

Focus Text

"Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

"Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?

Does a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?

Does a young lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing?

Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth, when there is no trap for it?

Does a snare spring up from the ground, when it has taken nothing?

Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid?

Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?

"For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?"

Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt, and say, "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see the great tumults within her, and the oppressed in her midst." "They do not know how to do right," declares the Lord, "those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds." Therefore thus says the Lord God: "An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered." Thus says the Lord: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed.

*"Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob," declares the Lord God, the God of hosts, "that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions, I will punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. I will strike the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end," declares the Lord." **(Amos 3:1–15, ESV)***

I: Guilty

“Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

(Amos 3:1–2, ESV)

As we begin the heart of Amos's prophecy, Chapter 3 introduces poetic and metaphorical language. Amos will use mental pictures to help his readers understand the judgment YHWH is giving to Israel.

When God called Israel His chosen/elect nation, this was an act of love. No other nation would be the chosen one. Israel's role was always to represent God to the world and be a beacon of hope to the nations. However, as we have already seen, Israel has asked God to leave and rejected God's laws and ways. YHWH takes his offense personally because He chose this person specially for Himself, and yet they have rejected Him.

Once again, God reminds His people that they are free and in this land because of Him. Now, they will be punished as a father punished His children for their rebellion.

“Israel's privileged relationship to God carried with it heavy responsibility to God. As seen in the Book of Deuteronomy, living in relationship with God demanded loyalty and faithfulness.¹⁰¹ If the people failed, judgment and punishment would come. God holds his people accountable for their sins.”¹

II: Sovereign

“Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet? Does a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing? Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth, when there is no trap for it? Does a snare spring up from the ground, when it has taken nothing? Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?”

(Amos 3:3–6, ESV)

Now, Amos uses some common sense language to illustrate Israel's coming destruction. Note: The metaphor of the lion is important; this is a looming foretaste of the final section in chapter 3. All of these simple illustrations are cause and effect. And until the final illustration and the destruction from the Lord, these are harmless pictures. Amos is meaning to have his readers agree with him until they understand the punch line. Which is: When a nation is destroyed, will you not understand that the cause of it was the Lord? Amos wants his audience to know that we live in an ordered world and the Lord is the conductor of it all.

¹ ¹⁰¹ See E. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 31, 55. Smith, Billy K., and Franklin S. Page. 1995. *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*. Vol. 19B. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

“Apparently Amos sought agreement from his audience on the implications of the first six questions (vv. 3–6a). Then, based on that agreement, the prophet hoped his audience would assent to the final proposition.¹¹⁴ Agreement with the general proposition that disaster in a city should be attributed to the Lord would lend support to the prophet’s contention that Israel’s oppression by surrounding nations was the work of the Lord. The emphasis of the sentence structure is that the Lord and no other “caused” (āśâ, “worked” or “performed”) the disaster. As Gitay expresses it, “Amos’s main concern is the recognition that God reveals himself not only in matters of success but also in terms of sins and punishment” and “to convince his audience that an unbroken relationship exists between their sins and a divinely inspired catastrophe.”¹¹⁵ The implication of this line of argument is that God, the Sovereign Lord, controls everything that happens.”²

III: Prophecy

“For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:7–8, ESV)

As we ended chapter 2, we learned that Israel had denied the prophets, and they were no longer listening to God’s messengers. Amos wants the audience to understand this is a grace error because God uses the prophet to bring about His message.

Now Amos reveals that the Lion (YHWH) is not just speaking but roaring, and the time for judgment is upon them. This part of the chapter begins to tell of a future judgment for Israel.

“3:8 The style shift in v. 8 alerted Amos’s audience (reader) that he had reached the climax. He turned from hypothetical situations (vv. 3–6) to statements of fact. “The lion has roared,” the first statement of fact, is the cause of “fear.” Here the lion’s roar strikes fear in humans, “*who will not fear?*” The effect of the lion’s roar in v. 4 was on other animals. Since “the lion has roared” is parallel to “the Sovereign Lord has spoken,”¹¹⁹ both expressions refer to God. This usage accords with the parallel statements in 1:2, “The Lord from Zion will roar, and from Jerusalem he will give his voice” (author’s translation).”³

² ¹¹⁴ Hayes, *Amos*, 125.

¹¹⁵ Gitay, “A Study of Amos’s Art of Speech,” 296.

Smith, Billy K., and Franklin S. Page. 1995. *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*. Vol. 19B. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

³ ¹¹⁹ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה דָּבַר stresses that “the Sovereign Lord” is the one Amos heard speaking. The same grammatical structure is used in the first line.

Smith, Billy K., and Franklin S. Page. 1995. *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*. Vol. 19B. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

IV: Cruelty

“Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt, and say, ‘Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see the great tumults within her, and the oppressed in her midst.’ ‘They do not know how to do right,’ declares the Lord, ‘those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds.’ Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered.’”
(Amos 3:9–11, ESV)

As Amos sets us the prophetic judgment, he uses sarcasm to illustrate their abuses of power. Ashdod is in Philistia, and if we remember, they were slave traders. Egypt is a reference to Israel’s own slavery of the Egyptians. Israel is giving a lesson to these barbarians about how cruelty is supposed to be done. The supposed peaceful nation that belonged to God is now the most cruel in the land, and there is no good coming from it. This then sets up the final judgment for Israel.

“The implication is that Israel could give these experts a few lessons. “The hypothetical coming of immoral barbarians from neighboring states to judge the morality of Samaria is used because of the dramatic effect it will have on the listeners.”¹²⁴ 4

V: Judgement

“Thus says the Lord: ‘As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed. ‘Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob,’ declares the Lord God, the God of hosts, ‘that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions, I will punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. I will strike the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end,’ declares the Lord.” **(Amos 3:12–15, ESV)**

Rescuing parts of a lamb from the mouth of the lion goes back to the book of Exodus. If the shepherd could prove with enough evidence that a wild beast ate the lamb, they would not be charged for the losses. But, if they could not produce enough evidence, it would be taken as theft, and the shepherd would be charged as it would be assumed that the lamb was stolen. Here, God is pronouncing to Israel that they would not have anything but pieces of their luxury couches and beds. This is an inditement against the wealth of the nation and its abuses of the poor and needy.

⁴ ¹²⁴ G. Smith, *Amos*, 119.

Smith, Billy K., and Franklin S. Page. 1995. *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*. Vol. 19B. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

As the judgment continues, their idolatry is found out. God will cut off the horns of the golden cows at Bethel and Dan. These altars are to the god of Ba'al. Because of their infidelity and cruelty to the needy, Israel will lose all their wealth and status. The rich are bragging about their summer and winter homes while the poor are trampled in the streets. All of this luxury and sin are coming to an end as Amos foretells Israel's coming destruction.

“If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, an oath by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath, and he shall not make restitution. But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. If it is torn by beasts, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn.”

(Exodus 22:10–13, ESV)

“The sense is either that they would perish “suddenly while living lavishly, sprawled on beds and couches”¹³⁶ or that the “number of Israelites who survive the disaster will be like the few bits of a mutilated sheep left by the lion, or like a few scraps of furniture salvaged from a looted city.”¹³⁷ Clearly the message of the verse is pessimistic as regards the future for Samaria.” ⁵

⁵ ¹³⁶ Finley, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, 192.

¹³⁷ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 410; G. Smith, *Amos*, 122.

Smith, Billy K., and Franklin S. Page. 1995. *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*. Vol. 19B. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Application

“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:1–5, ESV)

Just as Israel, when you put your faith in Christ, you became God’s elect in Christ. Peter charges us to honor God with our conduct and to love and follow God in all we do.

The question for us this morning is: Will our lives be an example of God’s love and grace, or will we be an example of hypocrisy and cruelty?

Don’t forget we do not do this alone.

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (John 14:25–27, ESV)

Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit that will empower us to be faithful and true. God’s Spirit dwells inside you, so lean on Him for help and understanding. Amen.