

God's Judgments Illustrated
Amos 7:1-17

Chapter 7 begins the third and final section of the book of Amos. Having warned in the opening section of the book that judgment was coming and having explained the reasons for it as the book goes on, Amos now displays symbols of judgment and makes his last appeal for the spiritually alive to flee from it. In these closing scenes we discover that God gives Amos five sobering visions. The series of visions in chapters 7 and 8 lead up to a vision of God Himself in 9:1-10. We will look at the first three visions in our study this week.

Open Your Heart: Ask God to give you a fresh appreciation for the power of prayer, for the joy of intimate fellowship, for the privilege of interceding, pleading, praising and adoring our God!

1. Observe verses 1a, 4a and 7a of chapter 7 and verse 1a of chapter 8. Of what was God reminding Amos and the people?

God used many methods to impress the truth upon His hearers—one being prophetic visions. In a vision God reveals a picture or an image and sometimes dialogues with the prophet to explain what the vision means. The prophet may see the picture in his mind's eye, or he may see it with his physical eyes. Sometimes it is a still picture, like a photograph (see Amos 8:1) or it may be a moving picture with action as seen in Amos 7:1-2 and 7:4.

Vision One—Read Amos 7:1-3

Note: In Palestine two crops a year were typical. Since the first mowing belonged to the King (1 Kings 4:7) the people depended upon the second crop for their own sustenance. It was this harvest which was threatened by the locust plague sent by God.

2. Describe the three dramatic elements that make up the first vision seen by Amos.

Many have wondered how it could ever be said that God changes His mind. Remember however that God always works in accordance with His infinite holiness and must condemn sin and punish it when it is present; but when prayer and the grace of God work together, a way of escape can be made if God so chooses.

Note: The word “standing” (Amos 7:7) conveys a posture of firmness and determination, providing a contrast to the change of heart attributed to God in the first two visions.

The Scriptures reveal that the plumb line was used not only in building houses, but in destroying them as well. (Note carefully 2 Kings 21:13; Isaiah 28:17; Lamentations 2:8.)

8. a. For what purpose was the “plumb line” used in this vision?
 - b. Of what would the coming judgment consist according to Amos 7:9? What do you find significant about these particular judgments?

9. *Remember, one purpose of this trilogy of visions is to set the audience up for the message of the third vision.* What would you say is the main point of the third vision Amos received?

10. Against what false standards could you be comparing yourself? Note them below.

11. a. In light of question 10, what areas of your mind need to be reprogrammed to God’s plumb line—the truth of His Word? Lift up each of these areas to God in prayer, remembering that the truest thing about you is what God says about you.
 - b. How will you work with God, by His grace, to make these changes a reality in your life?

False Priest Versus God's Prophet—Read Amos 7:10-17

Amos' visions are momentarily interrupted by a passage that gives us a rare glimpse of the prophet himself.

12. What do verses 12-15 reveal about the character of Amos? What do you admire most about the man whose prophecies we have been studying?

13. Consider what Amos had just prophesied in chapter 7 verse 9. What about this prophecy might have precipitated the confrontation recorded in 7:10-17?

This time God's Word of prophecy does not go unchallenged! Amaziah, who was the high priest at the sanctuary of the golden calf in Bethel, accused the prophet before King Jeroboam.

14. Record in your own words the accusations and indictments made against Amos and his prophecies (7:10-11).

Study the dialogue between Amos and Amaziah in verses 11-16.

15. a. What do you think is motivating Amaziah's accusations against Amos?
 - b. Instead of stopping the mouth of the prophet with his harassment, the encounter ended with a dire prediction. What would happen to Amaziah and his family (verse 17)?
 - c. Do you think the punishment was appropriate for the offense? Explain.

It is a fearful thing to set one's self against the truth of God. If man tries to silence the truth, it cries out even louder.

16. What is the most important insight you have gained from this passage? What might God be calling you to do in response?