

Amos:
The Prophet from the Country
Lesson 7

Key Verse

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your
heart.

—Jeremiah 29:13

Key Verse Thought: Read today's key verse. Do you know what it is to seek for God? Use the following definitions to help you understand this verse:

- **seek:** to search out – specifically in prayer or worship; to enquire, ask, beseech
- **search:** to follow in pursuit; to search; to worship; make inquisition
- **find:** to find or acquire; to meet
- **heart:** the mind; understanding

God promises that if we will actively pursue Him in prayer or worship, we will meet Him. But only if we will follow in pursuit until we find Him with our mind and understanding. It obviously takes work. In this lesson, we will see that the people of Israel did not seek God – even when God told them to seek Him.

Emphasis: We should consider Amos' question. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). We cannot live as the Israelites lived, disregarding God's commands. We should then heed Amos's warning to "Seek the LORD, and ye shall live..." (Amos 5:6).

Lesson Summary: Amos was a contemporary of Jonah, whom we studied in our last lesson. Although they spoke around the same time, they spoke God's Word to different groups of people. If you remember, God sent Jonah to a city, Nineveh, in a Gentile nation, Assyria. Amos was from an area just south of Jerusalem, in Judah. But God sent him to speak – mostly to Israel. He spoke during the reign of King Jeroboam II.

Amos was known as a prophet from the country. He was only a herdsman, yet when God called him, he obeyed God (Amos 7:14–15). Amos told of the impending judgment on the nations around, ending with the judgment that would fall upon Israel for their sin against God. He asked a pertinent question. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

After many warnings to “[s]eek the LORD, and ye shall live ...”, Amos warned of the discipline God would allow upon the people of Israel if they refused to turn back to Him. When the people refused to heed correction, God showed Amos several things that revealed the judgment that would come to God’s people. He saw: grasshoppers, a plumb line, a basket of summer fruit, and finally God standing at the altar. Nevertheless, even with the impending doom, God left His people with words of hope and restoration.

Suggested Bible Reading to Prepare for This Lesson

- Monday: Amos 1-2
- Tuesday: Amos 3-4
- Wednesday: Amos 5-6
- Thursday: Amos 7
- Friday: Amos 8
- Saturday: Amos 9

Amos:

The Prophet from the Country

1. God Speaks
 - God will discipline enemy nations: Amos 1 – 2:3
 - God will discipline Israel: Amos 2:6-8
 - Remember what God had done: Amos 2:9-11; 3:1-2
 - God’s warnings begin: Amos 2:12-16; 3:3-15; 4 – 5:1, 3
2. Hear God
 - Seek good, not evil: Amos 5:4-15
 - God will pass through the people: Amos 5:16-20, 27; 6:3-8, 14
3. God Promised Discipline – Yet Left them Hope
 - Amos saw grasshoppers: Amos 7:1-6
 - Amos saw a plumbline: Amos 7:7-15
 - Amos saw a basket of summer fruit: Amos 8:1-13
 - Amos saw God standing at the altar: Amos 9:1, 8-10
 - Hope remained: Amos 9:11-15

Note: As we learned about Jonah in our last lesson, we found him to be a reluctant prophet. God called, and Jonah ran the other way (although he finally obeyed God). In this lesson, we learn of another prophet – Amos. However, when God called Amos, he obeyed that call. Jonah and Amos lived during the same timeframe – while King Jeroboam II reigned in Israel. Remember that Jonah was sent to Nineveh, a Gentile city. We will learn that God sent Amos to His people in Israel. Amos was a herdsman (a shepherd or farmer). He lived in the country in Judah, yet God sent him to Israel to speak to His people (see Amos 7:14-16).

1. God Speaks: Amos 1 — 5:3:

When we last looked at Israel, they had been through a rough time with evil kings. The kingdom was beginning to recover numerically, but not spiritually. Each king continued in “*the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin ...*” which was, if you remember, that Jeroboam had set golden calves in Dan and Bethel claiming “they were the gods that brought the people out of Egypt.”

Amos begins by proclaiming God’s doom upon the enemy nations around Israel. The nations listed: “*Thus saith the LORD...*”

- “*For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof ...*” (Amos 1:3).
- “*For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof ...*” (Amos 1:6).
- “*For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof ...*” (Amos 1:9).
- “*For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof ...*” (Amos 1:11).
- “*For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof ...*” (Amos 1:13).
- “*For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof ...*” (Amos 2:1).
- “*For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof ...*” (Amos 2:4).

The word *transgressions* means “sin; wickedness; apostasy; a willful departure from the righteous path.”

Notice the term used “For three transgressions ... and for four” This expression is a Hebrew numeric parallelism. These numbers are not the actual number of sins committed, but they are poetic figures. They denote that their sins were innumerable.

Imagine you are in the crowd of Israelites, and a prophet is speaking doom and punishment from God upon all of the nations around – including Judah to the south. There is something about the human nature that is intrigued when they hear doom and destruction will fall as punishment for sins – when it is against someone else. But read what Amos said next. “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment thereof* ...” (Amos 2:6). This judgment was not just going to fall upon the nations around. Israel was guilty, too. Now do you think the people wanted to hear Amos’ message?

Read as Amos reminded them of what God had done for His people (see Amos 2:9–11). However, they had rejected the men God sent to warn them of their disregard of God’s law (“But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.” Amos 2:12). They continually broke the laws and commandments God had given to them by which to live (see Amos 2:6–8). God would overlook them no more – and none would escape (see Amos 2:13–16).

Why?

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2). Because God loved His people, He would not allow them to continue in their sin. When they would not receive warnings, God had no choice but to send discipline. How many parents discipline their children before they tell them (and repeatedly warn them) of wrongdoings? We just read in Amos 2:12 that the people had rejected the men God had sent to warn of wrongdoings. They would not receive correction, so God had no choice but to discipline. Why? “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Because God had no choice but to send that discipline, God was first sending His prophet to tell the people why they were about to be disciplined. “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). Amos was sent to warn God’s people of the pending destruction because of their blatant disregard of God and His Law.

What would happen? “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary *there shall be* even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall *be spoiled*” (Amos 3:11). There would be no escape – for anyone. As you read through Amos chapter 3, recognize this as Amos’ first sermon to the nation Israel. He first told them the problem: they had spurned their privilege of being God’s people.

As you read through Amos chapter 4, recognize this as Amos’ second sermon to the nation Israel. He told them, in detail, of their constant rejection of God and his correction – yet they would not return to God.

1. Hear ye this word which I take up against you, *even* a lamentation, O house of Israel. 2. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; *there is* none to raise her up. 3. For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out *by* a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth *by* an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel. (Amos 5:1–3)

Their doom was foretold because they refused to heed correction.

A Deeper Path: Just as God’s people in the Old Testament, the Israelites, were not to sin, Christians are not to sin. “12. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. 14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. 15. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. 16. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:12–16).

In addition, just as the Israelites were warned of the discipline, or consequences, of sin, Christians today are warned of the coming judgment. “10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we

persuade men ...” (2 Corinthians 5:10–11a). Knowing judgment is coming, we should persuade (convince) others as well.

2. Hear God: Amos 5:4 — 6:14

As you read through Amos chapters 5 and 6, see this as yet another sermon to the nation Israel. We just read the sad declaration of the fall of the house of Israel – never to rise again. As we continue in Amos 5, notice the recurring theme:

- “... Seek ye me, and ye shall live:” (Amos 5:4)
- “Seek the LORD, and ye shall live ...” (Amos 5:6)
- “Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live ...” (Amos 5:14)
- “Hate the evil, and love the good ...” (Amos 5:15)

God told them there would be great mourning and wailing. Why? “... [F]or I will pass through thee, saith the LORD” (Amos 5:17b). The last time we read that God passed through, was in Exodus 12. That was when God passed through the land of Egypt, killing all of the firstborn, because Pharaoh would not let God’s people go. When God passed through, there was death and destruction. It would be no different this time. See what Amos tells us next. “Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! ...” (Amos 5:18). You see, because the people had not turned back to God, the day of the Lord would be a time of judgment. They had turned from worshiping the one true God, and worshiped idols instead. “But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves” (Amos 5:26). For that, He could not let judgment pass over. “Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts” (Amos 5:27).

Knowing the judgment of God was declared upon the nation of Israel, especially see Amos 6:1–6 to see a description of the worst offenders. See what would happen to them. “Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive ...” (Amos 6:7).

“But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you ...” (Amos 6:14a).

A Deeper Path: Remember today’s Key verse: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). Then be reminded of what we are to

seek first in our lives. “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ...**” (Matthew 6:33a).

3. God Promised Discipline – Yet Left them Hope: Amos 7 — 9:

We just read of the promised doom because the people of Israel refused to forsake their false gods (golden calves at Dan and Bethel) and turn back to God, obeying His commands. Next, we will read about what God allowed Amos to see, helping him understand the problems so he would know what God expected him to do.

Amos saw grasshoppers: Amos 7:1–6

God showed Amos grasshoppers. They came after the grasses of the fields had already been cut and put away (probably stored for winter), but the second growing had just started. These grasshoppers ate all of the grass. When Amos saw, he understood what had happened. He began to pray, “**O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he *is* small**” (Amos 7:2). Amos knew God had been longsuffering, but He was going to allow Israel to be devoured (just as the grasshoppers devoured the grass) because of their sin against God. God answered Amos’ prayer, “**... It shall not be, saith the LORD**” (Amos 7:3b).

However, God showed Amos something else. This time the Lord God would contend by fire. (Remember in Numbers 11:1 when God sent a fire upon the outside edges of the camp to consume it because the people complained against Him again?) Amos interceded, praying again for God to spare His people. God turned from His wrath. “**... This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD**” (Amos 7:6b).

God would not completely destroy His people.

Amos saw a plumb line: Amos 7:7–15

Amos saw, “**... behold, the Lord stood upon a wall *made* by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand**” (Amos 7:7b). God asked Amos what he saw. Amos said a plumbline. A *plumbline* is “a weight on a string used to find a line perpendicular to the plane of the horizon; in Amos 7:8 it symbolizes the searching of morality followed by God’s exact judgment.” In building, a plumb line is used to keep the walls straight – in alignment with the floor, making sure that the building is sound and will not collapse. God told Amos he would set a plumbline in the midst of His people, Israel. God also said, “**... I will not again pass by them any more ...**” (Amos 7:8b).

Remember again back to Exodus chapter 12 when God “passed through” the land of Egypt, killing the first born. God “passed by” His people – those who had the blood of the lamb on the doorpost. They did not receive the judgment. However, God is declaring to Amos that he will not again pass by them anymore. God would bring destruction upon Israel.

God was going to judge the alignment of His people with His Word – destroying those who failed.

Amos saw a basket of summer fruit: Amos 8:1–13

God showed Amos a basket of summer fruit and then asked Amos what he saw. Amos said, “*A basket of summer fruit*” (Amos 8:2a). God then said, “*The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more*” (Amos 8:2b). Once again, we read God would not pass by his people. This was the second time God had said this to Amos. Destruction was inevitable. “*And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence*” (Amos 8:3). It would be a sad time in Israel’s history – but not without cause.

God let Amos know and understand why this would happen. Read Amos 8:4–6 to see how the Israelites had disregarded God’s Law. They took advantage of the needy and the poor, they cheated in their dealings, they bought and sold on the Sabbath (cheating with false balances), and even sold the refuse (wheat not good for anything). What did God say about their dealings? “*Surely I will never forget any of their works*” (Amos 8:7b).

God then declared the dreadfulness of that time in history (see Amos 8:8–10). The worst part came next. “*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD*” (Amos 8:11). There would be a day when God would not speak to His people – not even through the prophets. Then God’s people would wander, seeking the Word of the Lord – but they would not find it (see Amos 8:11–14).

Just as the summer fruits must be savored, God’s people were to savor His Word; for it would soon not be found.

Amos saw God standing at the altar: Amos 9:1, 8–10

“*I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the*

sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered” (Amos 9:1). Use the following definitions to help you understand this verse:

- **shake:** *a loud crashing noise*
- **cut:** *tearing something to pieces; symbolizing the completion, or finishing, of a task*
- **head:** *leader; head person*
- **not be delivered:** *none will escape or be saved*

In reading this verse, we can understand that God would completely destroy the false worship of Him that had been taking place in Israel (the golden calves in Dan and Bethel) since King Jeroboam established it. None would escape. In Amos 9:2–7, we understand that God knew where all of the offenders were – none could hide from Him. He would utterly destroy all who committed this great sin against Him. For God knew who had sinned against Him. “Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD*” (Amos 9:8). But also notice that God promised he would not completely destroy His people – only the offenders and the kingdom that had propagated the offense. Those that remain would be scattered among the nations. “For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as *corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth*” (Amos 9:9). According to Amos 9:10, all sinners who refuse to believe God’s Word saying, “... *The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us*” would die by the sword.

God would scatter believers of His Word among the nations, and all who refuse to believe would die.

Hope remained: Amos 9:11–15

But even with those sad words, God promised that He would one day restore His people. As we read Amos 9:11–12, notice that this verse was quoted in Acts 15:16–17. James is helping some Christian Jews understand during the early days of the church that Gentiles, too, could be saved, becoming a part of the church. We can see the words that God had given to Amos have been, and continuing into today, are being fulfilled.

God also promised that His people would be allowed back into their land to rebuild and inhabit the land. And even better, one day they would live in their land. “... *[A]nd they shall no*

more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God” (Amos 9:15).

God would restore His people one day.

A Deeper Path: Remember back to something that David realized. No one can hide from God’s presence. “7. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8. If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. 9. *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Psalm 139:7-10).

Another important thing to remember is what God told his people if they did not subdue (means “to conquer, subjugate; to subdue”) the land God gave them making it their possession. “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). When we do not obey God, we have sinned against Him. Remember – your sin will find you out. We have read a great example today in Israel, who disobeyed God, and the promise that there would be a price to pay. We will see what happens to them in the weeks to come.

An important warning to all who know what we are to do: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). Why? “21. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:21–22). We cannot do what the Israelites did in Amos’ day – disregard God’s Word, ignoring the warnings of the consequences for sin.

Amos 1-9 at a Glance:

Chapter 1: A herdsman who spoke during the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash (king of Israel); there is a listing of all the nations God will deal with because they were against His people (Israel) – Syria, Palestine (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon), Edom, Tyre, & Ammon

Chapter 2: God will also deal with Moab; God tells of the punishment Judah (4–5); God tells of the punishment of Israel and why (6–8); God reminds them of what He had done for them (9–16)

- Chapter 3: Amos begins preaching – he reminded them God had chosen them, but “**Can two walk together, except they be agreed?**” Because they have rejected God, God would allow the enemies around to “**bring down thy strength from thee**”
- Chapter 4: Amos continues preaching – God will take away their posterity because of their offenses; offenses are then listed, & then the disciplines God sent (that went unheeded), ending with a promise of their demise for not returning to God
- Chapter 5: Amos continues preaching – seek God, seek good & not evil, hate the evil; God will pass through; the people will go into captivity because of their idolatry
- Chapter 6: Because they did not believe God’s warning, the worst will be taken first – but all will be taken, and many will die
- Chapter 7: Amos sees God destroying his people like a grasshopper destroys, and Amos interceded on behalf of God’s people; God showed Amos a plumbline – and God would not “pass by” them anymore; Amaziah, a priest at Bethel, sent word to King Jeroboam II that Amos was speaking “conspiracy” against the king; Amaziah told Amos to go prophesy to Judah, but Amos said that God told him to speak to the people – and he did
- Chapter 8: God showed Amos a basket of summer fruit, and God once again told Amos he would not pass by His people anymore – God would deal with His people; God would send a famine that would scatter the people – seeking the Word of the Lord, but they would not find it
- Chapter 9: Amos saw the Lord standing at the altar – God would destroy Israel’s kingdom, but not utterly destroy the house of Jacob; God’s people would be taken captive, but God would bring them home again to rebuild

Reinforcement: Beginning with our Key verse today, we have been reminded to seek God; for God promised we would find Him – if we actively pursue Him. As we learned in this lesson, the Israelites did not seek God or His commands. They were comfortable where they were in life. Even with the prophet Amos’ warnings, the people did not return to God. Amos also helped the people understand that God knew the multitude of sins committed against Him, and no one could hide from Him. God knows all, and He is a perfect judge. Man will pay for the sins committed. Be encouraged to understand the importance of seeking God and His commands. The only way we can know what God expects from us, is to actively pursue Him. Realize that this goal can be achieved by reading the Bible, praying, attending Sunday School and church regularly. For children, one way to make this easier once they are an adult is by learning the importance of obeying their parents. Always remember that God sees all, and we will be held accountable for our actions – just as the nation Israel was warned of in our lesson today.

Closing: It would be good to close with a short prayer reinforcing today’s lesson. Always include any prayer requests you may have. *Today, pray that we will seek God, never disregarding His commands. Thank God for opening up salvation to us (the Gentile people) even today.*