB* says, "God is about to initiate the destruction from the very place from which the people expect to hear a word of peace and blessing...Whether the vision shows the Lord at Jerusalem or at Bethel is unclear, but we know of no temple structure at Bethel." Keil-Delitzsch says the altar is that of burnt-offering in Jerusalem and that the southern kingdom is targeted as much as the northern; Laetsch is similar, including saying that the Lord would not honor the temple and altar at Bethel with His presence. Lessing thinks the Lord is at Bethel but that Jerusalem's temple is also targeted. *TLSB* says Amos's introductory phrase "sets the stage for Amos's climactic fifth vision." In what follows, Amos seems to immediately quote what the Lord said.

“Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people: the Lord is commanding someone masculine singular (see also 9:3, 4, and 9). Kretzmann thinks the prophet Amos; Keil-Delitzsch thinks an angel, perhaps the destroyer who, for example, killed the firstborn in Egypt (Exodus 12:13, 23). Laetsch suggests different smiters are addressed as different enemies struck the different kingdoms at different times. Lessing comments, “the emphasis is not on who will do the smiting, but the certainty of the smiting itself, as well as the fact that Yahweh is commanding the destruction.” The capital at the top of the column is singular (Lessing says the singular collectively stands for all of them), while the thresholds beneath the column are plural, so “them” would seem to be the thresholds, though those hitting people in the heads seems hard to imagine. So, Keil-Delitzsch takes the plural as referring to the capitals and thresholds but also says the destruction is not literal but symbolical. Lessing translates, “Cut off the head of all of them”. Lessing also makes reference to the destruction of the Philistine temple of Dagon by Samson in Judges 16:25-30. Roehrs-Franzmann refers to a sanctuary normally as a place of refuge. *TLSB* comments, “The Lord will shake Israel’s illicit shrines to their very foundations. Their pillars would fall, and then the entire structures would collapse, killing the priests and worshipers.” Some commentators limit the columns to Jachin and Boaz, which were symbolic more than structural.

and those who are left of them I will kill with the sword; not one of them shall flee away; not one of them shall escape: perhaps they were injured by the falling structures? Keil-Delitzsch says the intention is “to cut off every loophole for carnal security”. *TLSB* comments, “Those fleeing the temple’s collapse will be killed with the sword.” Confer the mention of the sword in 9:4 and 9:10. Perhaps those fleeing are able to put some distance between themselves and the shrines as suggested in what follows?

9:2 *If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down:* “sheol” can be a pit, grave, or hell in the sense of the Old Testament sense of the abode of the dead. The contrast is “heaven”, which can be the sky, atmosphere, or heaven in the sense of the abode of God. But, we hardly think that people can dig into what we usually think of as hell or climb up into what we usually think of as heaven. Keil-Delitzsch refers to setting forth impossible cases, as though they were possible (confer Lessing), in order to cut off every escape. The contrast that follows in 9:3 seems more like what people can do. *TLSB* says, “Neither the deepest depth nor the highest height will provide a place of refuge. When God pours out His wrath, there is no place to hide”.

9:3 *If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them:* Lessing refers back to hiding in the Garden in Genesis 3:8, 10. Carmel is a mountain on the Mediterranean coast of northern Israel that commentators emphasize had groves at the top suitable for hiding.

and if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them: top of the highest mountain and bottom of the sea naturally contrast. Regarding the commanding, see 9:1 and 9:4 and 9:9. The involvement of the serpent is intriguing, since the context might suggest that a sword would eventually get them (9:1 and 9:4). *TLSB* comments, “Sea monster with a deadly bite stands ready to serve as God’s servant of destruction”. The Hebrew *nachash* is the same for the crafty “serpent” of Genesis 3 and the fiery/bronze “serpents” of Numbers 21:4-9, though in this case we might have expected Leviathan, often thought of as a sea monster or dragon (confer Keil-Delitzsch and Lessing).

9:4 *And if they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them:* “before” their enemies seems not to be temporal but spatial, as the enemies behind them marching them off (confer Lessing; the NIV translates “driven into exile by”), and Kretzmann refers to their “hoping to save their lives by surrendering to the foe” and to the sword’s being “wielded by those who hated them”. Regarding the commanding, see 9:1 and 9:3 and 9:9. On the sword, confer 9:1. *TLSB* comments, “Even exile in a foreign land will not provide an escape, for the Lord is ruler over all.”

and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good.”: regarding the fixing of the eyes, *TLSB* comments, “Usually, God ‘fixes’ His eyes on His people in order to show favor...Here, however, this expression seems to convey the certainty of Israel’s punishment.” The Hebrew word translated “evil” is *ra’*, which does not have to be moral evil but can be distress, misery, injury, calamity. Certainly God is not the author of “evil” in general, and His judgment against the northern Kingdom is righteous and good, but the people of the northern Kingdom likely would have deemed it “evil” and not “good”. Kretzmann refers to the verse bringing out the omnipresence and omnipotence of the Lord, and *GWfT* mentions also God’s omniscience.

9:5-6 *The Lord God of hosts ... the Lord is his name:* Amos apparently resumes speaking. The Hebrew is *’Adonay Yahovih tsaba’* (confer “Sabaoth” in the Sanctus of Divine Service, Setting Three; not “Sabbath” day of rest but “of heavenly hosts”). For all the relative description that follows in 9:5 and 9:6, what *TLSB* calls the “Last of Amos’s three hymnic doxologies of judgment”, the basic predication essentially is “The Lord God of hosts’s name is the Lord”. *TLSB* comments, “As Creator and Ruler of all, the Lord has more than sufficient power to carry out His threats, for He controls nature and guides human events. Accordingly, the Assyrians will soon accomplish God’s purpose, albeit unwittingly, when they come and destroy the northern tribes.”

9:5 *he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell on it mourn:* Psalm 46:6 includes the idea of the earth melting but at the voice of the Lord. The “mourn” need not entail any sense of repentance but can be as a result of the destruction.

and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks again, like the Nile in Egypt: confer the discussion at 8:8.

9:6 *who builds his upper chambers in the heavens and founds his vault upon the earth:* The Hebrew *ma’alah* translated “upper chambers” can be steps, stairs, or stories of heaven, while the Hebrew *’aguddah* is band, binding, vault of the heavens, or firmament that binds earth to the heavens. Laetsch takes “over the earth” as keeping with the facts and better depicting God’s power. The NIV text notes say the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. *CSSB* comments, “Contrasts the scale of God with the scale of man, whose structures fall at the movement of the earth”. Conceptually we probably should be taken back to Genesis 1’s account of creation, though neither word is used there. *TLSB* comments, “Cosmic imagery emphasizes that God is Creator and Sustainer of all things. As Lord of the universe, nothing can escape His judgment (vv 1-4).” Laetsch describes steps going up to the throne of God resting on the firmament as its floor but high above us. Lessing discusses creation, the tabernacle/temple, and the Incarnation of the Son as the final temple. Keil-Delitzsch connects the heavenly castle with the rain that pours down from it to flood the earth as described in what follows.

Who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the surface of the earth: *TLSB* comments, “May refer to the great flood (Gn 6:9-9:17). Just as there was no escaping God’s judgment in Noah’s day, so also it shall be when a flood of Assyrian soldiers overwhelms the land”.

9:7 ... *declares the Lord*: Amos apparently gives direct speech of the Lord (variously attributed to Him in 9:8, 12, 13, and 15), but perhaps distinct from what the Lord said while standing beside the altar (9:1) and so arguably revealed in some other way.

“Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?”: *TLSB* explains that the Cushites were descendants of Noah’s wicked son Ham and so “brothers” of the accursed Canaanites, also descendants of Ham (Genesis 9:18-24; 10:6). Note the use of “Israel” here and in 9:9 and 9:14 perhaps compared to the use of the earlier name of the same individual “Jacob” in 9:8.

Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?: Perhaps most-obviously to us, the Lord did bring up Israel from the land of Egypt. Implicitly then, yes, the Lord also brought up the Philistines from Caphtor, thought to be modern-day Crete (making the Philistines of Amos’s day different from the more-ancient Philistines and possibly the modern “Palestinians”), and, yes, the Lord brought up the Syrians from Kir, mentioned back in 1:5 as the apparent origin of the Syrians, not that the Lord did those bringing-ups in the same way as Israel’s out of Egypt. The Hebrew that the ESV translates “Syrians” Lessing renders “Arameans”. *CSSB* says that Israel’s “journey from Egypt is reduced to no more significance than the movements of other peoples.” Roehrs-Franzmann remarks that the exodus “can no longer be...the ground and basis of their confidence”. *TLSB* explains the rhetorical questions, “The Lord denies that apostate Israel enjoys a position of privilege before Him. By abandoning the covenant, the people have become no better [than the others]...Tragically, most from the northern tribes would lose their privileged covenant status.”

9:8 *Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom*: note the use of the sign-post “Behold” also in 9:9 and 9:13. Regarding the eyes, confer the discussion above at 9:4. Regarding the sinful kingdom, *TLSB* comments, “All that the Lord now sees in Israel is a wicked nation” (Keil-Delitzsch refers to both the northern and southern kingdoms; Laetsch does likewise). *CSSB* refers to Israel’s sin as “far worse” than the sins of other nations and refers back to 1:3-2:16 and 3:1-2. Keil-Delitzsch refers to Amos’s repeating in his own words in vv.8 ff. the threat exhibited symbolically in v.1, though we might put only this part of v.8 on Amos’s own lips distinct from the next two line-
portions, where the Lord certainly seems to speak in His own First-Person through Amos. *and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground*: *TLSB* comments that Israel “will be punished”.

except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,”: in Broadcast Journalism a pet-peeve was “totally destroyed”, seen as redundant for “destroyed” that expresses damage so severe that the object ceases to exist, can no longer be used, or is ruined beyond repair. *TLSB* comments, “Yet there is still a word of hope. Since God is just, a faithful remnant will be spared. The messianic line will continue, and people will be saved through Christ.” Amos 9:11-15 makes that Gospel proclamation more explicit. Regarding the use of “Jacob” compare 9:7 above and 9:9 and 9:14 below. Maybe “Jacob” more obviously includes “Judah” from which line the Messiah comes? Keil-Delitzsch at least rejects such a distinction but sees the difference in the sinfulness in contrast to the “holy seed out of which the Lord will form a new and holy people and kingdom”. Laetsch ponders the seemingly incompatible words coming from the same prophet at the same time, and Lessing considers modern scholars who reject Amos’s Gospel ending. Luther says consolation is added because of the devout.

declares the Lord: confer at 9:7 and see also 9:12, 13, and 15.

9:9 *“For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations*: note the use of the sign-post “Behold” also in 9:8 and 9:13. The Lord “commanded” also implicitly in 9:1 and explicitly in 9:3 and 9:4. The capitals struck and thresholds shaken of 9:1 may have been of the illicit shrines, a “temple” that can be translated from the same Hebrew *ben*, but “house of Israel” in this case seems to be more the people themselves in contrast to the nations (and a different Hebrew verb is used for the shaking in this case). Confer the use of “Israel” in 9:7 and 9:14 but “Jacob” in 9:8. When David is mentioned in 9:11, not the expected “house” in the possible sense of dynasty is used but “booth”.

as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth: regarding the “sieve”, Kretzmann sees the nations of the world as the sieve. *TLSB* explains, “Constructed from a punctured copper bowl or from a screen made with plant fibers.” My work with Civil Engineers makes me think of sieves that are intended to let material of a certain smaller size pass through, but whether or not that intent/result is the case here seems to be in dispute. The text says no pebble falls through. Luther takes it that way. *CSSB* refers to the sieve as separating wheat from stones and other refuse and says only the grain drops through. Keil-Delitzsch refers to the chaff’s flying off and the dust and dirt’s falling to the ground and the good grain’s being left in the sieve. *TLSB* comments, “Continues the remnant motif of v 8. God will separate the good from the bad. The evil will be punished from death, while the faithful remnant will be preserved for life.” But, as the prophecy continues, it might appear that the remnant comes not from Israel as the northern Kingdom but Judah as the southern Kingdom, particularly the line of David in 9:11.

9:10 *All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.’*: regarding “sinners”, *TLSB* comments, “All those doing evil will perish. The final sentence of the vision states Israel’s denial.” Certainly all people are sinners who think, say, and do evil, but those who repent (have contrition and faith) are forgiven, although in this case, if the people of Israel continued in unrepentance, then they died by the sword. Regarding the “sword”, see also 9:1 and 9:4, in all of which, Lessing says, the sword stands for the military invasion and reflects a covenant curse. “Disaster” is again the Hebrew *ra’*. People certainly can persist in false belief/hope that they are right and that they will not be destroyed but be wrong on both and other counts. Lessing refers to believers reckoned righteous through faith referred to in Amos as the remnant give the inheritance of God’s everlasting kingdom.

Restoration of David's Booth (9:11-15):

9:11 *In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen*: “In that day” is used here but “the days are coming” is used in 9:13, possibly indicating two different points or periods. As noted above at 9:9, the Divinely-inspired Amos interestingly refers not to “house” but “booth” as a “rude or temporary shelter”, perhaps because of its deterioration and decline, as *TLSB* notes “a temporary dwelling, a lowly hut”. Lessing says the word can also refer to the Lord’s heavenly pavilion and canopy and begins his interpretation with the Feast of Booths. *TLSB* comments, “Amos characterizes the royal house of David as having fallen into a weak and decrepit state. Yet the Lord promises to restore its fortunes for the sake of the covenant made with David (2Sm 7:8-16).” Luther describes the state of David’s line in Jesus’s day. *CSSB* says this verse is regarded as Messianic also in the Jewish Talmud and says it could refer to the dynasty of David or the united kingdom of the 12 tribes as under David. Keil-Delitzsch refers to it as the fallen “tabernacle”, and perhaps in that sense goes back to 9:1 and the destruction of Israel’s shrines, though Keil-Delitzsch also relate the decay of David’s house to the overthrow by the Babylonians. Lessing discusses David’s relationship with the northern tribes.

and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuilt it as in the days of old: though translated “its”, Keil-Delitzsch notes the first Hebrew noun’s plural possessive (the second and third are singular, as Lessing notes) and explains the plural as relating to the northern and southern kingdoms. *TLSB* comments, “This restoration of David’s line finds its fulfillment in the advent of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of David.” Lessing, for example, points to the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of those in Him.

9:12 *that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name*: the third-person masculine plural subject of the verb translated “possess” would seem to be those of the booth of David, or the northern and southern kingdoms, as Keil-Delitzsch seems to think (confer Lessing). Edom was mentioned in 1:6 (descendants of Abraham through Jacob/Israel’s brother Esau). *TLSB* comments, “Edomites were some of Israel’s most ancient and hated enemies...Nevertheless, the Lord promises that a remnant of Edom, along with peoples of all nations, will be made part of the restored Davidic kingdom. Then the greatest promise made to Abraham would be fulfilled: through his offspring (Jesus), ‘all the families of the earth shall be blessed’ (Gn 12:3).” Regarding being called by the Lord’s Name, *TLSB* comments, “In Christ, believers from every nation are freely granted the honor of being called by the Lord’s name. In this connection, note how James uses this passage to prove that all people shall be welcomed into the Church through Baptism and faith in Jesus, without any need for circumcision and the observance of similar rite[s?] (Ac 15:1-35, esp 16-17).” Keil-Delitzsch discusses whether or not the verse furnishes the proof that James in Acts 15 thinks it does, and Lessing discusses at length the relationship between the two passages. *CSSB* says the verse refers to the Lord’s anointed future king ruling over nations surrounding Israel as David had and that it represents the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. *declares the Lord who does this*: confer at 9:7 and see also 9:8, 13, and 15. *CSSB* notes “God does what he says.” Keil-Delitzsch refers to the expression as strengthening the promise. Laetsch colorfully comments, “This is not the fantastic dream of an overenthusiastic visionary. This is the unalterable oracle, the unfailing decree of the Lord, who alone can, who alone will, accomplish this”.

9:13 *“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord:* confer the use of the sign-post “Behold” also in 9:8 and 9:9. Compere “the days are coming” here with “In that day” in 9:11. On “declares the Lord”, confer at 9:7 and see also 9:8, 12, and 15. *CSSB* refers to what follows by commenting, “Amos’s final words picture a glorious Edenic prosperity”.

when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed: *TLSB* explains, “Promised restoration will be so abundant that there will be no breaks in the plowing-seeding-reaping work cycle.” Keil-Delitzsch says, “so quickly will the corn grow and ripen” and “the treading of the grapes will last to the sowing-time, so abundant will the vintage be”.

the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it: the Hebrew word translated by the ESV as “sweet wine” and referred to by the added English prepositional phrase “with it” can be “wine” or even (so new?) “pressed out juice”. (a different Hebrew word is used in 9:14). *GWfT* refers to overflowing wine presses that run down the hillside. *TLSB* comments, “Hyperbole. The blessings of the messianic kingdom will be overflowing (cf Mi 4:4).” Lessing refers to Jesus’s miracle at Cana in John 2:1-11 as indicating that the promises of Amos 9:13 are present in Him, and then Lessing moves on to the Lord’s Supper and marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19.

9:14 *I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them:* regarding the use of Israel, confer 9:7 and 9:14 but compare “Jacob” in 9:8. *TLSB* comments, “God will reverse to well-being all that was destroyed. Thus, people will rebuild and well (cf 3:15; 5:11; 6:11), plant and drink (cf. 4:9; 5:11), cultivate and eat (4:9). After the Messiah’s advent, nations wasting away in unbelief, superstition, and wickedness will be ‘rebuilt’ by the preaching of good news (Is 55:1-5; Zec 9:9-10), thus fulfilling the restoration promised here (cf Dt 30:3-5).

they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit: a different Hebrew word for “wine” is used here than in 9:13.

9:15 *I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,*”: note the reversal of the agricultural language familiar to Amos: as the people plant and reap, the Lord plants them and reaps from them and they are never uprooted. *TLSB* comments, “God’s restored people are given another promise—they will dwell securely. This pledge constitutes a reversal of the threats appearing in 5:2, 27; 7:17. Those called into relationship with the Messiah will be ‘the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified’ (Is 61:3). Cf. Jn 10:27-30; Rm 8:31-39; Php 1:6.” *CSSB* notes, “When Israel is finally restored, she will never again be destroyed.” Keil-Delitzsch finds the fulfillment not in the return from exile or a future establishment of the Jewish State but in the Church on the Last Day. Kretzmann sees fulfillment even before then as “the peace and prosperity of the true spiritual Israel, of the Church of the New Testament, in which every congregation is a garden of His mercy, and the streams of His love come down in the preaching of the Gospel, in order to bring peace to the hearts of poor sinners throughout the world.”

says the Lord your God: confer at 9:7 and see also 9:8, 12, and 13.

What are you taking home from the prophecy considered tonight?

TLSB's Law and Gospel Application Note for Amos 9:1-10 says, "In his fifth and final vision report, Amos makes two main points: (1) Because Israel has abandoned the covenant, it has forfeited its claim to a privileged status before God. Thus the nation will be destroyed, leaving only a tiny remnant. If you insist on living life on your own terms, arrogantly spurning God's will for your life, you will face judgment. (2) Yet the Lord provides a means of escape: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1Jn 1:9)." [How much that second point, while true in and of itself, is Amos's point in the passage might be debated!]

TLSB's Law and Gospel Application Note for Amos 9:11-15 says, "Following many oracles and visions threatening judgment, Amos's prophecy unexpectedly ends with a word of hope. A day of rich blessing is coming, for the Lord will fulfill His covenant promises, bring about restoration, and establish the eternal kingdom of His Messiah. If it is perilous to despise God's threats of judgment and punishment, as did the people of Amos's day, it is even more foolhardy to refuse such gracious promises as Jn 3:16."

Next time, July 01, Introduction to Hosea and Hosea 1:1

Closing Prayer & Benediction