

**Text: Amos 1:2; 3:7-8 (Pew Bible, pg.905)**  
**Title: “Hearing and Obeying God’s Word”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**ILLUSTRATION** – Just to review, I asked you to imagine that we have boarded a special airplane flying over biblical history. We start from the beginning in Genesis and we fly over the days of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And we fly over the days of Joseph, Moses in the Exodus. And there are the days of Joshua and then the Judges. As we fly over the days of the kings Saul, David and Solomon we begin our initial descent to the period where God raised up some special spokesmen called prophets. After the death of King Solomon the Israel split into two kingdoms ... the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah, where Jerusalem was located). This was a time when the people of God were unfaithful to Him. Their religion had become cold, and they needed revival. So God sent the prophets to preach to them.

There are Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel); the rest of them are called Minor Prophets because their books are shorter. Most of these prophets conducted their ministry during this time of the Divided Kingdoms, though some of them prophesied during and after the times of exile that will follow.

I’m preaching a series of messages I’ve entitled “Profiting from the Prophets.” God raised up these men to call His people back to Himself. They were revivalists, and we can certainly profit from their messages today. I’m preaching a message each week from a different OT prophet in the order in which they appear in the history of the OT.

Last week we met our first prophet, Jonah who was from the Northern Kingdom. Now our special plane is going to take us on short hop down to Judah, the Southern Kingdom, where we’ll meet a prophet named Amos. Turn to the book that contains his prophecies ... Amos 1:1 (Pew Bible, pg.905). Amos was from the Southern Kingdom, but God sent him to prophecy to the Northern Kingdom.

Read Amos 1:1-2.

**Amos 1:2 - “The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem...”**

Now most of us have never heard a lion roar except in a zoo. But we do know about thunder here in North Texas. And the way the Lord roars and thunders is by His Word. This is the big point of this entire book ... God speaks in a voice that everyone can hear. God does not give us the silent treatment. He speaks because He’s involved in the affairs of the world. He speaks because He cares about how people live their lives. He speaks because He is zealous for His own Name and glory to be revered. The Lord roars like a lion from Zion. There’s more about this in...

**Amos 3:7-8 - Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared— who will not fear? The Sovereign LORD has spoken— who can but prophesy?**

When God speaks, the people of God ought to listen. At least that's the way Amos saw it. He was a man who heard the Word of the Lord and he had great reverence and fear for the majesty of a God who reveals Himself in His Word. And the prophets are supposed to proclaim that word to the people. So in the message of the prophets we hear the roar of the Lion of heaven. And when the people of God hear this roar they are supposed to listen.

Now in those days, the word of the Lord came from prophets like Jonah, Amos and the others we will study over the next several weeks. Today the Word of the Lord comes to us through the Bible.

Question: When God roars in His Word do you pay attention? Are you so busy with other things in your life that you don't have time to carefully consider the teachings of Scripture? Do you work hard at listening to the truth of God proclaimed in preaching and teaching?

**ILLUSTRATION** – Every year Scott Eudaley, our Minister to Children, brings the first graders to my office where I present them with a Bible as a gift from our church. I say to the boys and girls, “You will read many books in your life, most of them just once, then you'll take them back to the library or put them back on the book shelf. But God's Word is different. It must be the most important book in your life. You'll hopefully read it and study it over and over again throughout your life.”

Well, sadly this was a time when that was not the case in Israel where Amos was called to preach. Turn to Amos 7:12. This concerns a priest by the name of Amaziah who is in Bethel, one of the many worship centers that the king of Israel set up when they no longer worshipped in Jerusalem, which is in the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Amos had been preaching hard against the sins of Israel and her leaders. And he gets called on the carpet, so to speak, by Amaziah the priest. Amaziah should have delighted that God had sent someone to preach truth to the people. But he wasn't. As a priest Amaziah should have been instructing people in the Law of the Lord, but he wasn't. Read Amos 7:12-13.

So you have a nation where the people didn't want to hear or be accountable to the Word of the Lord. And we live in a nation that doesn't want to hear or be accountable to the Word of God. Every year that passes our nation is drifting farther and farther away from the truths laid out in the Bible. It used to be that our land valued most of the things that are set forth as valuable in God's Word ... marriage, unborn children, truth and righteousness. But that's no longer the case. And this is exactly what the Bible says will happen:

**2 Timothy 4:3 - For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.**

**2 Timothy 4:4 - They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.**

Now this tells us where it will start. It starts in churches where the people of God no longer want to hear and obey the Word of God ... where the people of God no longer let the Bible judge them, but instead they judge the Bible ... where the people of God can no longer put up with, much less cherish, the straightforward preaching of the Word of God.

And this was the state of things in Israel where Amos goes to preach. Let's just go back to Amos 1 where Amos starts his preaching. And he actually doesn't start with Israel. He starts with the pagan nations surrounding Israel.

**Amos 1:3 - This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.**

**Amos 1:6 - This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.**

**Amos 1:9 - This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.**

**Amos 1:11 - This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.**

**Amos 1:13 - This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.**

**Amos 2:1 - This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.**

**Amos 2:4 - This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.**

But then, as they say, Amos quit preaching and went to meddling.

**Amos 2:6 - This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.**

Now when the people of God don't listen to the Word of God there is a spiritual vacuum in their lives. And in the spiritual vacuum, all kinds of evil can rush in to fill their lives. Let me show you what that looked like in Israel about 750 years before the time of Christ.

This was a time of great prosperity in both Israel and Judah. Everything is great. No apparent enemies are attacking. Many people are getting very wealthy. And while their material prosperity is going up, their spiritual condition is rapidly declining. And in times like this all kinds of evil can rush into our lives as God's people. I won't be able to show you all this, but we get a pretty good picture of the condition of God's people in this day in Amos 2. It all starts with ...

### **1. BOUNDLESS GREED (2:6)**

We're talking here about materialism. Again, this is a time of prosperity in Israel. And the people just want more and more, no matter what it takes.

**Amos 2:6b - They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.**

They're so eager to get silver and shoes that they will abuse other people to get them. The most important things to them were just that ... things ... and the pleasures of life. Now just keep your finger there in Amos 2 and just ahead to...

**Amos 6:4-7 - You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.**

So there's boundless greed. The next evil to rush into this spiritual vacuum is...

## **2. RUTHLESS OPPRESSION (2:6-7)**

**Amos 2:6b-7 - They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed.**

**Amos 4:1 - Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!"**

Now the farmer is coming out in Amos here. Obviously he wasn't trained in one of the schools of the prophets, otherwise he would have known that it's not nice to call women cows. But there they were lounging around getting fat and ignoring the needy ... even oppressing them.

And then there's ...

## **3. GODLESS IMMORALITY (2:7-8)**

**Amos 2:7b-8a - Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name. They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge.**

It's hard to imagine this kind of sexual immorality taking place under the guise of religion, but it did. Mark it down: Where there is a spiritual vacuum, when people don't want to hear or obey the Word of the Lord, there will always be some manifestation of sexual sin.

That's just for starters. As you dig deeper into the book you see there are even deeper spiritual problems.

## **4. CARELESS COMPLACENCY (2:10-12)**

The Lord says to Israel, "Just think of all that I did for you."

**Amos 2:10 - “I brought you up out of Egypt, and I led you forty years in the desert to give you the land of the Amorites.**

**Amos 2:11 - I also raised up prophets from among your sons and Nazirites from among your young men. Is this not true, people of Israel?” declares the LORD.**

Now we know about prophets, but what about the Nazirites? The Nazirites were men who were dedicated to holiness. They made vows to live holy lives as a witness to the people of God. Samson was a Nazirite. But instead of encouraging and honoring men who made extraordinary commitments to God, look at what happened:

**Amos 2:12 - “But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy.**

All this spiritual complacency led to...

## **5. HEARTLESS WORSHIP (4:4-5; 5:21)**

Jump forward a couple of chapters to Amos 4.

**Amos 4:4-5 - “Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal (another one of Israel’s counterfeit worship centers) and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years. Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings— boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do,” declares the Sovereign LORD.**

**Amos 5:21 - “I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.**

I wonder what God thinks about my singing today. What does He think about your singing today? What does God think about our offerings and our instrumental music? Well we know exactly what God felt about Israel’s worship. He said, “I can’t stand it.”

And it’s not as if God had not warned them. But the people of God have become so numb to the things of God that they can no longer respond to the Lord when He speaks to them.

Because God is a holy and just God He must punish sin. And He is going to send such judgment upon them that it will completely uproot their identity as the people of God. Let’s go to the end of the book and see how all this unfolds ... Amos 8:11-12.

**Amos 8:11 - “The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “when I will send a famine through the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.**

**Amos 8:12 - Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.**

God will send a “famine of hearing the words of the Lord.” Notice that it does not say, “a famine of the words of the Lord.” That will never happen. God will never leave Himself without the witness of His Word. No, this is a “famine of *hearing* the words of the Lord.” People will get to a point where they simply do not want to hear the truth; they will not want to hear the Word of the Lord proclaimed.

It is possible to become hardened to the Word of the Lord when it goes in one ear and out of the other, and you never put it into practice in your life. It’s not just hearing the Word, it’s doing it ... obeying it. If I don’t *heed* the Word of God, the time will come when I will not even be able to *hear* the Word of God.

Remember we talked about the Assyrians last week. They were the hated and feared enemy that loomed just on the horizon. In a few years the Lord will send them down to deal harshly with His people. In 722BC the Northern Kingdom will be no more. They will be carried off captives into exile in Assyria.

Now the conclusion of the matter is seen in Amos 9.

**Amos 9:8 “Surely the eyes of the Sovereign LORD are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth— yet I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,” declares the LORD.**

Note: There are times when God has to discipline His people. And those times of discipline can be very severe, depending on how stubborn we become. But in the end, we are still His people, and He loves us and will fulfill His purposes in our lives.

Now, the political kingdom of Israel will be destroyed. But God’s plans for the people of Israel have not changed. You see, God made a covenant with Abraham. He said, “All nations of the earth will be blessed through you.” That covenant was reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob. And it was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ who came not just to save Israel, but to save the world. He went to the cross and died for our sins and rose again so that we might have life.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **LORD’S SUPPER**

Matthew 26:26-28 - While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.