



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of Amos

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INTRODUCTION TO AMOS

Amos in Hebrew means, “Burdened” and a very fitting name for this Old Testament prophet of God. Amos’s home was in the village of Tekoa, just 12 miles south of Jerusalem and 6 miles south of Bethlehem. But he was primarily a prophet (preacher) to Israel, the northern kingdom (10 tribes). Amos was not a prime minister like Daniel, nor a man of the king’s court like Isaiah, nor a priest like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He was a common, ordinary, every-day working man. He was a herdsman and a “gatherer” of shigmah (i.e., “sycamore) trees. These wild shigmah trees bore edible fruit like the fig tree. There was another “fig” tree in the land called te’edah, but its fruit was inferior to the shigmah and was eaten only by the very poorest people. The te’edah “fig” had to be punctured with a thorn or sharply pointed instrument to get it to ripen. We do not know if this was required of “gathering” the fruit of the shigmah tree. Nevertheless, Amos was a farmer of sorts and a “herdsman” of “flocks” of sheep and goats. Neither he nor his father had gone to the “schools of the prophets” to study preaching (see 1 Sam. 19:19-20; 2 Kgs. 2:3; 4:5; 4:38; 6:1).

His ministry took place about 752 B.C., “two years before the earthquake (Amos 1:1) which Amos had predicted (Amos 8:8; 9:5). This must have been a severe earthquake because the prophet Zechariah (520-516 B.C) speaks of it in the “days of Uzziah,” nearly 300 years after Amos and Uzziah (Zech 14:5). Uzziah (a.k.a. Azariah) was king of Judah (787-735 B.C.) during Isaiah’s ministry (Isa. 6:1). The king of Israel at the time of Amos was Jeroboam II (790-741 B.C.). Jeroboam II was a very successful king over the ten northern tribes, expanding their territory nearly as great as that of David and Solomon (2 Kgs. 14:23-29). During his reign Israel prospered materially as well. Halley’s Bible Handbook pictures Israel as “in the high tide of prosperity....But she was brazen in idolatry, and reeking in moral rotteness; a land of swearing, stealing, injustice, oppression, robbery, adultery and murder!” Just as Jesus used common fishermen to be his apostles, Jehovah used a farmer to deliver his message to Israel. Farmers are good at speaking succinctly and unequivocally. Amos “minced no words” with the wicked people of Israel—his erstwhile countrymen.

It had been over 200 years since the ten tribes had “divorced” themselves from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin constituting the “kingdom” called “Judah.” Israel as one nation, “undivided,” lasted 120 years under Saul, David and Solomon. Solomon had placed a “servant” named Jeroboam (933-911) in charge of the fortifications and public works at Jerusalem and made him the overseer of the taxes and conscripted laborers from the house of Joseph (1 Kgs. 11:28). This “Jeroboam” would become the first king of the 10 northern tribes and an ancestor of Jeroboam II. When Solomon died, his son, Rehoboam ruled the two southern tribes (“Judah”) about 17 years, during which time he taxed the people severely (1 Kgs. 12:1ff). That was when Jeroboam the “servant” used his position to stir up trouble against Solomon’s son, Rehoboam. A prophet named Abijah (1 Kgs. 11:30) had predicted to Jeroboam that the kingdom of Solomon would be rent asunder and this “servant” of Solomon, Jeroboam, would become the head of 10 tribes. It was not until 200 years later (and 11 kings of “Israel” including such apostates as Omri, Ahab and Jehu) during the reign of Jeroboam

II (790-749) that Amos came on the scene. One of the first acts of Jeroboam I when the kingdom of Solomon was divided was to establish calf-worship as the northern kingdom's national religion. Baal-worship had already been adopted by many of the Israelites. God had sent the famous prophets Elijah, Elisha and Jonah to the northern kingdom—to no avail. So God sent Amos and Hosea in a final effort to turn the northern kingdom, now speeding head-long toward ruin, destruction and exile into Assyria.

Amos, as a lad, had probably known Jonah, and may have heard him tell of his visit to Nineveh. He also may have known Elisha and heard him tell of his association with Elijah. Jonah and Elisha were passing off the stage as Amos was coming on. The prophet Joel may also have been Amos's contemporary, or near predecessor. Hosea was a contemporary of Amos and their paths undoubtedly crossed up in the territory of Israel. They, no doubt, knew one another well, and may have often compared notes on the messages God had given them. Hosea was younger than Amos but continued his work after Amos was gone. Just as Amos was closing his work, Isaiah and Micah were beginning their work preaching primarily to the southern kingdom, Judah, because Israel (the 10 northern tribes) were very soon to be ravaged by the ferocious Assyrians (ca. 722 B.C.) and taken into exile. In the first part of their prophetic ministries, both Isaiah and Micah "take a shot at" turning their countrymen to the north back to God—to no avail!

Amos was a model worker for God in humility, industry, wisdom, clarity, faithfulness, steadfastness, pertinence and temporary success. Amos has been called "the prophet of woe," and "the prophet of justice." His message from God was stern for a people living in luxury and self-indulgence bred by wicked idolatry. Amos pronounced woe against the six "Gentile" nations surrounding Israel. He predicted even greater judgments against Judah and Israel than against the Gentiles because the "chosen" had sinned against a greater knowledge of the One True God. His prophecies show that national sin means national judgment. The history of the world proves that nations are judged in this world, while individuals will be judged in the next world at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11ff).

The theme of Amos's preaching to the "chosen people," as well as to the "Gentile" nations is summed up in Amos 4:12—"Prepare to meet thy God" (in judgment). Judgments would come (chs. 7 & 8) in the form of plagues of locusts (grass-hoppers), fires and droughts sweeping through these lands, the "plumb-line" (God's word) condemning their crookedness and ruin, the basket of rotting fruit depicting their moral depravity, and a "famine" (spiritual) of God having withdrawn his word from them. No wonder Amos was told by his depraved fellow Israelites (7:12-13) to "mind his own business and go home."

In spite of having to pronounce doom upon his own kinfolk, Amos closes his ministry on a positive note with a promise of the restoration of a "messianic Israel" (9:11-15)—see Acts 15:15-16 for its fulfillment in the New Testament era where the apostles agree that God's "new" kingdom (the church of Christ) would be made up of those who trust and obey Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles. Our pagan world today needs more "farmers" like the fearless Amos who will proclaim both the Lord's coming judgment and the "fortunes of" God's people have been restored in the "booth (house) of David" being "raised up" (Christ's church)

AMOS 1:1—3:15

God needed a “hard-nosed” no-nonsense, self-disciplined, plain-spoken, afraid-of-nothing, uncompromising spokesman for that time. Amos had been reared and lived and worked in the barren, desolate, wilderness of Judea, south of Bethlehem, in a little “burg” called Tekoa, which means in Hebrew, “blowing a trumpet.” It was a hard life, demanding a sharp mind, a courageous spirit, a powerful will, and a practical outlook. Amos, making his living (and a meager one at that) by the sweat of his brow, in a vocation that demanded self-sacrifice and humility (herding sheep)—a vocation that demanded bravery against weather and predators toward his flock and compassion for lost and injured sheep (Ezek. 34:1-31). He was also “a dresser of sycamore trees” (7:14). This “sycamore” bore a fruit like a fig but its fruit was inferior to the normal fig tree of Israel. Amos would have little sympathy for the indulgent and profligate life he would find among his northern kinsman (“Israel” was then the 10 northern tribes). Amos was not unschooled! He apparently knew enough of his native language that he could write a book about his prophetic ministry. Besides, he had been tutored in the best school of all, “the school of nature and hard-knocks.” He learned of the awesome power of Almighty God, the Creator; he learned the folly of disobeying the Creator’s laws; he learned the satisfaction of being and doing what is right toward God and man; he learned to hate the injustices done to the poor and powerless by the rich and powerful; he learned God’s judgments are inevitable when his word is disregarded; he observed in history the sovereignty of Jehovah over all men and nations; he learned to express God’s message in words that could not be misunderstood! God has a place in every generation of mankind many like Amos! We could use a couple of “hard-nosed” no-nonsense preachers like Amos in America today! It would take bushels of courage—he would probably not find a welcome at many churches (perhaps at some “Restoration Movement” churches). But judgment is coming friend! Read the letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor in Revelation chapters 2 & 3.

All the true Old Testament prophets (even those who did not author books) teach clearly the doctrine that ELOHIM/YAWEH (God) is sovereign over all nations. They all teach that Jehovah holds all nations morally responsible for any actions violating the fundamental laws of right and wrong which are “written on their hearts and...consciences” (Rom. 2:12-16). It is a sharply defined principle of the Old Testament that God holds all men (without respect of person) responsible for doing as much good as they know. Ezekiel warns, in addition, that when God makes known to anyone some good that others do not know, the one who knows is responsible to God to tell the one who does not know (Ezek. 3:16-21; 33:1-16). Not only does God reveal himself in “nature” and the “heart” (i.e., logic, mind). God also reveals himself through his “people” in the midst of the heathen world. He did this in the OT times as well as NT times. Remember—God put the descendants of Abraham “smack-dab” in the middle of the ancient world for the very purpose of showing forth the sovereignty and holiness of the Creator (Deut. 4:6-7; Ezek. 5:5ff). Therefore, the world is without excuse! It has had the witness of God in four ways (a) in creation, i.e., “nature” (Psa. 19:1-6; Acts 14:15-18; 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18ff); (b) in logic (i.e., in the mind/heart (Acts 17:29 Rom. 1:18ff; 2:12-16;); (c) in God’s people (the ancient/faithful Israelites and the NT church); (d) in God’s written word, the Bible (Psa. 198:7-10; 119:69-92; Jn. 6:63; 2 Tim. 3:16-17;

1 Pet. 1:22-25; 2 Pet. 1:3-4; 1 Jn. 4:1-6, etal.). The whole world has not yet seen the last two even though his church is here and his word has been completed—AND WHOSE FAULT IS THAT?

Of course the Lord is concerned and is, indeed, involved in geo-politics (international relations) in wars, boundaries, POWs, and treaties. This began as early as man's multiplication of himself upon the earth. It was God who made the multiplicity of languages (creating nations and languages, Gen. 11:1ff; Acts 17:16-28). God was involved in blessing those like Abram (Abraham) who upheld international justice even when war was necessary from the most ancient times (Gen. 14:13-24; Heb. 7:1-28). Clearly, God involved himself directly in national and international affairs of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome (Isa. 10:ff; 13:1-23). Daniel's entire book, and many other prophets testify to this divine intervention in geo-politics. Why is the Lord concerned and active in geo-politics? (a) he wants human life to be held sacred and protected (b) he wants righteousness and justice to be the matrix of society; (c) he wants man's use and stewardship of property (the creation) to be sacrosanct; (d) he wants his propositional revelation (his written word) to be proclaimed to every human being on earth (1 Tim. 2:1-7) and that cannot be done without "a, b, and c" above being enforced. Notice in Amos chs. 1 & 2, God's accusations against the heathen nations— (a) inhumane destructiveness (Damascus); (b) kidnapping and hostage taking (Gaza); (c) slavery and treaty-breaking (Tyre); (d) maliciousness, constant warfare, grudge-bearing (Edom); (e) ruthlessness, imperialism (Ammon); (f) implacable depredation (Moab).

Amos said, "...their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked." Their lies were the false religions with their false doctrines and false gods. Their lies were their religions and philosophies which were unscriptural and anti-scriptural. Almighty God and his Almighty Son, Jesus Christ, are the exclusive repositories of truth (Col. 2:1-5)! Any viewpoint, tenet, teaching, doctrine, philosophy, or practice that is in conflict with nature, logic, or the scriptures (the Bible) IS FALSE! And remember, it is Scripture that interprets "nature" and logic (i.e., the thinking and feeling of human beings must coincide with what the Bible says). Ultimately, any viewpoint of creation and creature, of life and living, or of origins and destiny that conflicts with the Bible (properly read) is false and leads people on a false course of living. Why did Israel believe the lies of idolatry? Couldn't they see and understand that an idol was not God? Read Isa. 44:6-20 for the prophet's sarcastic thrust into the heart of a deluded idolater. Why do people choose falsehood over truth when truth is logically undeniable? Because they take pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:10-12)! There is temporary pleasure, both physical and psychological, in believing a lie. Believing a lie gave Eve and then Adam a temporary sense of god-like power. Satan said, "eat of the forbidden" and you will be as gods! Lies, falsehoods, must be recognized and acknowledged for what they are. Even the apparently very religious practices of asceticism and legalism temporarily bring psychological satisfaction in self-righteousness. The Israelites of Amos's day (except for a small remnant) believed prosperity, fame, security all came to those who practiced idolatry. So, they decided to get some of the "gusto" themselves! Ultimately, the only way human beings are to know the difference between truth and falsehood is to compare every idea and practice with what God says through his spokesmen in the Bible (properly read). John 17:17; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-4.

Amos appealed to past history, warning Israel they would be judged for their rebellion against God's standards. In 2:9-11, Amos reminds Israel of past historical events which showed God's involvement and providential direction of the nation: (a) the protection of Israel from her enemies the Amorites, (b) Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage and giving Israel the land of the Amorites; (c) God giving Israel prophets for verbal and written direction; (d) God giving them Nazarites, i.e., living examples of the holiness he expected from all his people. All Israel had to do in Amos's day was to look at history and learn! Stupidly, most human beings do not learn from history. Even today, there is not only a deplorable ignorance of the great events and lessons of history, there is even an arrogant contempt for even the idea that man ought to learn anything from the past. CBS's "60 minutes" TV program discovered at a community college in Puget Sound, Washington, among average aged students, less than half a classroom could identify Albert Schweitzer, Adolph Hitler, or Winston Churchill. Nor could they tell where Beirut, Calcutta, or Tripoli were! One man about 30 had not read a book until he was 28 years old! One need not imagine how ignorant most Americans are about the great men and events of their own heritage of freedom let alone what these men said and did—just watch the TV show "Jeopardy" a few weeks. And what about Bible history? Most people do not consider the Bible to be a book of history! But that is the Bible's fundamental content—HISTORY—what God and Christ have DONE, in time, in space, and at specified places to and through human beings. The ONE FUNDAMENTAL of the Christian faith and hope is history—the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ—at a place and at a time! The apostle Paul said Jesus's bodily resurrection is of "first importance" in Christianity (1 Cor. 15:3-11)!

In Amos 2:12, Israel is accused of mocking God's "special" holy men (the Nazarites) and forcing them to do what they had vowed not to do. But the king of Israel commanded Amos, saying, "you shall not prophesy" (Amos 7:10-13). When people, especially political rulers, are contemptuous of learning from the past (especially from the Bible) the society disintegrates into anarchy and wickedness. To paraphrase today's liberals and modernists, "Forget the past—it has nothing to do with the present or the future—live for the moment—live by how you feel right now—there are no norms of standards that are relevant for our generation—there is nothing we need to conserve from the past—everything is now and new and that is the only relevancy or good." Sorry, BUT THAT IS WRONG! God abhors that attitude, and God's word reveals that his divine standards are relevant for all time, past, present and future. The principles of belief and practice (behavior), understood in their progressively-revealed operation (not progressive relevance) have always been the same from Adam & Eve to the 21st century. The word of Jesus Christ never changes (Mt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33; Heb. 13:8). God has always justified human beings according to their faith and repentance, even in OT times (Gen. 15:6). He has always desired holiness and spirituality and goodness in people, from Genesis to Revelation. So for those who forbid the preaching of his word, God intends they shall learn about his word THE HARD WAY. God told Israel, through Amos, that he would "press them down" (2:13ff). That is, God was going to STOP ISRAEL IN HER TRACKS! He was going to take from them all the arrogance and contempt they had for his word and give them a humiliating experience that would make many weep and long for his word again. Those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Israel did!

Amos's point in 3:3-8 is ISRAEL'S LACK OF LOGIC OR "COMMON SENSE." He illustrates his point picturing two persons not walking together unless they have made an appointment, and a young lion crying out from his den when he has taken no prey. THE LOGIC OF HISTORY! It is the principle of cause and effect. If God is roaring logically, then, there has to be a reason for such a roaring. God is saying, "You, Israel, and I, are going to walk together in judgment." Lions don't roar unless they have their eyes on a victim. God is about to pounce on Israel, like a lion, because Israel has made herself a prey! Amos 3:3-8 is much like Hosea 9:10. People become detestable like the thing they love. It is like the warning in Romans 1:27 that people receive in their own persons the due penalty of their error. If an individual, or a nation, or an institution, makes itself rotten, then the "carrion birds" will come and prey upon it. Does evil befall a city unless the Lord has done it? Local and national calamities are not due merely to "natural" causes, human mistakes, faulty legislation or political folly. These and other circumstances may be secondary or contributory causes, but the Prime Mover of this universe is God! God is the author of both weal and woe (Isa. 45:1-7) and he does what he does from divine, perfect justice (2 Thess. 1:6) or perfect compassion (Isa. 49:14-16). God acts in his creation by Omniscient, Omnipotent Sovereignty. God has not sent judgment upon a wicked and rebellious world without first revealing his secrets to the prophets (and apostles) whom he has commissioned. God will reveal his redemptive plan so that all may know and understand. God has spoken finally, completely, and in human language in his Son and through his spokesmen. There is no need for latter day revelations. God is not going to speak again until Christ comes in final judgment. He has revealed all his "secrets" which human beings need to know about being saved and sanctified. There are some "secrets" God has kept from the human race (Deut. 29:29). But he has dealt with sin and salvation once for all (Heb. 9:27-28; 10:10, 12, 14; 2 Cor. 5:1-21).

The KJV follows the Hebrew text and says, "Publish in the palaces of Ashdod" (3:9-11). The RSV follows the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew OT), and says, "Proclaim to the strongholds in Assyria." Whatever the correct original text, the point is God is inviting a heathen people to look upon the mountains of Samaria (Israel) and see the tumults and moral rottenness within her because: (a) Israel, the Chosen and blessed of the holy Jehovah, is worse than the heathen! (See Jer. 2:9-13; 18:13-16; Ezek. 16:1ff for Judah's out-heathening the heathen); (b) God is going to use the heathen nations to chasten and purge Israel of her idolatry: (c) God wants to make Israel ashamed of herself by making her a spectacle for the heathen to behold! Christ told the NT church at Laodicea, "I counsel you to buy from me...white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen" (Rev. 3:18). Yes! It is possible for the church today to be a "spectacle" for the world to behold in shame! In some places, those who claim to wear the name Christian have made themselves worse reprobates than the non-Christians with their blatant homosexual indulgences, sexual abuse of children, thievery, crass materialism, fighting, back-biting, gossiping, pride and extravagance. One of the most terrible spectacles Christendom presents to the world is that of division in the name of Christ, the One Lord and One Savior of all mankind! Division is just a modern form of idolatry. It is the same old game of human beings making a god to fit their concepts instead of fitting their concepts to the absolute revelation of the Sovereign God.

No! It is not possible that Israel did not know how to do right! Israel did not want

to do right! God told Israel what doing right was. It was in the Law of Moses. They had God's word on right and wrong as well as conscience to tell them when they were doing right or wrong. The very fact that God sent prophets to preach the Law of Moses and not a new revelation shows Israel knew what right was. Furthermore, Israel had plenty of motives for doing right. They had the past history of God's merciful blessings upon forefathers who did right, and judgments on those who did wrong. They had the providential long-suffering of God upon themselves. They had the history of how God judged heathen nations for the idolatry and immorality that Israel herself was then doing. Israel was not a nation of idiots or illiterates. She had a priesthood, a law, a temple, a heritage, so why doesn't she know how to do right? Israel preferred the wrong because there is the exhilaration and inebriation of a sense of power when one rebels against God and presumably gets away with it. It's like the first rush of autonomy and self-sovereignty one gets when first the rebellion against parental direction is carried out. Rebellion is extremely attractive. Partaking of the forbidden is exciting because of the lie that it makes one wise, popular, powerful, and in control. Partaking of the forbidden proves that the partaker doesn't have to trust anyone but himself, depend upon anyone but himself, be responsible to anyone else, and should therefore, be admired, adored, exalted and feared. It all started in the Garden of Eden.

AMOS 4:1—6:14

Amos called the women of Israel “cows,” (Heb. parah) because that is the way they acted. They had renounced logic and common sense—they simply did what their bodily instincts told them. All they did was gratify their insatiable hunger for food, drink, comfort and procreation. It is not unusual for a spokesman of God to call human beings animals. Isaiah and Jeremiah said even the animals were smarter than the people of Israel (Isa. 1:3; Jer. 8:7). When men live only on the physical plane of life, God proves to them they are beasts (Eccl. 3:16-22). The heathen emperors of ancient empires were symbolized as animals in Daniel ch. 7:1ff and Rev. 13:1ff, because of their beastly behavior. Human governments are all “beastly” to some extent because they are predators, preying on the bodies and properties of their citizens. The flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit wars against the flesh (Rom. 7:13-25; Gal. 5:16-17). As Christians we are told to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to satisfy its desires” (Rom. 13:14). The apostle Peter speaks of “false teachers, bold and wilful...like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed” (2 Pet. 2:10-16). The apostle Paul spoke of those who lived “as enemies of the cross of Christ...their end is destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things” (Phil. 3:18-19). Paul called some of the Judaizers (legalists) “dogs” (Greek, kunas) (Phil. 3:2-3). When human beings worship and devote themselves to the flesh, to the physical, they behave worse than animals (Rom. 1:18-32). The satanic theory of evolution has poisoned the minds of many millions of western civilization—especially in higher education which usually produces those who aspire to government. The theory of evolution is the satanic theory of “struggle for existence and survival of the fittest”—the law of the jungle. People become that to which they set their minds (Hosea 9:10; Rom. 8:1-11; Col. 2:20; 3:11). If a human follows only his physical instincts, he will become like an animal! If a human “sets his mind on Christ” (Col. 3:2-3) he will become like Christ (see also 2 Cor. 3:17-18). What goes into the heart (mind) either defiles a man (Mt. 15:17-20) or purifies a man (Rom. 12:1-2)—it is man’s choice! Clearly, there are humans in our world who have sold their souls to Satan and have become little more than animals—creatures of instinct only. The human race has always been saturated with predators lurking around, without jobs, without spiritual ambitions, waiting only to pounce upon and exploit their fellow human beings! Do you know any? They can be changed—all it takes is surrendering their minds to the mind of Christ which is found in the Bible (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Amos is using sarcasm, satire and irony. The Israelites were already going to Bethel and Gilgal. It was at Bethel they set up the golden calves to worship (1 Kgs. 12:26; 2 Chron. 11:15; 13:8; Hosea 8:5-6). Israel was also offering to idols and worshiping them at Gilgal (Hosea 4:15:9:15:12:11)—probably because of its historic significance (Joshua encamped there; Samuel made Saul king there; Saul offered animals to the Lord there). Amos was not commanding them to worship at these places. He was trying to shame them from their idolatry. The prophets were not afraid to use sarcasm, satire and irony. The hard-headed, spiritually-dull minds of their audiences called for it (Ezek. chs. 2 & 3). People who think and act like dumb animals (Isa. 1:3) have to be talked to like animals! Jesus used irony and sarcasm in his teaching. The apostles use it in their letters. Shakespeare, Milton, and other poets

have used sarcasm, satire and irony. Comedians use it. Parents use it. All kinds of people use it and no one gets upset until a preacher uses it! What should Amos have done? Was he never to mention the sinfulness of their idolatry at Bethel and Gilgal? Was he to simply to condescend to it? And, if he is to warn them at all, how shall he phrase his warning? Have they heard the prophets before Amos? What does it take to get their attention? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy (preach)? Amos 3:8!

There are 7 disasters, actually, “divine invasions-into-nature,” God sent to bring Israel to repentance. It is not “mother-nature” that is the cause of these disasters—God the Creator of this universe is the Cause: (a) hunger, i.e., “cleanness of teeth” 4:6; (b) drought, i.e., “I withheld the rain, 4:7; (c) crop-disease, i.e., “blight and mildew” 4:9; (d) locusts, i.e., “the locusts devoured” 4:9; (e) pestilence, i.e., “after the manner of Egypt” 4:10; (f) war, i.e., “I slew your young men with the sword, 4:10; (g) destruction and devastation, i.e., “like a brand plucked out of the burning, 4:11. In all this God was immanently involved carrying out judgments in order to turn Israel to repentance (change of mind and direction). God is immanently at work in what we today call “Nature.” There are still millions of people who need to turn their thinking and behavior to what the One True God wants and knows is man’s blessedness. God still, today, acts through natural “laws” (causes) to turn all mankind from his wickedness back toward rightness or righteousness. Why would anyone think God is less in the earthquake, drought, whirlwind, fire, flood, war, etc. today than he was in Amos’s day or Paul’s day? God does not change—man must change. When God’s immanence in nature so thoroughly saturates the Old and New Testaments, why should we think it impossible that God might still act that way today? Ever natural disaster and every providential deliverance is a message of God to the whole world that it is to turn to him (Rom. 1:18ff; Acts 14:15-18; 17:22-31). Christ even promised the churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2:16, 22; 3:19) that he would be immanently involved in chastening them to produce repentance in them. Yes, even Christians need constant reminders that this world is not their home—they’re just pilgrims, passing through.

Three times, in 14 verses, Amos says, “Seek the Lord” 5:4,6,14. Evidently the people were seeking some religious experience for they were going to Bethel and Gilgal. But God, although omnipresent, can be sought only in the place, time, and manner which he ordains. Human beings do not dictate where and how they shall find God. God alone dictates where he shall be found and how he shall be sought. See 1 Chron. 28:8; 2 Chron. 15:2; 19:3; Ezra 7:10; 8:21; Isa. 8:19; 45:19; Jer. 29:13; Hosea 5:6; 5:15; 6:3, etal. God is found through his word. God is found in the church universal. That is what God was trying to teach Israel through the Law and the Prophets. God’s spiritual habitation is not in a house made with hands, but in the minds and hearts of his people—and in the New Testament dispensation in Gentiles as well as Jews, Eph. 2:11-12. He cannot be found anywhere any human dictates. The woman at the well and her Samaritan kinsfolk worshiped God on Mount Gerizim, Jn. 4. Her ancestors for at least 500 years thought they had done so. But Jesus told her, “You worship what you do not know” ...i.e., she was worshiping in ignorance. God was not to be sought on Mt. Gerizim, but in Jerusalem in the OT dispensation, 2 Kgs. 17:28-41. The Jews tried to worship Jehovah according to their own dictates and the prophets denounced them for that! In the NT the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, “It is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat” ...1 Cor. 11:20. The Corinthians were observing

the Lord's supper contrary to the apostolic revelation. God has revealed how and where he is to be sought. He has revealed it in the Bible, and only in the Bible. He will not be found any other way! Are we really worshiping according to God's revelation? How long has it been since you read your New Testament to seek God's revelation concerning worship rather than the "way we do it."

The crimes Amos accused the people of tells us what God expects in business dealings. Amos accused them of: (a) hating to be reprov'd; (b) trampling upon the poor; (c) exacting (overcharging/extorting) from the poor; (d) taking bribes, i.e., being partial; (e) turning aside the needy. Amos called upon them to : (a) seek good, love good; (b) hate evil; (c) establish justice (fairness) until it rolls down like the waters, and righteousness (right) like an ever-flowing stream. God involves himself even in our everyday business with our fellow man! God knows when people are being cheated. He knows when partiality for favors (bribes) is going on. He knows when the needy are turned aside. And he will not let crookedness go unpunished! In Amos's day, the big business people (the rich) hated anyone who tried to correct them. They hated the truth. They were in business not to help anyone, but strictly to help themselves. They did not care about what was right or wrong, so long as they made a profit. They would take bribes, pay bribes, extort, be unjust and be indifferent to anyone's need, in order to increase their own wealth. The Lord was about to pass through their midst and take them into exile "beyond Damascus" 5:27, i.e., to Assyria (modern Iraq).

This is another of Amos's rebukes couched in irony and sarcasm. Amos certainly was not silent! But he was not unwise! The social and political situation had so deteriorated in the day of Amos that the "smart" man would either join the "establishment" or keep quiet. It is so in every generation. Every OT prophet was told this! I have been told that! Jesus was told that! The apostles were told that! Martin Luther was told that. Alexander Campbell and Elder "Raccoon" John Smith were told that. Almost every preacher I know has been told that at one time or another when they preached the unadulterated word of God. But when God has spoken and said, "Tell it!" who will keep silent? When God has commanded, "speak," is it wise to keep silent? Daniel was told, "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" Dan. 12:3. How is one to turn many to righteousness by being silent about what God's word says about "righteousness?" When Amos was threatened and ordered to stop preaching, Amos's reply was, "Hear the word of the Lord." When the apostles were threatened they said, "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard...we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 4:20; 5:29). What would you do if the times became "evil" in America? Would you keep silent, or proclaim his word? Aren't the times evil enough in America now for you and me to speak up and speak out? Subtle, satanic advice comes constantly, "Don't get excited, or carried away—don't become a fanatic, don't get involved, be tolerant and keep your nose out of it. Play it "cool," be wise, keep your mouth shut, don't rock the boat, "don't make waves." Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778) French satirist and philosopher (who lived during the appalling, bloody French Revolution), said it well, "It is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong." We will see in Amos ch. 7, how dangerous it was for God's prophet, Amos.

Yes! We are supposed to hate evil! To hate means: "to feel an intense aversion to; detest; abhor; loathe; to be utterly disgusted with; to be intolerant of." In Amos's day,

society had its values upside down. It called evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20)—Amos and Isaiah were contemporaneous in their ministries. The people of Amos's day had turned justice into wormwood (poison), and cast down righteousness to the earth (smashed it under their feet, figuratively speaking), Amos 5:7. How many do you know today who are intolerant of evil? Who do you know today, besides yourself, who detests evil and who is utterly disgusted with it? What is "evil?" GOD ALONE IS TO SAY WHAT'S EVIL! And God has clearly spoken about good and evil in his word, the Bible! Our yellow-livered, spineless, pleasure-mad society, headed by political leaders like those of Amos's day, do not want to call anything evil except—call those evil who express their disgust for evil! That's what you call being "up-side-down." Our society thinks the most evil thing in the world is intolerance toward evil. Our society has turned justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth (in the NT the word for "wormwood" is absinthe, a liqueur, the continuous use of which leads to mental deterioration and even death—it is also called, *creme de menthe* and is used today in numerous "cocktails"). We are told not to call homosexual practices evil; not to call pre-marital or extra-marital sex evil; not to call government corruption evil; not to call stealing from the government evil; not to call gluttony evil; not to call littering evil; not to call pornography evil—and a million other crimes and sins. Fundamentally, the reason people do not hate evil is that they do not love righteousness! A person will always love good in direct proportion to his hate for evil. Isaiah (contemporary with Amos) wrote, "Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth has fallen in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice." (Isa. 59:14-15). When those in "the public squares" (i.e., political leaders) have no regard for the truth there can be no justice. And anyone who cries out against the evil of injustice "makes himself a prey" (i.e., victim).

God hates their feasts! God is utterly disgusted with their feasts! He will not tolerate their feasts! Sounds a little harsh for the God who commanded them to keep certain feasts! They were offering him "burnt offerings" and "cereal offerings," and he refused to accept them 5:22. What was wrong? Was God being petulant? Was God that difficult to please? God is not difficult to please. All he wants is a person's heart (mind). All God wants is a person's love and trust (faith). He knows human beings are short of perfection. He has made provision for the shortcomings and imperfections of human beings who trust and love him. He sent his only unique son (Jn. 3:16, Greek, *monogenes* "the only one of his kind") to "become sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21) "so that we might become the righteousness of God in him." But God cannot tolerate being mocked, shamed, distrusted, despised. And holding feasts, giving offerings, without giving one's heart is an abomination to one so gracious and giving! Amos's people were doing just that—mocking God, shaming him, despising him by holding feasts, giving offerings, and then cheating, turning side the needy, worshiping idols and keeping silent about evil (see Isa. 1:1-17; 58:1-14; Hosea 4:1; 13:14). Israel had become a nation of ingrates, an "adulterous wife," shameless and despicable. Could it ever be possible that the NT church would be displeasing to Christ? What do you think all the epistles of the apostles were about? What do you think the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. chs. 2 & 3) were all about? Did God hate the evil in the Corinthian church—even their inconsiderate observance of the Lord's Supper? Why do you think Paul warned the Corinthians about drinking condemnation unto themselves. An un-surrendered heart turns ritual and profession into abomination in the Lord's eyes!

Yes! And No! Amos does prohibit not only musical instruments, but music itself that is careless or idle, 6:5. The Hebrew word hamon is translated in Amos 5:23, “tumult, confusion” and means “to improvise, to make-up, to fake and merely make noise.” But Amos does not prohibit music that honors God, whether vocal or instrumental! There are enough statements in the NT as to what honors God so no one should be ignorant. Certainly, music that comes from a motivation that is selfish (commercialized, fleshly oriented) dishonors God. Music from instruments that drown out the lyrics or is so loud it hurts one’s ears does not honor God. Music that is only for showing-off or performance, or “look at me, I can sing” does not honor God. And we have a lot of that today or we wouldn’t have people applauding the performances like we do! Music in true worship of God is NOT A SHOW! There should be much more congregational participation in church music and much LESS people on the platform performing. The apostle Paul wrote that we must sing with the spirit AND THE MIND (1 Cor. 14:15). So let us have lyrics that are not dumbed-down and repetitious. Let us have lyrics that stimulate the thinking and the soul to do what God wants done, not just pretty little ditties that are on the level of immature children. Amos’s people were prolific singers and musicians. They put on a noisy show with their harps and other instruments. But they had no concern for “the ruin of Joseph” (i.e., Israel), 6:6. They appeared to be very religious, but they indulged themselves in the finest of everything. They went first-class while the poor went hungry and suffered injustice. It is a mockery of God to “have an emotional party” (even a religious party) while others suffer deprivation. When sin is rampant and social ruin is all around, it is no time to celebrate! An attitude of soberness, seriousness, repentance and even mourning is more appropriate. And do you think that sin and social ruin is not rampant in our midst today?

Justice defined: “that which is right; that which is equitable; that which conforms to the law; that which conforms to the truth; integrity, impartiality; vindicatory, righteousness”. Look the word “justice” up in the dictionary for yourself! Justice is what our American Declaration of Independence declared. “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equally, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Justice is what the purpose of our United States Constitution is for: “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” The people of Amos’s day were violating the fundamentals of justice. They were not doing what was right. They were not conforming to the “self-evident” law of justice. They were not doing what was true. They were practicing partiality. They gave advantage to those who paid money (bribes), or to those who had power and would do nothing about it. They were turning justice into poison. When advantage is taken over those who are poor or powerless, the fundamental glue of social order becomes poisonous, death-dealing and destructive. When what is intended to preserve society weakens (justice, righteousness, truth, fairness) eventually society is destroyed. Racial discrimination is one of the vilest forms of injustice! People should be treated fairly without regard to race or station in life. Equal opportunity does not call for giving advantages to minorities or race just because they are minorities. Giving preferences to minorities just because they are minorities is injustice.

AMOS 7:1—9:15

The Lord is not saying he will never judge Israel 7:106. He most certainly did judge Israel! He took them away into captivity just as he promised. The 10 northern tribes (Israel) were taken captive in 722 B.C. 40 years after Amos predicted it. God sent them into Assyria whose kings ruled all the Euphrates/Tigris region from the north and what is today Armenia, west into a portion of what is now Turkey, south to include all of Syria and Palestine except the kingdom of Judah, and east into the edge of what is now Iran. The kings of Assyria were arrogant and ruthless. Their soldiers were fearless and savage in warfare. Assyrian soldiers were known to skin victims alive or impale them alive on huge, sharpened posts. They enslaved all captured peoples. They maintained rule over such a wide expanse by taking the natives of a land captive and moving Assyrian peoples into the vacated territories. We know that some of the Israelites survived Assyrian captivity and returned with the captives of Babylonian kings when Cyrus, king of Persia allowed thousands of Jews to return to their homeland (see the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). The Israelites taken by the Assyrians were scattered "like a sieve" all over that vast territory 9:8. "Foreigners" placed by Assyrians into the conquered portion of Palestine later married the few Israelites left behind became what was known as "Samaritans." As Amos continues his prophecy, he says in no uncertain terms that God is going to judge, punish and scatter the Israelites, 7:8-9; 7:17; 8:1-3; 8:9-14; 9:1-9. But the Lord also promises that when he judges them he will not utterly destroy the house (descendants) of Jacob. Some of the 10 northern tribes (Israel) did return with the restored exiles in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, and formed the Messianic people upon whom God restored his fortunes (9:14). However, most of the exiled Jews of both Israel and Judah, remained in that territory and became Persians-Jews (the book of Esther). It is evident that Amos represented God as temporarily withholding some judgments upon Israel. God is more patient and long-suffering than any human being! Amos interceded for Israel. Intercessory prayer cannot be over emphasized. We ought to do more it. Paul exhorts us to do so, even for all men (1 Tim. 2:1ff). Perhaps the world of mankind would lead a quieter and more peaceable life if Christians devoted themselves to more intercessory prayer for the other nations of the world instead of so much "gimme" praying!

A "plumb-line" is a tool by which a stone mason or carpenter, or plumber, checks to see if a wall or a board, or a pipe is vertically straight. It is a standard and a measurement, a rule. God's "plumb-line" is his word. In Amos's day it was the law of Moses and the revelations given the prophets preached throughout the Israelite nation. God was putting the law of Moses and the words of the prophets up against Israel to see if Israel was "plumb" (straight, correct). And, of course, Israel was not plumb. Israel had not used God's plumb-bob (his word) when she built her society. Thus, the society of the ten northern tribes was about to cave in, topple over, fall, and come into ruin. "The ruin of Joseph" was about to be seen by the whole world of that day. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it" Psa. 127:1; Mt. 7:24-27. Later, God used Israel as his to "plumb-line" on Judah (2 Kgs. 21:13) and found Judah was as out of plumb as Israel. As a consequence, God sent Judah into captivity, too! Does America, raised up straight and true by her founding fathers, the Pilgrims and Puritans, dare now to see what God's plumb-line indicates concerning herself and her practices?

She had better apply the plumb-line quite often lest she find herself in the condition of the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. chs. 2-3).

The church of God has gone underground many times! Even in OT times, many of the prophets and their faithful few hid themselves from those who would kill them and persecute them. Even the brave Elijah and David did so. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 11:38) tells us of those wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth...were counted faithful. These were the saints of God in the terrible times of the Syrian holocaust when Antiochus IV tried to turn all the Jews into heathens trying to force them to worship idols and violate the kosher laws of food. It was the time of the Maccabean struggles to rid their land of the Syrians (ca. 300-60 B.C.). We sense that some of the Christians were hiding during the Jewish persecution of the early church, recorded in the book of Acts. The book of Revelation represents the church during the imperial Roman persecutions during the imperial Roman persecutions as being carried by God into the "wilderness" (i.e., pagan hostility) to "nourish it" (Rev. 12:13-17). We know from post-apostolic church history that many thousands of Christians went underground and worshiped in the catacombs of the city of Rome. Amos himself does not seem to have gone underground. He bearded the lion in his own den. He went before the leaders of the apostate 10 northern tribes and declared God's judgments. Whether he eventually returned to his home in Tekoa (south of Jerusalem) or stayed and suffered death at the hands of the idolaters, we do not know. God apparently leaves it up to his people to decide whether they shall go underground or "beard the lion." And he does not count those underground Christians as cowards, nor those who do not as foolish. Remember, there were times when even Jesus and the apostle Paul discreetly kept away from those who would harm them!

There is nothing wrong with offering wheat for sale. And these merchants were even restraining themselves from selling on the Sabbath. However, they were making the "ephah small and the shekel great" i.e., they were cheating with false balances. And that was intolerable with God, see Lev. 19:35-37; Deut 25:13-16. It was an abomination with the Lord. God hates cheating and exploiting others. Micah, a prophet to the southern kingdom, about 100 years after Amos, pronounced the "woe" of God upon those who cheated and oppressed, "because it was in the power of their hand" to do so. The OT prophets are as "up-to-date" as the 21st century in every nation on earth! Cheating is thievery! Exploiting is thievery! Thieves will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 4:28, etal.). To lie or practice falsehood with deceitful balances will send a person to hell, Rev. 21:8; 22:15). To sell the refuse of wheat is also to cheat! To sell a product that is phoney, or less than advertised, is what God condemns through Amos as an abomination. With God it is not caveat emptor, i.e., "buyer beware." With God it is caveat venditor seller beware. It may be smart or shrewd business to deliberately build obsolescence into products to make the product carelessly, cheaply and even faulty, so that the margin of profit is larger. To advertise deceptively may be "good for business but it is an abomination to the final Judge of all mankind! If God expects us to be trustworthy, faithful, true, loving helpful stewards in spiritual matters Lk. 16:10-13 (i.e., church matters), then he expects nothing less in material things—in our job, our businesses, in dealing with our neighbors, in dealing with employers and employees, **ESPECIALLY BUSINESSMEN, BEWARE!** THE Lord'S eye is everywhere in your place of business, in your home, in your bedroom, in your heart and mind!

This is probably one of the most relevant, pertinent, piercing questions we might ask our 21st century American society! Are people hungering and thirsting after the word of God? Perhaps, a few, but millions upon millions hunger after everything else in the world except the word of God. Perhaps there are some people hungering for religion but “religion” and the word of God are not synonymous—they’re not the same “hunger.” People are hungering for justice, freedom, forgiveness, love, identity, peace—but not for the word of God. And, “surprise, surprise” everything they are hungering for is in the word of God. If only the millions and millions would “hunger and thirst for righteousness” they would be “filled” (Mt. 5:6). None of that which the world hungers for may be found apart from God’s word. Millions are trying every where and every thing, and every idea except the word of God to find what their souls long for, and they are only intensifying the starvation of their souls! When Jesus gave his famous sermon on The Bread of Life, after he had miraculously fed some 10,000 people with only 5 loaves and 2 fish, he said, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but labor for the food which endures to eternal life” John 6:27. Then he very specifically pointed out that the food which endures unto eternal life was the words that he had spoken to them, John 6:63. Who do people not hunger for the words of Jesus? Why do people stupidly hunger for, and labor for words from everywhere but the Bible? What is it about Jesus’s words that makes people want everything else but that? It is its demand for death to self! It is its demands for humility and servant-hood. It is its demand for trusting one’s salvation to Christ’s grace. People want everything else but Jesus’ word because they have determined to preserve themselves on their own terms!

Yes! God really commands the sword! He commands the “swords” (i.e., military, police, judicial officers) of all nations (a) Isaiah 10:5-18 tells us that God used the Assyrians to punish Israel, even though the Assyrians did not think they were being used by the Hebrew God; (b) Isaiah 44:24 tells how God is going to grasp the right hand of Cyrus, king of Persia, and led him, give him victory; (c) Jeremiah 27:1-11 tells how God was going to use Nebuchadnezzar as his servant, and will give the whole world of that time into his hand; (d) Habakkuk 1:5ff tells how God is going to use the Chaldeans against Judah; (e) Revelation 17:15-18 tells how God put it into the hearts of ten kings to carry out his purpose against the harlot, the ancient Roman empire. There are many other such scriptures specifying God’s over-riding of human’s words and deeds even when the humans think they are doing otherwise. Certainly, almost always God allows humans to choose which words they will say, but there is the account of Balaam, a “diviner” from a city on the Euphrates (Num. 22:4-5ff) when the Lord “put a word in Balaam’s mouth” Num. 23:5,16 “beyond which Balaam could not go” (Num. 24:12ff). Whether Balaam’s refusal to curse the Israelites was because God miraculously made it impossible for him to do so, or whether Balaam’s refusal was his fear of what Jehovah would do to him, we are not told in the account. Wicked men continually speak words contrary to the Lord’s commandments. Wicked men still make war against their fellow men (especially against God’s church) for their own selfish purposes. They intend to devour the church, to annihilate the kingdom of God and his word on earth. Wicked men intend to take over God’s “vineyard” (the church) for themselves, Mt. 21:33-45. And while God allows men to choose and act, he uses their choices and actions to serve his purposes for either judgment, nurturing, warning or deliverance. God controls wickedness. It never goes beyond his limitations (see Job chapters 1 & 2).

Amos, like all the other prophets, repeatedly appeals to the reality and identity of Jehovah. The OT prophets continually declare that the existence, nature, character, and attributes of Jehovah as the basis for all he has to say to mankind. When emphasizing Jehovah's existence and character, the prophets usually make a contrast between Israel's God and the idols of the heathen (see esp. Isa. chs. 41-44). Human hope, behavior, reasoning, learning growth, identity, valid feelings and values must ultimately be based on WHO GOD IS! If people are ever to be turned away from the deception of Satan, away from wickedness and sin, away from eternal death, it will happen when they learn, understand, believe and obey God in accordance with his revealed word! We must evangelize by teaching the world who God is, and who his only unique Son, Jesus Christ, is! We must edify and strengthen Christians (the church) by continually teaching the nature and character and identity of God and Christ! We cannot produce righteousness by preaching a systematic religion. There are no rituals which will, by simply engaging in them, no matter how faithfully, will produce right behavior. Because right behavior must parallel right thinking, right motives and right devotion. And our right thinking and right devotion depends totally upon our concept of the nature of God! We love him because he first loved us! (2 Jn. 4:11-19.)

The "booth of David" prophecy, Amos 9:11-15, is the most important part of Amos's book! This prophecy is unequivocally fulfilled in the first coming of Christ and the establishment of the church—specifically, in the incorporation of Gentiles into the covenant community of God and Christ, Acts 15:16-17: (a) note the "shortened perspective" principle of prophetic literature as Amos applied it in this text. He is speaking of the captivities of the Israelites in 9:9-10 which took place 722 B.C.—and then—in the very next verses 9:11-15, he speaks of an event which came 750 years after the captivities (Acts 15:16-17). He does this without telling anything that will happen in the intervening 750 years. This is a principle of interpretation never recognized or used by most "prophecy fanatics" who want to make every prophecy of the OT apply to the alleged "rapture, tribulation, and millennium." (b) note the times coloring principle of interpreting prophecy. Another hermeneutic principle seldom acknowledged by "prophecy fanatics." Amos describes the messianic age (the church and reception of the Gentiles) in military and agricultural terms (terms suited to a spiritually immature people). Israel possessing Edom and all the nations is fulfilled by the church's evangelization of the world of heathenism. The "restoration of the fortunes of Israel" means spiritual satisfaction, blessedness and security in the messianic age (the church). It has nothing to do with the United Nation's gift of Palestine to modern Israel! The Hebrew word succoth translated "booth" is also translated "tabernacle." Amos is saying the house of David which has come to ruin shall some day be raised up and rebuilt. The apostles said that came to pass with the NT church and salvation of Gentiles. You know, of course, even the OT itself was a parable of the NT church (see Heb. 9:9 where the Greek text actually has the word parable in reference to the NT church).

No! I say again, Israel possessing Edom and all the nations is not a Biblical mandate for modern Israel to drive the Palestinians out of the Dead Sea region (or any other region of Palestine). Contrary to former President Jimmy Carter's theology, and that of Menachem Begin and Ronald Reagan, there is no Biblical mandate anywhere in the OT or NT for what the U.N., urged by America, did in 1947-48 by arbitrarily partitioning the land of Palestine and declaring that part of the land must be vacated so

Jews from all over the world could move in. If there is a Biblical mandate about the Holy Land at all, it is that the Jews should never have the land again! They were told in the OT that if they rejected The Prophet (i.e., the Messiah, Jesus) they would be driven from their land and the sole of their foot would never find rest again, Deut 28:1-68; especially 28:65. Jesus, in his prophecy of the doom of Judaism and Jerusalem (Mt. 23:1—24:35), declared Judaism desolate and forsaken by God. Jesus indicated their nation and their land would be taken from them (Mt. 21:33-46; Lk. 21:20-24). If some Jews want to get together and invade Palestine militarily, take the territory by warfare, and claim the land by right of conquest, O.K. But don't pretend there is some Biblical mandate or divine right to the land. The U.N. has no right to give the land to anyone. Theoretically, the U.N. is supposed to suppress that kind of aggressive take-over of long-held territory!!! If the U.S. wants to honestly declare that Jewish take-over of Palestine is politically and economically in its interest, O.K. But phooey on Biblical mandate. Actually, almost all the "Jews" living in modern Israel do not believe the Bible is divinely inspired. Some of them (many of the survivors of the Nazi holocaust) do not even believe God exists. And if Arthur Koestler is correct in his book, "The Thirteenth Tribe," all the eastern European "Jews" originated from the switch of the Kazars of Russia, about A.D. 900, from heathenism to Judaism. They were not born Jewish! Jacob Gertenhaus, a Jew, wrote in a past issue of Christianity Today, that no Jew can trace his ancestry back more than four centuries. So, who is a Jew?

Do you now see the connection between the dispersion of Israel by the captivities in 722 B.C., and, later Judah in 606 B.C., the raising again of the booth of David? Those connections are between God's working upon Israel in judgment and captivity dispersing Jews with their OT all over the heathen world. That facilitated the rapid evangelization of the Roman empire from A.D. 30-500 and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, the 5th and final, universal kingdom on earth (Dan. 2:44-45). The failure to make this connection between OT prophecy and the NT church as it began in the first century is what causes so many shortened perspective prophecies in the OT prophets (e.g., Joel 2:17 and Joel 2:28ff; Micah 4:11; 5:1 and Micah 5:2, and many more in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah (which we call apocalyptic prophets) to be misunderstood and misinterpreted when people do not let the Bible interpret itself. All history is inexorably moving toward the goal and purpose of almighty God and his Son, Jesus Christ (the Lamb). **THE MOST IMPORTANT HISTORY, FROM God's perspective centers on those to whom he has chosen to reveal, and demonstrate, covenant relationship to him.** One thing is certain, the political, economic, artistic, and scientific schemes and deeds of humans which deny God or claim no need for God, are living in a fool's paradise. They are actually of consequence only because God allows them and uses them inevitably to serve his purposes! **THE OT PROPHETS MAKE THIS SO VERY PLAIN!!!** Apart from God's purposes, whatever any human does, is of no consequence. Only that labor which is done in the Lord Jesus Christ is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:1-58). AMEN!

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

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