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**C0915 – April 15, 2009 – Amos 3:9-15 – God. Our Enemy**

Last week in Amos 3 we introduced the first of three Covenant Lawsuits we'll be following. It's an important structure. I don't want you to get lost in the structure but I don't want you to forget the structure either. The structure is very important to understanding the role of the prophets as God's prosecuting attorney's. Maybe you've never thought of the prophets that way, perhaps you've thought of them primarily as revealers of the future. They do that, but that's not the primary thing we're trying to emphasize. If you'll think more in terms of a prosecuting attorney it will help you with the prophets of the NT. For example, take Stephen in Acts 7; in that chapter when he defends the word of God before the Council of the Sanhedrin, he's really serving as a prosecuting attorney. He's casting himself into the stream of the prophets, calling the nation to repentance. He says you do always what your fathers did, always resisting the work of the Holy Spirit, you killed the prophets whom God sent to you. And then what do they do to Stephen? They kill him too. He sees himself, albeit faintly perhaps, as a prophet of God, prosecuting the nation for not keeping the Covenant Law and he's warning them of judgment. Did they listen? Once again they did not. So the structure is important here because it sheds light on the prophet. It casts light on him as a prosecuting attorney. But we don't want to lose the content of this court proceeding. The nation Israel is in a vile place, filled with sexual immorality, social injustice, governmental corruption and false religion. It's a very sad state of affairs and the Lord God is angry, he's hostile, particularly because they are the people of God. V 2, "You only have I known among all the nations." That statement is a statement of unique privilege. No other nation ever had this relationship with God. And therefore with great privilege comes great responsibility. They are the protectors, so to speak, of the name of God. And yet if their lifestyle is so out of kilter with the revelation of God it casts a bad light on Him. And God is very concerned with His name. He is very

jealous for His name. And if you think you can esteem His name lightly you are in a world of trouble. The Lord God does not like his name to be a reproach among the enemy. We live in dark times personally; the failures of the individuals who name the name of Jesus Christ are, en masse, a reproach to the living God. We are in dark times corporately, for those churches that name the name of Jesus Christ are, en masse, apostate, holding to the outward form of godliness yet denying the power thereof. And we live in dark times nationally, the nation overall has moved from the firm basis of the word of God to a basis of think air in which we generate standards out of thin air, with nothing to stand on and the corruption is rampant. So it was in the northern kingdom of Israel. And therefore the God of Israel, who had a special covenant relation with them, enters into a Covenant Lawsuit with them through His prosecuting attorney, Amos.

We've seen the structure: in v 1 the Plaintiff and Judge are introduced, they are one and the same, the Lord God. In the same verse the Defendant, Israel, is introduced. At the close of v 1 and the beginning of v 2 there is a short Historical Review, recalling to mind God's gracious work on behalf of Israel at the Call of Abraham and the Exodus. And then a short indictment. Because of their unique position that carries with it a high responsibility, a high danger of correction and the judgment is pronounced in short. Then we looked at vv 3-8, where the prophet Amos defends his right to prophesy against them. We concluded v 8, he has no choice, and he is compelled to prophesy, for the Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy.

And now, tonight we will cover the rest of the chapter, vv 9-15 which is a continuation of the Lawsuit. In v 9 we have the Summoning of the Witnesses. In vv 9-10 more of the Indictment and finally in vv 11-15, the Pronouncement of Judgment which is the 5<sup>th</sup> Degree of Cursing described in Lev 26 and Deut 28. That gives us the Covenant structure now we want to look at the details, so let's just read through it first, then we'll come back to the minutia.

**<sup>9</sup>Proclaim on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt and say, "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and see *the* great tumults within her and *the* oppressions in her midst. <sup>10</sup>"But they do not know how to do what is right," declares the LORD, "these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels." <sup>11</sup>Therefore, thus says the**

Lord GOD, “An enemy, even one surrounding the land, Will pull down your strength from you And your citadels will be looted.”<sup>12</sup> Thus says the LORD, “Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion’s mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away— With *the* corner of a bed and *the* cover of a couch! <sup>13</sup>“Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,” Declares the Lord GOD, the God of hosts. <sup>14</sup>“For on the day that I punish Israel’s transgressions, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; The horns of the altar will be cut off And they will fall to the ground. <sup>15</sup>“I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; The houses of ivory will also perish And the great houses will come to an end,” Declares the LORD.

**9 Proclaim on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt and say, “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and see the great tumults within her and the oppressions in her midst.** Now, a word about the **citadels**. This word is used a number of times in this section, it’s used a number of times in chapters 1-2 as well. I want to expand on this word a bit now that I’ve done a little more word study. When you think of that word don’t only think of a fortress, which would be shortchanging the idea here. This word can also refer to a large palace so it encapsulates both the fortified military bases but also the great palaces of the land.

And there’s a command here to the prophet or perhaps prophets to make a proclamation in these two nations. Actually **Ashdod** is a major city in the nation of Philistia, and it probably stands by metonymy for the whole nation of Philistia. The other nation is Egypt, and the prophets are here to summon the witnesses by going to these countries and making the proclamation at the end of v 9, “**Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and see the great tumults within her and the oppressions in her midst.**” So it’s a summons to come and take a look, come and witness, come and see what is going on in Samaria. **Samaria** was the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. It was situated on a mountain, but it was surrounded by taller mountains. So, as one Jewish commentator said, “Samaria was situated in the centre of an amphitheatre of mountains.” So it’s very theatrical announcement, come and sit in the best seat in the house, high and

overlooking center stage and she who is on it, Samaria and all her vices; her **great tumults and her oppressions**. Those are the two things the Lord God singles out

What is the significance of these two vices? Well, it looks to the two nations here, Ashdod, who we'll call Philistia, and Egypt. If there is one word that encapsulates Israel's treatment in Egypt it is **oppression**. They were kept under the thumb of Egypt, they were slaves, they were constantly under the whips of the Egyptian taskmasters, they would not intermingle with the Hebrews, and so there was social exclusion. The Hebrews had no rights in Egypt and now what is being said is that the experts in oppression techniques have something to learn from Israel: that those who had mastered the art of oppression now need to come and learn something from Israel. The real experts were in Samaria. Israel's upper class was oppressing the lower class to a greater degree than Israel had been oppressed by Egypt (Amos 5:11; 8:6). So come, Egypt, take a seat and learn something from the new masters of your sinful methodology. Philistia, on the other hand, they were the nation that was expert at causing **great tumults**. They were Israel's inveterate enemies constantly causing chaos and the way they caused chaos was through terrorism. Terrorism, the goal of it is to cause instability in a society and fear among the people. And that's what Philistia did, they made terrorist incursions from the coastlands up into the hills and that caused psychological fear among the residents. Samson had to deal with the Philistines on a number of occasions, so did Saul. David kept them at bay during his reign but they were a constant thorn after the time of David. Now the reign of terror exerted by the upper class over the lower class had exceeded that of Philistia. The upper class had put fear in their hearts.

And now the prophet is to go to the citadels of Philistia and Egypt, up on the rooftops, of the fortresses and palaces, which were flat, and make this proclamation. Come, take a look for yourself, you who are the experts in terror and you who are the experts in oppression, come and learn from the real experts who reside in Samaria. You who held the upper hand in these departments now have something to learn from Israel.

Now you can imagine how you might feel if you were an Israelite and you heard this. That's why Amos wasn't a very popular prophet. These are hard words to take: those who are pagan nations are better than God's people. If

ever there was a slap in the face. Two people, Philistia and Egypt, who did not have the revelation of God, who did not have the redemption of God, who did not have a covenant with God and yet they are the One's who will judge those who do. Think of all the benefits Israel had. She had the covenant promises of God given to Abraham, she had the redemption of God from Egypt, she had the word of God given to her in the Mosaic Law, all these benefits she has accrued by the grace of God and yet she is worse than those who have none of these.

Now, I want you to know how important it is if you profess Christ to live as Christ would have you to live. You are the recipient and carrier of His name. And he does not like us to bring reproach to His name. It is just as a parent is often embarrassed by his/her child. The child acts a certain way in the grocery store, he's throwing a fit, he's uncontrollable and it's an embarrassment to the parent, "That's not my kid." Parents sometimes joke about it but it's not funny. It reflects poorly on you and that's what other people think, they look and they see the child and they judge the parent. It's inescapable. And the same is true with the Lord and us. He doesn't want you running around professing His name and then living like an idiot. You're running His name down, you're making Him look bad and He doesn't like that one bit. In fact, in many places in the word of God He doesn't even claim you. Exod 32 is an example: these are Your people Moses, not mine, those are your kids. He distances Himself from His people and that's not a good thing. That does not bode well for us. So that is the Summoning of the Witnesses and the beginning of the Indictment.

Now in v 10 the Indictment continues. This is the result of continual sin "**But they do not know how to do what is right,**" declares the Lord, "**these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels.**" That is a very serious statement in the word of God. Not only do they not **do what is right** they **do not know how to do what is right**. They've lost that capacity, their moral compass is broken. This is an effect of continual sin. What sin does to the mind is it darkens the mind such that the mind loses its capacity to discern right from wrong, truth from falsity, correctness from error. It is a great danger to think that when you sin and you confess it and you're back in fellowship everything is fine and dandy. One thing that is not fine and dandy is the consequences that remain in our own being. There's a negative feedback on our own person. One of which is the darkening of the

mind making it less sharp in perceiving spiritual truth. I'm quite sure there are believers who have so corrupted themselves with sin that their minds are darkened to the point they can hardly perceive any spiritual truth whatsoever. When we talk about sin, which is any want of conformity unto the standards of God, when we fail to meet His standard we're not believing Him, we're not believing His word. And what that leads to is autonomy. Autonomy is the spirit that I am in control of my destiny, I determine what is right and wrong for me, I determine the meaning of my own life, I will make my name great. That is the problem with this society; they are an autonomous society that has abandoned the word of God. In place of it they legislated their own standards, the word of man, they legislated a new morality, a morality that conformed to their sinful practices, so they are an autonomous nation, and in the end autonomy works out in a licentious society, a society filled with every kind of immorality; perversions in society, perversions of speech, perversions of sex, perversions of law and so forth. This is the kind of society God's people had become.

Turn to Jer 4:22, we really have to think about this. Look at how God thinks of His people. This is how He may think of you. "For My people are foolish, They know Me not; They are stupid children And have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, But to do good they do not know." You can be a child of God but a stupid child. You can be a believer in Jesus Christ but not know Him, because what this is talking about is failure to come to an intimate, mature knowledge of God. Granted we are not Israel, that is God's people in the OT, we are the Church, God's people in the NT. God has a distinct program for each. But the principles often coincide because the same God is over each. Here we have the people of God who profess the name YHWH but they are not living according to YHWH's standards. In the same way we have many who profess Christ but do not live up to Christ's standards. Whenever we do that we bring reproach upon His good name. In such a case it is better for people to not know we are Christians than for them to know we are Christians. God is very concerned about His name. And it is a very dangerous thing to come into the hands of the living God.

Who is all this spoken to? V 10b, "**these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels.**" This carries another figure of speech called metonymy. The picture is of the upper class again, sitting up in their palaces **hoarding up violence and devastation**, They store up the goods they've

accumulated by acts of violence and devastation or havoc. Those who store up goods by their wrong doing and havoc, by their oppression and tumult.

And in verse 11 the Pronouncement of Judgment comes forth, **Therefore, thus says the Lord God**, that name of God by the way emphasizes his sovereignty. The sovereign God says, **“An enemy, even one surrounding the land, Will pull down your strength from you And your citadels will be looted.”** An enemy, and what you might expect is for Assyria to be mentioned. Assyria is strikingly absent from the whole book of Amos. We’re not told why but she’s apparently an unnamed terror, lurking in the background. But the **enemy** here is not Assyria but the Lord God. God, our enemy! A very fearful thing it is to think of God as our enemy. It is God here who will surround the land of Israel by His army Assyria and when they come they exact judgment on His behalf, they are His instruments of judgment. The enemy **will pull down your strength from you And your citadels**, the gleaming palaces of the rich, **will be looted**. That is, in fact, what the enemy would be interested in, all the rich palaces and castles of the land. They would loot that which had been attained by oppression and tumult.

**12 Thus says the Lord, “Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion’s mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away— With the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch!** Turn to Exod 22:10 for the background of this. There was a Jewish law that stands behind this. It forbade the practice that was common in the old west. Ranchers would often have their men keeping their cattle and if some rustler’s came along they could pay off the men and take some of the cattle, these were the backroom deals, and the man could tell his boss they ran away or they were stolen or something. You couldn’t do that in Israel, verse 10, “If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep *for him*, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, <sup>11</sup>an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor’s property; and its owner shall accept *it*, and he shall not make restitution. <sup>12</sup>“But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. <sup>13</sup>“If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces.” That last phrase, if you were keeping someone’s sheep and a lion or a bear came out and attacked the sheep, carrying one away, it was your job

to follow the blood trail and retrieve any pieces that might be left behind, a **couple of legs or a piece of an ear**, that would be the evidence that there was no foul play by the keeper.

What is the point the Lord is making? That when He comes as their enemy the rich will be snatched away in judgment and all that will be left is the evidence of their lifestyle. The luxurious couches, the satin pillows, the beautiful fabrics will be all that is left. Keep in mind they were very wealthy and the splendid beds and couches will be all that remains when the Lord judges. If we were to characterize the northern kingdom from the picture of Amos we would say they were sensual, luxurious, idle, indolent and indulgent. They were everything the Lord God did not want them to be, and they had become that way at the expense of others, they had attained it in a corrupt fashion, they did not know how to do what is right. It was unjust gain.

Now, there's a difficulty with translating that last phrase of v 12, **With the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch!** There's no question it refers to luxurious items, some have said the word for **cover** is *damask*, a certain fabric, and others have said it is the same consonants for the city of Damascus, it is very difficult to be specific, but one thing is certain, this is their resume before God. They are wealthy at the expense of others. They have nothing on their resume of the reading of the word of God, there is no prayer, there is no desire for holiness, true holiness, living before God in a holy way, it is all materialistic, it is all luxurious items, they have been lulled to sleep by wealth and luxury.

And thus v 13, **“Hear and testify**, that's a command to the two nations; Philistia and Egypt, the two summoned to serve as witnesses, **“Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,” Declares the Lord God, the God of hosts.** Now look at the names of God there, short, abrupt, packed together like that. The names identify their enemy, the judge, the abruptness communicates the suddenness of His judgment, it will come like a bolt of lightning. The name, the first one, the Lord God, adon YHWH, adon emphasizes the sovereignty of God and **YHWH** His covenant name. So the sovereign omnipotent covenant keeping God is going to punish them. The second name, **God of hosts**, we think of the hosts as an angelic choir and Jesus leading them or something. This is not a pretty choir, the translators



downplay the sense. The Hebrew for **hosts**, *saba*, is plural and has the definite article so it means “the God of armies.” When you study the OT you find that the Lord’s armies consist of a number of things. First, His armies consist of angels, and oftentimes angels are involved in fierce warfare. A single angel can easily kill 100,000 men, it’s a common occurrence in the OT. Secondly His armies consist of men, human armies, of course this is also common in the OT. God raises up national armies to carry out His warfare judgment. We think of Babylon raised up to destroy Judah. So His armies consist of angels, men, and third, nature or nature forces. God uses nature forces, winds, waters, fire and other elements of nature in His warfare. Sometimes a whole battle in history has turned because of the weather and you can do great studies on the providence of God in historic battles, whether they are land, sea or air. The point of the God of armies title is to show that the whole cosmos stands at His command, He is General of the cosmos and can call upon angels, men and nature to carry out His destructive judgments.

Verse 14, **“For on the day that I punish Israel’s transgressions, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; (Oh, by the way, with the mention in v 13 of the house of Jacob we think perhaps he’s calling them back to Gen 28 where Jacob had the vision of the ladder going into heaven and the angels going up and down the ladder, that place was where the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed to Jacob, so he may be reminding them here that the people he’s entering into Covenant Lawsuit against are the people of the Abrahamic Covenant.)** But there’s something more significant you find when you turn to Gen 28. Where was Jacob when the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed to him? Geographically where was he? Does anyone remember what place Jacob had the covenant confirmed to him? Bethel, the same place mentioned in v 14, **the altars of Bethel.** Bethel means “house of God.” And with this we’re getting into the historical significance of Bethel. So turn briefly to Gen 28 and then I want to go to 1 Kgs 12. In Gen 28, I just want you to get the historical significance of Bethel, it wasn’t originally called Bethel, it was called Luz, but Jacob renamed it after his vision. Take a look at the historical significance. In v 13 there’s the covenant confirmed to Jacob, that goes on in vv 14-15, come to v 16, “Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” <sup>17</sup>He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” In v 19 he renames it Bethel. How significant did the Israelites see Bethel? Now turn to 1 Kgs 12:25. Now we’re getting into the false religious

system that was set up in the northern kingdom. Remember, the kingdom had divided under Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and so now you have two kingdoms. Rehoboam ruled in the south, called Judah, and Jeroboam ruled in the north, called Israel, which is our place of interest. Verse 25, "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. <sup>26</sup>Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. <sup>27</sup>"If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, *even* to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." What is Jeroboam up to? What's he planning? Jeroboam was a very shrewd politician, he wasn't too quick on the draw spiritually, but he saw that if he allowed the people from the north to go down to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, then their loyalty would be to Rehoboam. He didn't want that, he wanted to consolidate his kingdom in the north. Verse 28. "So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." <sup>29</sup>He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan." Now why do you think he set one in Bethel? Not only was it on the border between his kingdom and the southern kingdom, but what had Jacob said about this place? "How awesome is this place?" "Surely the Lord is in this place." "This is the house of God and this is the gate to heaven." So Jeroboam, as a slick political ruler, capitalizes on Jacob's words and sets up a house of God here. He says "behold your gods" which could be plural, it could also be translated singular, its *elohim*, and it could be he's saying the golden calves are gods or he could be saying the golden calves represent God. I don't think Jeroboam would have a problem saying that. These golden calves represent YHWH who took you out of Egypt. See, we still worship YHWH, not a problem, we even worship him in the place Jacob said, "Surely God is in this place, surely this is the house of God and the gate to heaven." Surely the Lord will accept our worship. Surely what matters to God is that we are in fact worshipping. Surely what God considers important is not how people worship Him but that they are sincere in their worship. You know, this is a problem for us today. I personally think this is THE problem today. People think that you can bring in all kinds of foreign, pagan elements into the church and still call it worship of the one true God. One of the lies we're told is that we can have a rock band up on stage and we can sing all the Contemporary Christian Music, the CCM movement as it is called, or Praise & Worship (P&W) and we can put Christian lyrics to it and

make it Christian. Friends, I do not believe that it is Christian. People think that it is Christian because of the lyrics; well as long as they're Christian lyrics, it's okay. Let me quote briefly from Dan Lucarini. This is a guy who worked in the music business, he worked with Fleetwood Mac, he wrote songs, he wrote lyrics, he's a musician who was converted and one of the major players in making CCM and P&W so prevalent in the church. By the way, now he rejects it and has confessed what he did as sinful, bringing it into the church and promoting it. He says, "CCM is stuck with this stigma of immorality, because the music styles carry with them the baggage of the world's immorality. It does not matter if you change the lyrics. It does not matter if you change the musicians. It does not matter if you change the record labels. It does not matter if you ask God to sanctify it. Rock music and all its children, and by association CCM, can and will corrupt the morals of everyone who practises it." You cannot take the world's stuff and baptize it into the church and call it Christian. You're mixing, you're syncretizing. He says, and this is what I keep seeing in the Bible, and when we do aren't we "Like Israel, aren't we then guilty of mixing true worship with idolatrous practices?" That's what struck me as I stood at the ruins of Arad in Israel, 06'. We were looking at one of the "high places" you read of in the OT, and if you remember they weren't supposed to have all these alternative worship places, there was one place God put His name, Jerusalem. But at Arad they had this high place and a smaller version of the Temple. It has the same dimensions, it has the holy place, the most holy place, so it must be alright, we're still worshiping YHWH, right? Wrong. Then they had YHWH on a little stone, perched up there like a parrot and opposite Him you had His wife, but that's okay, right? God is a man, he must have a wife. See, it all starts from a small deviation from God's prescribed means of worship. After that it's a slippery slope. The same thing is happening in the Church at large today and individual churches along the way. You say, "Ah, well, music is amoral, it's neutral." Lucarini says, "Of course, we don't think we are being immoral or idolatrous. It's all about how we feel. We believe we can handle rock music safely and clean it up, because we are saved and we ask God to use it. Wrong! We cannot separate the style of music from its immoral associations. Rock music inevitably corrupts Christians." Inevitably. He's saying there's a link between the style of music and human behavior. This from a man who promoted this in the Church of Jesus Christ for years. Maybe you know this, maybe you don't, but "rock and roll" was originally a slang term for "sex" in the Middle Ages and is associated with rebellion and disturbance.<sup>1</sup> Music and

rhythm are not amoral, they are not neutral. I challenge you to talk to the Ph.D's in music today, the experts in musicology, who are experts in arrangement. They know very well that the notes, the way they are arranged are not amoral and neutral. I'm not against music, I'm simply stating that there is a distinctly biblical way of arranging music and CCM is not one of them. There are a few, yes, but not many. Lucarini notes how it has divided the church into contemporary and traditional lines and that soon the traditional will be gone. What he means is it's sidelined the old timers, it's put them out. And that's wrong because as a matter of fact, they're right. They may not know how to articulate their position, but they know something is not right, it is not just a matter of preference. What is at stake is the heart of biblical worship. He also says CCM has corrupted the church by bringing in sexual license, rebellion and self-worth. He says, "I believe that the use of CCM in praise and worship is a man-made phenomenon and should be exposed as such because it lacks a strong biblical foundation and ignores God's instructions for acceptable worship. Using it for worship has produced wrong attitudes and encouraged carnal lifestyles...I also believe the real motive for adopting CCM for praise and worship was not...to evangelize those from outside the church, but was rooted in a need to satisfy our own desires for *our* favourite music...we have come to the point where even our definition of worship has very little resemblance to its biblical meaning." By that last point about worship he means that worship in the biblical sense is to bow down, to be humbled in fear of the Almighty but in the CCM praise and worship man is lifted up, higher and higher, lifting the arms up, looking up, rather than bowing, there's a physical manifestation of the heart orientation. Lifting up man toward God is the opposite of the biblical term for worship, it emphasizes man rising on the scale of being, the Continuity of Being, being drawn into the Godhead, but biblical worship stresses being separated from God, bowing down before Him, we are as dust of the earth, worship is recognizing who God is as the Creator and man's proper place as His creature. I'm picking on music, but this is not the only area. We could also talk about marketing or theatre, but I use this as an example of how true religion gets corrupted. This is exactly what happened to the northern kingdom, you go off the path at one point and it leads to a whole slew of problems, that's what was going on. That's what's going on in the church today. You slide off the knife edge of the Scripture and it's a long way down. It's hard to stay on that knife edge with all the pressure in the church to get

more people to come. People naturally associate a large crowd with God's presence, although it's a lie.

So here's Jeroboam and he brings these foreign elements into the worship system, he deviates, he doesn't completely deviate, it's just a slight deviation. We don't get rid of YHWH, we just add the golden calves in the mix. What does that do by the way? The nature of the golden calf is imposed upon YHWH. The nature of the idol is projected upon God, so now you've confused the Creator-creature distinction, you've attributed to the Creator, created qualities and now you've distorted the nature of the Creator. The technical word for this is syncretism. It's the mixing of pagan elements with biblical elements. Verse 30, "Now this thing became" what? "a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. <sup>31</sup>And he made houses on high places," so he changed the place of worship, that's a sin, God designated Jerusalem, Jeroboam designated Dan and Bethel. What else? "and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi." Another sin, a non-Levitical priesthood. Got to have priests, the important thing is that we have priests, right? Wrong. The important thing is that you do it exactly as God prescribes, have Levitical priests. See, these are easy for you to see, today, if you'd lived in this culture they probably were not easy to see, particularly after it had gone on for a generation or two. "That's what we've always done!" And that is why I'm warning you now as I've warned you before to be careful, the things that creep in today you may not see. Later Paul's going to command us to "examine everything carefully." So just know, it's happening, it's all over the place, it's ubiquitous, and know that you have to be alert or you'll get captured by it. "<sup>32</sup>Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah," see, it was "*like* the one in Judah," except for one difference, in Judah it was in the seventh month, same day, different month, but the important thing is that we have the feast right? Wrong! Absolutely wrong!

Devastatingly wrong! "and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. <sup>33</sup>Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense." There's the altar in Bethel, what Amos is talking about. Well, the important thing is that we have altars and we sacrifice to YHWH, right? Wrong! The important thing

is you sacrifice on God's altar in Jerusalem, not Bethel. This kind of playing, this kind of deviating, this kind of nuancing the word of God is interpreted by God as wholesale rejection of the word of God. He does not accept this as worship. And it ticks Him off and He's going to judge with great fury. So how is God going to judge in Amos 3:17, **The horns of the altar will be cut off And they will fall to the ground.** Oops, I guess God isn't too pleased with the altar in Bethel. One deviation from God's prescribed means of worship will result in a ton of deviations to follow. This is called apostasy, and the church at large is walking down the primrose path of apostasy. Do you think God' likes that? Oh, you're being legalistic, Jeremy? You're just a Pharisee. All that stuff doesn't matter, "How we worship, what we sing, how we pray, how the word is taught? What style of music we use?" Oh really? Would you like to defend that from the Scriptures? All I can find in the NT is this. Try this one on, 1 Thess 5:21, "...examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil." "Every form," that word means appearance; do not associate yourself with anything that even appears evil. That's what Paul is saying. Do you think God cares how we worship? How we pray? What style of music we bring use in worship? That phrase by the way, the **horns of the altar**, some students of the OT think that the horns of the altar were a place of refuge and so you could go and hang on the horns of the altar and you would be safe; a number of men do this in the OT. One of the arguments here is that since they will be cut off indicates Israel will have no place of refuge. They will be judged inevitably. But that's a disputed idea, I tend to like the idea but it is debated. Verse 15, **"I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house;** the upper class had multiple homes, they kept oppressing the poor, holding their heads in the dust, taking everything from them so the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. **The houses of ivory**, that refers to the ivory inlay on the inner walls, they built these marvelous homes, these too **will also perish And the great houses** or dynasties, the great families of the land **will come to an end," Declares the Lord.**

Suffice it to say God is not very pleased with the northern kingdom. They're even worse than Egypt in oppression and Philistia in terrorism. They are sexually immoral, they are religiously immoral. We have only to look at the Church today and ask ourselves, individually as a church and corporately as a church at large, are we doing things God's way? Are our practices lining up with the word of God? Because if not then a very sobering thought arises?

God, Our Enemy! As He poured out His hot wrath on Israel so He will pour it out on the Church. No one who has the elect status under God escapes the hot discipline of God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. No discipline is pleasant for the moment, but for those trained in it there is a yield of the fruit of righteousness. May we obey that the Lord may bless.

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<sup>i</sup> Before then, the phrase "rocking and rolling", as secular black slang for dancing or sex, appeared on record for the first time in 1922 on [Trixie Smith's](#) "My Man Rocks Me With One Steady Roll". Even earlier, in 1916, the term "rocking and rolling" was used with a religious connotation, on the phonograph record "The Camp Meeting Jubilee" by an unnamed male "quartette".<sup>[5]</sup> The word "rock" had a long history in the English language as a metaphor for "to shake up, to disturb or to incite". In 1937, Chick Webb and Ella Fitzgerald recorded "Rock It for Me," which included the lyric, "So won't you satisfy my soul with the rock and roll." "Rocking" was a term used by black gospel singers in the American South to mean something akin to spiritual [rapture](#). By the 1940s, however, the term was used as a [double entendre](#), ostensibly referring to dancing, but with the subtextual meaning of sex, as in [Roy Brown's](#) "[Good Rocking Tonight](#)." The verb "roll" was a medieval metaphor which meant "having sex". Writers for hundreds of years have used the phrases "They had a roll in the hay" or "I rolled her in the clover"<sup>[6]</sup>. The terms were often used together ("rocking and rolling") to describe the motion of a ship at sea, for example as used in 1934 by the [Boswell Sisters](#) in their song "Rock and Roll"<sup>[7]</sup>, which was featured in the 1934 film "Transatlantic Merry-Go-Round",<sup>[8][9]</sup> and in [Buddy Jones'](#) "Rockin' Rollin' Mama" (1939). Country singer Tommy Scott was referring to the motion of a railroad train in the 1951 "Rockin and Rollin". <sup>[10]</sup>.

[Back To The Top](#)

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