

A Glimmer of Hope in a Prophecy of Doom Amos 9:11-15

Intro: The prophecy of Amos crackles with the righteous indignation of a good hell-fire and brimstone sermon. There was not much Amos could say to Israel during Amos' time that could be very comforting. His message was one of doom because of Israel's sin. He was called to say to Israel, "Prepare to meet God!" (Amos 4:12).

Yet, the final three verses of Amos offer a glimmer of hope for Israel.

God's Promises to Israel

Restoration of the Rule of the House of David

"In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name," declares the Lord who does this. (Amos 9:11-12)

God had promised to David that his throne would be established forever. Yet Amos has described a period of judgment for Israel that would practically bring the house of David to ruins. Already the northern tribes had been torn from the house of David and eventually both kingdoms would go into captivity. Yet, the prophet pictures a time when the descendants of David will rule again as before. In addition, the Gentile people are pictured as belonging to David's restored kingdom as well, that is, people from among one of Israel's fiercest enemies, Edom as well as from other nations. These Gentile peoples are also "called by God's name" a phrase indicating God's ownership and protection.

Abundant fruitfulness of God's land

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills will be dissolved (Amos 9:13)

This is a picture of almost incredible fertility or blessing upon the land over which the restored house of David is ruling. It is as if, by the time the reaper is finished harvesting the crops, the one who plows the fields of a new crop has come to start his work. The one who has picked the grapes and tread them for the wine is still working when the sower goes out to sow a new crop. The mountains are so lush with vineyards that they appear to melt down with the flow of the wine that drips from the abundant vines.

Restoration & security of God's people

"Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their

fruit. I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,” says the Lord your God (Amos 9:14-15)

The third picture of this idyllic scene is the safe and secure possession of the land by the people of Israel. The prophets, because of Israel's sin, had often threatened that they would not eat the fruit of their orchards or drink the wine of their vineyards. But in this case, they will do so; for there will no one to root them out because they have remained true to the covenant of God, protecting them from the harsh judgments of captivity.

Taken together these three verses describe the restoration of the kingdom God had promised to David with emphasis on divinely provided fruitfulness and protection.

How were or will these prophecies or promises to be fulfilled?

A common dispensational interpretation—the future millennial reign of Jesus

David's fallen tent will be restored when Jesus, the son of David returns and sits on David's throne in Jerusalem ruling not only over Israel but over the peoples of the nations.

The physical land of Israel will be converted to a place of incredible fertility, a virtual oasis, through God's blessing.

The Jews will return to Palestine to live and rebuild their cities, never to be removed.

Though this somewhat semi-literal interpretation seems possible or plausible, there is a NT passage that demands that we give Amos' prophecy a different interpretation.

Ac. 15--The key that unlocks Amos' prophecy!

The context

You remember that in this chapter the apostles and elders of Jerusalem are deliberating in the presence of the Jerusalem church due to a problem created by some of the members of the church there. Some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem had gone down to Antioch and indicated to the Gentile disciples there that the apostles were teaching in Jerusalem that all Gentiles had to obey the Laws of Moses, including circumcision, in order to be saved. This caused a great stir and it was agreed that Paul and Barnabas who were preaching there should go up to Jerusalem to address this issue with the apostles and elders of the church.

The apostles and elders called the church together to discuss the matter.

Peter related his experience at the household of Cornelius stressing how that God had indicated that the Gentiles were saved by faith by giving them miraculous gifts just like the Jews had received at the beginning,

confirming that they were authentic Christians without having been circumcised and without having committed to keep the Law.

Paul and Barnabas then presented their evidence that God had accepted the Gentiles without their keeping the Law and had shown that through the miracles they had performed among the Christians in the Gentile churches.

From their testimonies three facts can be established:

God approved the proclamation of the gospel to Gentile people.

God confirmed their authenticity as His people by giving them the Holy Spirit with the evidence of signs and wonders as proof of that fact.

The Gentiles were accepted and authenticated as God's people without the any additional requirement to keep the Law.

To this James added his judgment:

The Text

And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 'After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old. Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." (Acts 15:13-21)

James' application of the text

James affirms that the events described by Peter as well as by Paul and Barnabas involving the conversion of the Gentiles and God's attestation of their authenticity as His people by miracles and their reception of the Spirit without the keeping of the Law are compatible with what the prophets had said. A case in point is the prophecy of Amos.

Amos had said that God would do several things:

He would return to Israel (that is), He would no longer abandon them, but visit them again with His saving power.

God's mission in returning would be to raise up the fallen tent of David and restore it (that is) He would reestablish His kingdom among the Israelites. The result of which would be that the Gentiles would seek the Lord and be called by His name. James sees the fulfillment of the Amos' prophecy in the experiences that Peter, Paul, and Barnabas were reporting. And the implication is clear: God had returned to Israel and the rule of the house of David over Israel had been re-established resulting in the incorporation of Gentiles into the kingdom of God.

Did James misunderstand and misapply the words of Amos? Not at all! In fact, his application helps us understand the spiritual meaning and application of Amos' prophecy about Israel. God's promise was not of a geo-political kingdom but a spiritual one reminiscent of the original kingdom of God when He Himself reigned over it from heaven.

An alternative divinely-directed explanation—the present spiritual reign of Jesus at the Father's right hand

The fallen tent of David and its ruins are restored through the resurrection, ascension and reign of Jesus at God's right hand!

It is not an accident that the gospel writers give us these long genealogies about Jesus. They want us to understand that He is properly descended from David to fulfill the promises God had made to David to establish His throne forever.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

Because Jesus was of David's descent He can reign over Israel as their king. Peter declared that Jesus was raised from the dead for that very purpose! (Ac. 2:29-36).

Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet." Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts 2:29-36)

And His reign is not only over the people of Israel (i.e. King of the Jews), but all those among the nations “called by His name”, (i.e. He is “King of kings!”). His land is not Palestine but the world!

The continual fruitfulness of His land is spiritual and is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit.

The fruitfulness of Amos’ prophecy is not merely about wheat and grapes. That might be a disappointment to someone who cannot rise above the promise of all the wine one can drink and all the bread one can eat. But there is something far richer that is available to each citizen of the kingdom, the spiritual fruit that comes through the work of the Holy Spirit in each kingdom citizen.

This figure of kingdom “fruitfulness” is often mentioned in the NT.

*Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. (Romans 7:4)
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)*

The restoration of Israel’s captivity and their subsequent security takes place when they repent of sin and put their faith in Jesus Christ.

All God’s people are being gathered into one body through Jesus Christ. Wherever they are, they are “a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people for God’s own possession” (1 Pet. 2:10).

And as God’s people they are in Jesus safe and secure! The Good Shepherd promised us so:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27-30)

Today we are experiencing what God promised through Amos. We are Gentiles who have sought the Lord, the God of Abraham, and who participate in the blessings promised to him. Jesus Christ reigns over us. The Holy Spirit works in us to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Through Him all our enemies are conquered; and through Him there is security in this spiritual land in which we dwell.

Lessons for us from Amos 9

Beware of interpretations that overlook divine explanations and impose upon Scripture constructs contrary to them.

The whole “Left Behind” series is based on the dispensational interpretation of these OT prophecies.

Premillennialism is not merely a strange doctrinal curiosity; it is a system of interpretation that causes its adherents to miss some of the important principles of the gospel.

Be thankful for the opportunity to participate in the kingdom of Christ.

Rejoice in the reign of Jesus

Receive the fruitfulness He makes possible

Rest in the security that He provides

Conclusion: In God’s plan for Israel He had an eye on those who were not the physical descendants of Abraham—upon us! We too can be a part of the kingdom of God and enjoy its blessings.