

Amos Chapter 9

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

- [0 : 0 0] Psalm 2, it talks about the world in which we live, but it talks about the Lord God and his attitude to the world, and then it also points us to the Lord Jesus.
- It's good to read together. Just read, just listen as I read this psalm. Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?
- The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.
- The one enthroned in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them. He rebukes them in his anger, terrifies them in his wrath, saying, I've installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.
- I will proclaim the Lord's decree. He said to me, you are my son. Today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.
- [1 : 0 7] You'll break them with a rod of iron. You'll dash them to pieces like pottery. Therefore, you kings, be wise. Be warned, you rulers of the earth.
- Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son or he will be angry. Your way will lead to your destruction.
- For his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. So important to remind ourselves that when the world around about us is against the Lord and against his truth, that he still is in control.
- And that Jesus Christ is his king who rules over all things. We thought even this morning about kissing the son. That lady who kissed the feet of Jesus.
- And how that was her act of devotion and love. And how when we love the Lord Jesus Christ, we can be sure that he is the one who is in charge.
- [2 : 1 0] Let's stand and sing our first hymn. It's, The Lord is King, lift up your voice, all you heavens and earth. Rejoice. Praise. From a 54. And praise.
- And as we've done from time to time, perhaps two or three others would like to lead us in prayer. I'm going to pray briefly and then if others would like to pray and lead us before the Lord and before his throne of grace.
- Let's pray together. Father, it's a great comfort to us, O Lord, our God, to know that you are king. Not king in a limited sense with just a small area to rule over like our queen.
- But we thank you that you are king of kings and Lord of lords. King of the universe. King of the world. That you are the one who has all power and all might and all authority. But how we thank you that that power and authority does not corrupt you.
- That power is not to be feared in that sense. But we thank you for those who know you and love you. That power is a powerful love. A love which watches over.
- [3 : 1 7] That cares for, provides. That meets our needs. That is there for us in all things. We pray, O Lord, that even this evening as we come into your presence, O Lord our God, that your power and rule over our lives may grant us a sense of your peace.

And the sense, O Lord, of your presence. Be with us then. Give us hearts surrendered to you. Given over to your will. And bless us, we ask. For we bring our prayers in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. of Amos. of Amos. And so we're going to read the last chapter of Amos now before we sing and then study this portion of God's word.

Amos, chapter 9. If you've got one of the church Bibles, the Red Bibles, that's page 924. One like this, page 924. We're going to read this last chapter, and this will be our last time, at least as far as I know, for the time being, in Amos.

We're going to read the whole of chapter 9, and then sing, and then come back to the passage in a moment. I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said, Strike the tops of the pillars, so that the thresholds shake.

[4 : 37] Bring them down on the heads of all the people. Those who are left I will kill with the sword. Not one will get away. None will escape. Though they dig down to the depths below, from there my hand will take them.

Though they climb up to the heavens above, from there I will bring them down. Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them.

Though they hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea, I will command the serpent to bite them. Though they are driven into exile by their enemies. There I will command the sword to slay them.

I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good. The Lord, the Lord Almighty. He touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn.

The whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt. He builds his lofty palace in the heavens, sets his foundation on the earth.

[5 : 38] He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land. The Lord is his name. Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites, declares the Lord?

Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Kaphtor, the Arameans from Kerr? Surely the eyes of the sovereign Lord are on the sinful kingdom.

I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Yet I will not totally destroy the descendants of Jacob, declares the Lord. For I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations, as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground.

All the sinners among my people will die by the sword. All those who say, disaster will not overtake or meet us. In that day, I will restore David's fallen shelter.

I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins. I will rebuild it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations that bear my name, declares the Lord, who will do these things.

[6 : 51] The days are coming, declares the Lord, when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman, and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.

They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine. They will make gardens and eat their fruit. They will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them, says the Lord your God.

Well, let's turn back to Amos then. Amos in chapter 9, this last chapter. Because it's the last chapter, and because it's been a week or two since we were thinking and studying in Amos, just a little bit of a recap, a bit of a brief history of what's been going on.

What is this Old Testament prophecy all about? Well, Amos, as we've read, was a shepherd. He'd been a shepherd in the southern part of the country.

He'd also looked after the fig trees as well and gathered the fruit. It was a part-time occupation. But God met with him. God met with him and spoke to him and sent him to the north. To the north, that terrible place.

[8 : 12] Not, of course, the north of England. It's such a lovely place for a southern missionary to come up and minister to you. But, no, the north Israel, a godless nation. People that had turned away from the Lord.

Though they'd had much blessing, they were now far from God. And Amos was sent to speak to them, to warn them about their sin, particularly their sin of idolatry, where they had turned from the Lord, had set up temples in one sense, had set up altars, and had burned incense, and even wore horrible sacrifices to these false gods that turned away from the true God.

And as Amos begins his ministry, he begins to speak about the nations around about, the countries that they didn't get on with and didn't like. So, I imagine, to begin with, he was very popular.

He'd talk about how those horrible nations would be judged, those wicked nations. God would come and visit them. But, ultimately, he came full circle back to Israel.

Because God was particularly concerned to speak to them. And I'm sure that his popularity rating sunk very quickly once he started to point the finger at their sins.

[9 : 22] They were God's chosen people. Remember how God had spoken about them there, the beginning of chapter 3. You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth.

I'm the one who brought you out of Egypt. They had this wonderful privilege of knowing God and being in a relationship with God. But they had neglected it, despised it, rejected the Lord their God.

And so they had fallen into all sorts of sin. Not just sin against God, but against one another. So the rich oppressed the poor. They didn't care for them and they used them just to get richer.

Almost slavery of their own people. They refused to turn away from their sin. In spite of the fact that God had shown them how wicked their sins were.

In spite of God warning them again and again. They still would not turn away. God came to them in Amos with wonderful words of compassion, of mercy.

[10 : 20] Of saying to them, come back to me. Seek me. Let's put things right together. But they wouldn't listen. They just would not listen. And so all the way through, we've seen again and again.

God speaking through Amos. Warning. And then offering salvation. Warning. And then saying, let's sort this out. Until we get to that point which we did in the last chapter.

Where God says, the people are like a basket of ripe fruit. They've gone over. They're past saving. They're past saving. It's too late.

There's nothing more to be done but judgment. And so when we come to this final chapter. We find that Amos is bringing the final word from God.

But it's not just full of destruction as we shall see. It also is a word of great hope as well. Great hope of what God had promised for those who would turn to him and seek him.

[11 : 24] So what does the chapter begin with? It begins with a vision of the Lord. Amos had these visions from God. As I said, he had a vision of a basket of fruit.

He had a vision of locusts. He had a vision of a plumb line. He had a vision of all sorts of different things. But now he sees God. At last he sees the Lord.

He's heard his voice. He's proclaimed his word. But now he sees him. And he sees him standing by the altar. What altar is it? It could be the altar of the temple back in Jerusalem.

But that was in Judah. That's not where Amos was ministering. It could be that heavenly altar. Which the Bible speaks about in Revelation. Where indeed God is.

But it seems more than likely that he sees the Lord standing by the pagan altar. The false altar at Bethel. They had set up these altars.

[12 : 26] As I've said. Chapter 3 in verse 14. God speaks to them and says to them. On the day I punish Israel for her sins. I will destroy the altars of Bethel.

The horns of the altar will be cut off. And fall to the ground. The altars that he spoke against in chapter 5. As well. He says seek me and live.

Don't go to Bethel and seek Bethel. Don't go to Gilgal. These were the different places where they'd set up these false altars. To false gods. They turned from the true God.

Seeking the help of false gods. Who never turned up. Who never helped them. But here God turns up. Unexpectedly. Not where they'd like him to find them.

In their sin. Wherever we go. Whatever our sin. God knows about it. God's.

[13 : 23] It's not done secretly. He sees it. And perhaps when we least expect him. He turns up. In the least expected place. And it's from the altar.

Where they committed their sin. That God speaks judgment. Against their sin. It's not as if they could hide it away. And pretend that they'd never done it. God sees it.

And God is there. In that place. And there's two things that God has to say here. He speaks about two promises.

And they divide this chapter for us. The first of them that we look at is what we might call the bad news. The second that we shall look at is the good news. The first promise that God gives to the people is this.

A dreadful destruction. A dreadful destruction. What a command God gives. He said. Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake.

[14 : 21] Bring them down on the heads of all the people. It reminds me of Samson. Remember when Samson regained his sight and his strength. He went into the palace. Where the enemies of God were.

And he pushed against the pillars. Till the roof collapsed. And killed those who had blinded him. And enslaved him. And God says. All the pillars that hold up the temple.

The things that you trust in. They will be shaken and will fall down on your heads. Don't forget that when God speaks.

His voice is the voice of the God who created the world. When God says. Let there be light. There was light. When God says something. It happens. It always happens.

For he is good to his word. And faithful to his word. Whether that is. Judgment. Or mercy. We see there don't we.

[15 : 18] Very sadly. There is a total. Destruction. A complete destruction. There is. No one who's spared. There is no one who escapes.

From their sin. There is no one who can. Can somehow. Manage to. Find a loophole. As it were. In God's commandments. Or law. Where they can get around. His judgment. And what a terrifying picture it has.

Isn't it? There is people. As it were. Fleeing for their lives. Some dig down. Go into the caves. As it were. Under the ground. And they are found there. Some climb to Kama. One of the highest mountains.

Friends. They can't escape. Even up there. Wherever they go. To the sea. Whether they go. To another country. Even there. God will find them. There is no hiding place.

No escape. Some people. Think that they can. Escape God's judgment. Some people. Think that they will never. Have to stand before God. Never have to give an account.

[16 : 13] For their sin. But they will never. Escape God's judgment. They may escape. The judgment of the world. There may be those war crimes. Those terrible people. Who carry atrocities.

Who never seem to be brought to justice. They seem to dissolve. Into the world. They're never found again. It seems. Why. Why has God allowed them. To get away with these things. Well God will not allow.

The wicked. To get away with their evil deeds. He will bring all people. To justice. You cannot escape his arm. I will keep my eye on them.

He says in verse four. God sees everything. Our secret sins. Our hidden sins. And he acts accordingly.

And then we find that in one sense God backs up his promises by a revelation of himself. Who is this God who says that he's going to judge us?

[17 : 12] Who is this God who says that he's going to bring everyone to justice? Why should we believe him? Why should we take any notice of him? Well in one sense we have as it were God laying out his CV.

Laying out his qualifications. Why we should be afraid. Why we should be concerned. Why we should listen to his warnings. He reminds them who they're dealing with. Verse five.

The Lord. The Lord almighty. That means the Lord who has all power. All might. He touches the earth and it melts. He only has to touch it.

With his finger. And it melts before him. He's the God who causes the land to rise and to fall like the Nile. We thought about the Nile a few weeks ago didn't we?

How it. I can't remember how many meters. It's a dozen or more meters the Nile falls and rises over a season. People rise up with power and authority and then they fall.

[18 : 11] Kings. Governments. And empires. God rules over them all. He's the God who whose house as it were fills the heavens.

Verse six. Its foundation is on the earth. He's immense. He's infinite. He has all power. He speaks to the sea. He pours out the water. The Lord is his name.

And yet there were still people who doubted him. There are people who thought well even though he is this amazingly great and powerful and awesome God. We don't need to really worry.

Look at the end of verse 10. Where it says all those who say disaster will not overtake or meet us. How could they have such confidence? How could they feel safe in spite of God's warning to them of judgment?

Well they were those who thought themselves rather special. They thought because they were part of Israel, God's chosen people, descendants of Abraham, they shouldn't worry.

[19 : 15] Remember we looked at chapter 6 and verse 1. Woe to you who are complacent. It means not worried, at ease in Zion. Those of you who feel secure on Mount Samaria.

You notable men of the foremost nation to whom the people of Israel come. You think you're special. And because God has dealt with you in a special way, you think that he's going to let you off the hook.

He's going to turn a blind eye to your sin. He's not going to touch you with any judgment. That's why he says there in verse 7. The Cushites are the people of the upper Nile region.

The people part of Egypt. Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt? Yes he did. He guided them and he took them as a nation and brought them to the promised land. But he says as well, I brought the Philistines from Kapthor.

That's almost certainly a Crete. Brought them onto the land. The Arameans, the nations of this world, are all under the hand of God. He guides and leads and works them.

[20 : 22] And just because he guided and led and worked in Israel doesn't mean he's going to treat them any differently to the other nations where sin is concerned.

We have many privileges, dear friends, in this nation, in this world. In this country, many people seem to think, well they are Christian because they're in England.

Because they go to church or because they are good people or nice people. And because we have peace and we don't have war. All these things are privileges that God has given us. Our Bible and our own language.

And somehow there's a sense, isn't there, amongst many people in our community, in our society and day that say, well, you know, I don't need to worry about getting right with God. I know that if there is a heaven, I'll get in there okay at the end.

I'll be all right. There's a complacency, an indifference, a lack of worry. Disaster won't overtake or meet us. But they're blinding their eyes to the reality of who God is.

[21 : 30] That he is, yes, grace and mercy. But he is justice and righteousness. He is not a God who is just all love. Neither is he a God who is just all anger.

He is perfect in his unity of his person and character. And dear friends, what about us as Christians? Haven't there been times when, as Christians, we have thought ourselves above the law?

Thought ourselves able to do and live as we please and think? Isn't that one of the great curses upon the church in our day and age? That men and women have put aside the word of God?

They call themselves Christians still. But, well, we don't need to live by those old commandments of God. We don't need to be bound by the old ways of our forefathers in the faith. We're a new people in a new millennium.

We even, perhaps, as Christians, we allow certain sins in our lives. Certain habits and attitudes and thoughts and prejudices.

[22 : 34] And we say, well, you know, I'm better than I was. But I don't have to really deal with that sin. I don't really have to change in that way. We do.

If we're born again of the Spirit of God, if we are those who are truly his people, then we will not treat his blessings with a sense of pride and arrogance. We won't treat the goodness and grace of God as something to be despised.

We will live for him, follow him, be wholeheartedly set apart for holiness. But they were those who were destined for a dreadful destruction.

Who were they? We're told who they are. They're those, in verse 8, who are the sinful kingdom. Later on, in verse 10, all the sinners among my people will die by the sword.

God will judge sin. And amongst the nation of Israel, there were those who had sinned against him in so many ways.

[23 : 38] And though they'd been warned and called back, the time had come that they would be judged. Then we come to verse 8, don't we?

And we begin to have a chink of light in the midst of the darkness. I will destroy it from the face of the earth, yet I will not totally destroy the descendants of Jacob, declares the Lord.

After God's promises of judgment, there's an assurance of hope to those who are his true people. The true Israel amongst Israel. How will God tell the difference?

How does he know which one from another? Because he sieves the nations. Verse 9. I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations.

As grain is shaken in the sieve, not a pebble will fall to the ground. When I was younger, we used to have coal fire. And we always used to have a big sieve for sifting out the cinders.

[24 : 43] You ever do that? And you put all the cinders and the ash in, and you'd shake it, and all the small bits and the dust and the ash before the ground, and you'd get the cinders, and they'd keep them to one side, because then you could bank up the fire with them, couldn't you, and use them again.

It's a bit like that. A sifting. But when we've got here, this word pebble is a difficult word to translate. But what it means is something hard.

And really what most commentators think is actually not so much a stone or a pebble, but the grain itself, the hard grain. The chaff and everything else falls through, but the grain is kept and protected and preserved.

That's an illustration that goes all the way through the Bible, about the grain being God's good people, and the chaff and the rubbish, as it were, being those who are the sinful.

It even goes into the teaching of Jesus himself, when he spoke about it in Matthew chapter 3. God will clear his threshing floor. That's where all the wheat was brought in.

[25 : 45] Gathering his wheat into the barn, burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Now, for these people, those people who've been sifted by God, sifted, tested in that sense, instead of there being a dreadful destruction, we have here the promise of a delightful destiny.

A delightful destiny from verse 11 and following. Not everyone will be destroyed. Those who are shaken in the sieve, those who are tested, those who are the good grain, those who have loved the Lord and trusted him and followed him.

In that day, verse 11, God promises blessing. I will restore David's fallen shelter. Have you ever been to somebody's house, and they've got a very overgrown garden in the back.

And almost inevitably, somewhere in the back of the garden, there's an old shed. And the shed has become warped, and the shed has become rotten, and the roof has fallen in, and the felt has come off.

Well, that's a sort of a picture here. There's sort of a crumbling down shed. That's the state of the nation at that time. David was the great king.

[26 : 59] The king after God's own heart. The king that God had given a promise that there would always be one of his sons who would rule on the throne and guide the people in God's ways.

But by the time we get to Amos' day, there was no king like David anymore. Instead of there being a wonderful royal palace to represent, as it were, the kingdom of God's people, there was an old knockdown shed.

It was so far removed from what God intended. But God promises it won't always be like that. I'll restore David's broken down shed. I'll repair its broken walls, restore its ruins, rebuild it as it used to be.

God was going to restore his kingdom, his people who were his temple, his nation. And in restoring it, God was going to bring great blessing.

A time of plenty. The days are coming, verse 13, when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.

[28 : 09] It's picturing this amazing abundance of good things. There's going to be so much harvest that people are still going to be treading out the grapes when they should be planting out the plants for the next harvest.

They're still going to be gathering in the wheat when all the men are out there with their plows, ready to actually plow again. It's just going to be so much, so much abundance, so much blessing.

And indeed, what we read here, at the end of chapter 9, we know came into being for those people in that day. We know that not long after Amos gave those warnings and promises, as many of the other prophets did the same, the Assyrians, the great superpower of the day, swept down from the north, conquered Israel, destroyed it, took the people away into exile.

Those promises were fulfilled. But then, 70 or more years later, God's other promises came into being. People from Babylon, who had also been taken into exile, returned to the land.

They began to rebuild the temple. And we've been studying on a Wednesday evening how through Nehemiah, Nehemiah, they rebuilt all the walls of Jerusalem, just as God had promised their words.

[29 : 33] But Amos' prophecy isn't just for those people then. It speaks to our lives today. It speaks about a day of judgment, the day of the Lord, which will come upon the whole world.

The apostle Paul, as he was preaching in Acts in chapter 17, said this, God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice.

And just like this day of the Lord and the warnings that are given, it will reflect this. It will be like that day when Christ comes again, the day of the Lord.

It will be a day when people will be divided between a dreadful destruction and a delightful destiny. And just like that day when Jesus comes again to bring justice to the world, there will be people who will run to hide from him, but will never be able to escape.

Listen to the similarity of these words from Revelation in chapter 6. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves under the earth and among the rocks of the mountains.

[30 : 46] They called on the mountains and the rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from his wrath. But they won't be able to escape.

They won't be able to hide. Not all the money in all the world. We'll be able to protect these people from God's judgment when they stand before him.

And again, it will be as God commands. It will be in God's time. God said to send judgment. And when God says, Christ will come again and this world will be judged.

In 2 Peter in chapter 3 in verse 7, by the same word by which God spoke the world into being, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire being kept for the day of judgment.

And on that day as well, there will be no more, there will be no favoritism. Every one of us will be judged according to how we've lived. Whatever we've done in this life will be the reason why we'll be judged.

[31 : 53] In Revelation in chapter 20, verse 12, the dead were judged according to what they'd done as recorded in the books. God keeps a catalog, a record of your and my life.

We'll have to answer for that. And God will judge us and sift us according to how we've lived, how we've lived in relationship to Him, how we've responded to His call and to His promises and to His grace.

But dear friends, just as on that day there will be a dreadful destruction for those who have lived in their sin and denied the Lord their God so there will be a delightful destiny.

And that's what we see here as well in this wonderful promise of restoration. The whole Bible is a restoration book. It's all about how God started the world perfect and wonderful and how it was destroyed by sin and how through history it was sort of tried to be repaired and patched up and put together until Jesus came to bring about a full restoration in the lives of men and women.

That's what He's begun to do in every Christian, changing and transforming us, restoring what was lost and broken, making us to be the people God created us to be until that day when Jesus comes and we shall be perfect.

[33 : 19] All the pain and death and sorrow and grief and sadness will be gone. It'll be like these days where there's abundance overflowing. You see, even in the days after the exile when Nehemiah and others came back, it was never as wonderful as this.

They never had so much wine that they couldn't contain it all. They never had so much grain that the harvesters never stopped gathering it in. It's a picture of heaven. It's a picture of the promises of God that we have in Jesus, partly now but fully in the day to come.

God often used physical things to speak about spiritual realities. Dear friends, what's God's word to you tonight?

As Amos brings this to a conclusion, what is God saying to you? Is he saying to you, there is a dreadful destruction coming and you must avoid it. You must flee to the one who alone can save you.

You must turn to the Lord. Seek me and live, God says. Or have you already come to him? And is he saying to you, dear friend, whatever you're going through, whatever hardship there is, whatever sorrow and grief in this world, there is a delightful destiny for you.

[34 : 41] A place of abundance, a place of life, a place of fullness. There is hope for this world.

The hope for this world is not in scientists. It's not in education. It's not in money. It's not in politicians.

The hope for this world is in the Lord God himself who has sent Jesus Christ to reconcile and to save, to rebuild what is broken, to bring fullness where there's emptiness, to bring life where there's death.

Dreadful destruction, a delightful destiny. destiny. God's word will be fulfilled. It shall happen. Are we ready?

Are we looking forward to it? Have we taken the message of hope? Have we fled from the warning to come? Our final hymn this evening is a wonderful hymn of trust and faith and thanksgiving reminding us that every blessing we have, all that we receive is in Christ alone.

[36 : 04] It's not because we're good people. It's because of what Jesus has done for us in his life, death and resurrection. Wonderful fourth verse here in 647.

No guilt in life. Sins are forgiven. No fear in death. This is the power of Christ in me. No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hands.

When we put our faith in Christ, we are secure and safe in him. Until he returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ, I stand. I trust this is your assurance and hope as well at Christ's return.

647. 647. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.