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C0927 – July 22, 2009 – Amos – Highlights In The Book Of Amos

Tonight I want to conclude our study of Amos, next week we'll get into Hosea. But it takes a lot of up front study to get into a new book so tonight we'll cover some highlights of Amos and conclude with an analysis of some of the trademarks of living in the apostasy. If there's time left we'll have some questions. The goal of these book studies is to learn the books, at least in a way that we can easily find what we're looking for. That's my prayer for you, that's one of my goals in life, to teach and learn the whole counsel of God, to be familiar with each chapter and know what's there. That's how we learn about Him.

Now, to study the prophets, whether they are major or minor, the minor we call, as the Jews did, the Book of the Twelve, you have to have a handle on the basic interpretive keys of Israel's history. History is God's plan and He's given us certain keys to interpreting history and if you don't have these keys then you end up misinterpreting the history of the nation Israel, misunderstand the prophets and finally the Christian life. These guys weren't social reformers trying to move beyond the Torah, they were looking forward, but they knew that to move forward they had to go back, back to Torah. They're calling the nation back. What were they calling the nation back to? What in Torah is so important for history?

The covenants. The covenants are the interpretive keys. There are two major covenants given to that nation. The first is the Abrahamic Covenant. Key chapters: Gen 12, Gen 15. This is a covenant or contract of grace that gives eternal security. The Noahic civilization apostatized very rapidly so that by the time of Nimrod the whole civilization is dominated by the world system; the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life. Man, in his quest for autonomous freedom, would suppress the truth in

unrighteousness so as to make a name for himself, building a kingdom of man. And therefore God called Abraham out from the kingdom of man to build a counter-kingdom of God in history, we call the nation Israel. They were to be counter in every way; a distinct nation among the nations. So God entered into covenant with Abraham and declared to Abraham what He would do for him and his descendants, Isaac, Jacob and the twelve tribes. So it all started with God's grace. It did not start with man's works. Abraham was a pagan, he worshipped the moon god. So it was of mere grace that God chose this man to start a counter kingdom. This kingdom would revolve around three basic promises. A certain seed would come forth from this family who would be the King, a certain land or real estate where the King would rule from and His subjects would dwell and a worldwide blessing, the extent of the kingdom over all nations. Those promises in no way depend on what Israel does or does not do but on who and what God is.

The second interpretive key to Israel's history is the Mosaic Covenant. Key chapter: Exod 20. This covenant is a covenant of law that establishes discipline. So we have grace, what God does for Israel in promising her a kingdom and then we have law, what God expects of Israel in His kingdom. Grace and law, there's always grace and law, it's never one to the exclusion of the other. Grace establishes their position as the kingdom of God, law establishes how God expects them to live in His kingdom. It's a set of 613 policies. God's express will for the nation Israel. And God promised that if you obey My law then I will bless you in My kingdom, but if you disobey My law then I will curse you in My kingdom. The blessings and cursings are outlined in Lev 26 and Deut 28. So we have grace and law. Grace in the Abrahamic Covenant, law in the Mosaic Covenant. Most everything in the prophets is explained in terms of one or both of those two covenants.

Now, it's important to understand what the kingdom was like when Amos ministered and how it got in that condition. Things were obviously a mess. How did it become a mess? Amos is ministering in 762 years before Christ to the northern kingdom. If there's a northern kingdom then obviously it was a Divided Kingdom. The United Kingdom under the monarchies of David and Solomon had ended 150 years earlier. That cleavage happened under David's grandson Rehoboam. And when Rehoboam did his idiot thing a man who had been in Solomon's administration, named Jeroboam, we call him Jeroboam I, was elected king over the ten northern tribes and from that point on they're

called "Israel." Rehoboam stayed in the south and ruled over two tribes, and they're called "Judah." So you have now two Jewish kingdoms, one in the north and one in the south. We're interested in the northern kingdom because that's where Amos ministered.

Now, being 150 years after the kingdom divided Amos is ministering to a kingdom that is really screwed up. What had happened? Well, the northern kingdom under Jeroboam I had gone into apostasy. The apostasy we can trace in the book of 1 Kings in three stages. First, they rejected the Davidic dynasty and came out from under the protective booth of David. However, this was a divinely authorized move and Jeroboam could have had an eternal dynasty, if he obeyed the Mosaic Law. But he didn't. He resorted to human gimmicks of the flesh to solve problems and did not trust God's word. And so while God promised to secure his kingdom, Jeroboam didn't believe God's word and therefore he tried to secure his kingdom by a second rejection; rejection of Temple Worship in Jerusalem. To do this he built temples for worship at Dan and Bethel, he set up the golden calf, he did away with the Levitical priesthood, he changed the feast calendar. He did all this out of the imagination of his heart and so formed a counterfeit religion which, of course, brought the northern kingdom into covenant disobedience. And so if you study that period in 1 Kings you'll see the curses of Lev 26 and Deut 28 beginning under the ministry of Elijah. If you curse me you will be cursed. The third and final move of apostasy in the northern kingdom was under a king named Ahab. We haven't studied him yet, but he married a real fine Phoenician girl named Jezebel. A wonderful lady, a lady who was so evil she becomes the symbol of evil for the rest of the Bible, you can read about her over in Rev 2. And when he married this gal what else did he marry? Her gods and goddess and so she brought with her Baal, the fertility god and that became the dominant religion in the north. By this time they were completely apostate. The rejection we call the rejection of YHWH Himself. So the three steps downward in apostasy: rejection of the Davidic Dynasty, rejection of Temple Worship in Jerusalem and rejection of YHWH Himself. Yet what was the whole point of God starting a new kingdom with Abraham? Did God want a kingdom like all the other kingdoms? No. God wanted to build His kingdom to be a counter kingdom. But the northern kingdom had become just like all the other kingdoms. So God disciplined them according to Lev 26 and Deut 28 to restore them to collective obedience to Him. They had a relationship with God through the Abrahamic Covenant but through collective disobedience

they were out of fellowship, so to speak. And therefore to restore the nation to fellowship God sent His prophets. This is where the role of the prophet comes in. Basically these prophets are not social reformers but prosecuting attorneys. They're like lawyers who keep coming to the nation and saying, alright you broke statute 101, 109, 143 and so forth and they're doing that to convict the nation of their sin so they will confess and be restored to fellowship with the Great King.

Amos is God's prosecuting attorney to the northern kingdom. And the nation is 100 years past Ahab so the kingdom is in really bad shape. They have political problems, they have legal problems, they have social problems, and they have public health problems. All their sin has been compounding for 150 years and so Amos is sent to bring the nation back into fellowship.

Now, if you remember our doctrine of sanctification, all these truths in this section of Scripture deal with some aspect of our doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification is a term for "spiritual growth." The nation was to grow in loyalty to God, that's the aim of sanctification, loyalty to the word of God. They didn't do that. They went into apostasy, they rejected the word of God, they rejected the Levitical priesthood, they rejected the prophets, they rejected God Himself, they were apostate. So they had failed to learn loyalty to God and were in a state of autonomous rebellion just like all the other nations.

So being in that condition, how in chapters 1-2 did we say Amos approaches them? How did we learn Amos had to approach them to get a hearing? When someone is in a state of rebellion or they're deceived about their sin problem what's the technique? We learn the technique first with David's incident with Bathsheba. David was so carnal at the time he didn't even realize he'd sinned. Then he went out and had one of his top men knocked off and who knows what else David would have done if Nathan hadn't come in with this technique. *It's the technique of entrapment.* Chapters 1-2 are entrapment strategy. Entrapment is where you have to outsmart these sinners. Sinners are still smart, sinning doesn't make you stupid in the logical, rational sense, and logic is just a tool used to promote your agenda. And the flesh has an agenda, to suppress the truth. So these people are, so to speak, behind a ten foot barrier, that barrier is the suppression. They've spent years and years building that wall of suppression to keep the truth out and it's that barrier

that has to be broken through with these people. So to break through Amos uses entrapment. He comes and in chapter 1 he starts his message. He pronounces doom in v 3 on Damascus, doom in v 6 on Gaza, doom in v 9 on Tyre. No problem, doom on three surrounding enemy powers, that's great from the northern kingdom's perspective, our enemies to the N, NE and SW are going to get creamed. But now watch because with the next nations he gets a little closer to home. Doom in v 11 on Edom, doom in v 13 on Ammon, doom in chapter 2, v 1, on Moab. What makes those three closer to home than the first three? They're all blood relatives, some more distant than others but all related. What's he doing? He's zooming in on his target. But still, no problem, doom on three surrounding enemy powers, to the SE, E and S. In fact, things are looking good for the northern kingdom because if these enemy powers are doomed then what does that mean for them? More power, more dominion, we'll rule the region. Then chapter 2:4 he gets even closer to home, doom on Judah, that's our sister kingdom, that's also the seventh kingdom mentioned so far which means that's it, because seven is the number of completion, right? Wrong. Everything up to this point is Amos setting the trap. In v 6 Amos springs the trap and Israel is caught, they probably never expected vv 6-16. We recall this technique because it's one of the ways the Scriptures shows how to expose someone who is caught in sin. It may not be the only way but it is a technique we can learn from Amos. Sometimes we have a friend or family member who is so far gone in sin this may be the only way to wake them up. It takes some creativity to see how to set this up and it may not look nice, but sin is not nice. We have to remember that sin distorts, sin suppresses the truth, sin masquerades and so techniques like this are preserved for us by the Holy Spirit who authored them, as methods to recall and use when you face similar situations with people you love.

Let's move to the love dimension in chapter 3. Chapter 3:2 because to many of us this looks like a very unloving approach: setting a trap for someone so they walk right into the thing and look like an idiot. But this isn't coming out of a non-loving disposition. This is coming out of love. Principle: *All True Discipline Comes out of Love*. Notice verse 2, "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Literally, "You only have I known," *yada*. Obviously God knows all nations cognitively; this isn't a verb of omniscience. This is a verb of covenant love, elective love, and sovereign love. What covenant? The Abrahamic Covenant. No other nation on earth has an Abrahamic Covenant

with God. Name one other country that has a promised land, a promised seed and a promised worldwide blessing. Only Israel has that. You only have I known. Now, before you think that's unfair, finish the verse. What comes with God's sovereign, elective love? Discipline. "Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." What covenant? What covenant brings in the discipline for the nation? The Mosaic Covenant. See, you have to keep the balance. Yes, Israel you have the privileged position of the Abrahamic Covenant but you also have the Mosaic Covenant that demarcates your responsibilities. Both covenants are butted against one another in that verse. Principle: *With Privileged Position Comes Danger of Discipline*. And the same is true for human families. If you're not my son I'm not going to discipline you, you don't have the privileged position. But if you are my son you are in the privileged position and like it or not with that comes great responsibility and if you don't obey I'm going to discipline.

Now, chapter 4 gives us some principles on the disciplinary procedure. The procedure was already revealed in Lev 26 and Deut 28 as coming in five cycles. Each cycle increases in intensity to get the desired result. So watch, chapter 4:6 Amos says, alright, remember, God disciplined you over and over and over but you always responded negatively to the discipline. V 6 the discipline, "But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities And lack of bread in all your places, Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD." Negative response, therefore verse 7, "Furthermore I withheld the rain from you While there were still three months until harvest." That's not good, that's spells agricultural distress. How did they respond at the end of v 8? "Yet you have not returned to Me." Negative response. So what does God do? Turns it up a notch. Verse 9, "I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees," Olive trees were the last thing the caterpillar ate so this spells agricultural disaster. How did they respond? "Yet you have not returned to Me." So He turns it up some more, verse 10, "I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt; I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses, And I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils;" Now we've got public health problems, military defeat, dead bodies everywhere. Response: "Yet you have not returned to Me." And if you follow these to the end of the chapter it's a step by step increase in the discipline. If they respond negatively to the discipline then God intensifies the discipline. Principle: *Discipline Should Increase In Intensity*

Until Desired Result is Attained. What is the desired result? Respect for authority. Authority orientation. Why is that so important? Because a child can't learn anything until they first learn who's the boss. It's the problem you have in the school system today. The poor teacher's hands are tied. Oh, you can't spank little Johnny, why if you do that you might destroy his little self-esteem. Well, if you don't spank little Johnny, little Johnny is going to be running the classroom. Little Johnny is going to be little Johnny rebel. And in an environment where you have twenty of these things running around the poor teachers can't teach a thing. The whole thing turns into a glorified daycare center. Nobody learns anything. Until the authority issue is settled, that I am the authority and you do what I say or else, you can't really teach them knowledge. And this is the model for parental discipline. If this is how God disciplines His Son then can't we learn something from that? And so, if you have a child and he rebels against you then you spank, with the biblical rod, and if he rebels again you spank harder, until the child says yes sir, I respect your authority. Then you can teach them something. It can get severe, but it's worth it because biblical discipline done out of love always develops character. If you say, well we tried that and biblical discipline won't work for my child because he's the unique thing in the universe, no one under heaven had one like this, then you're in rebellion against God and He will proceed to spank you.

Alright, another highlight, Amos 5:18. Some of the severe discipline, the most severe the Lord uses against His own son might be described by the biblical phrase, the day of the Lord. A day of the Lord in the ancient world was descriptive of a day in which a great warrior king could consummate an entire battle in a single day. So it's a day of great wrath, great destruction, and inescapable horror. It could refer to a single day or it could refer to a single campaign. As far as Israel's theology of the day of the Lord at this time they had Obadiah who first used the phrase to refer to God's eschatological judgment on the nations and then they had Joel which described a past day of the Lord that had come upon Israel for her covenant disobedience and also a future eschatological judgment on the nations where Israel was rescued. So, in Israeli theology, at the time they looked forward to the day of the Lord because it was the time the nations would be destroyed and Israel would become chief among the nations. But what does v 18 reveal? "Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose *will* the day of the LORD *be* to you? It *will be* darkness and not light;" In other words, a new

development in the theology of the day of the Lord is injected through Amos here, that the day of the Lord will also be a day of judgment for Israel. This is a significant development in the theology of the day of the Lord. Notice how he describes it in v 19, “As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. ²⁰Will not the day of the LORD *be* darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?” Israel’s judgment is inescapable. Turn over to Amos 8:8, another passage on the day of the Lord. “Because of this will not the land quake And everyone who dwells in it mourn? Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile, And it will be tossed about And subside like the Nile of Egypt. ⁹It will come about in that day,” that day being technically a reference back to the day of the Lord in chapter 5, “It will come about in that day declares the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon And make the earth dark in broad daylight. ¹⁰“Then I will turn your festivals into mourning And all your songs into lamentation; And I will bring sackcloth on everyone’s loins And baldness on every head. And I will make it like *a time of mourning* for an only son, And the end of it will be like a bitter day.” In some of these contexts it’s difficult to tell if these are referring to past days of the Lord or to the future day of the Lord. There could be some double reference in some of these where part of it refers to a past day of the Lord and another part refers to a future day of the Lord. That’s a common way the prophets write. Turn to Zech 9:9 for an example of this. Watch this because v 9 refers to the first coming of Christ and v 10 refers to the second coming of Christ, if you were reading this in the original, of course, there were no verse divisions. So how would you understand this if you lived in Zechariah’s day? Would you see this as one or two comings? We wouldn’t be able to make the split and say there are thousands of years between v 9 and 10. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.” There are a number of OT passages that do this, they just butt up right to one another two comings of Christ, separated by thousands of years. We know now, they didn’t know then, that’s called the Law of Double Reference. We’ll cover that law some day when I teach you a class on hermeneutics. But our point here in this development of the day of the Lord in Amos is that I think in some of

these passages you have this Law in effect. And it's hard to see where the break is between the past day of the Lord for Israel and the future day of the Lord for Israel. But the point is that Amos makes a significant development in prophetic theology.

Now I want to shift over to some of the trademarks of apostasy. They undoubtedly lived in an apostate kingdom so what are some of the characteristics of an apostate people of God? People who are named as God's people but have departed from Him? First, chapter 2:12, rejection of the word of God. "And you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!' The prophets were the mouthpiece of God so to command them to shut up is to reject the word of God. The very first step in apostasy is to somehow marginalize the word of God. It may be an attack on inerrancy, a redefining of inerrancy so that we say, for example, that the Bible is true in all matters of faith, by which we mean that in the historical or scientific details it's in error. So that's a technique of limiting inerrancy. There are a number of ways this has been done. It may be by a new hermeneutic, a new way of interpreting the Bible to avoid the straightforward meaning of the text. We use the grammatical-historical hermeneutic which means we consider the grammar and the historical context. Other people use other hermeneutics and that's how they get different theologies. They may use the grammatical-historical-literary hermeneutic and by adding literary to the list that means you get into genre and you compare this book in the Bible with extra-biblical literature and then you say, this genre is meant to be read this way and therefore we override the meaning of the text. This is often done with prophetic literature like the Revelation. We're not saying we don't identify the genre, we recognize poetry, narrative, epistolary, etc...but just that do I go to extra-biblical literature to get a hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible? That's the problem. It's plain and simple rejection of the word of God. And every time you reject the word of God as an authority what must take place? A vacuum is created and a new authority is sucked up. And so the word of man begins to take over. What happened when Jeroboam I rejected the Temple Worship in Jerusalem? Did he go into neutral mode? Did he just coast? No, he developed a new worship system based on his word, the word of man. There is no such thing as being neutral in any area of life, you will either think the thoughts of God or you will think the thoughts of man.

Here's a second mark of apostasy, chapter 3:10, moral relativism. Does that logically follow? If you reject the word of God as the absolute standard in step one what obviously comes next? No absolutes, except the absolute that there are no absolutes. Now we all just make up whatever standard we want, and I have my standard and you have yours. The problem is when our standards collide. You can say all standards are equal until that happens and then one or the other. Do we have that in the church? With the loosing of doctrinal standards I'd say absolutely. Today the issue isn't doctrine, it's let's have a discussion and we'll all pour out of our little carnal hearts whatever we think. Relativity, no fixed meaning, no absolutes in the word of God and if there were we could never arrive at them. All signs of moral relativity, all signs of the apostasy.

Turn to chapter 5 for a third mark of apostasy; hatred for anyone who judges rightly. Verse 10 and 13 for this. Verse 10, "they hate him who reproves in the gate," in other words you've got one guy out there trying to maintain an absolute standard of justice, the word of God, and this guy's the problem. How long do you think a guy like that is going to last in apostate society? Eventually what happens, v 13? At such a time the prudent [or wise] man keeps silent, for it is an evil time." Eventually they all go silent, not even one voice to stand up and say, that's wrong. Very few verses are speaking up today and if they do there's a crowd waiting to bury them, and rake their name through the coals and destroy them. Hatred for anyone who judges rightly, a sure sign of apostasy.

Here's a fourth one, chapter 4:1-3, role reversal. Women trying to be men and men trying to be women. "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan," you have to love Amos judicious approach, "hear this you heifers," that's the women. And they were heifers, look at how they act in v 1, "Who say to your husbands, "Bring now that we may drink!" Now who is obviously wearing the pants in these homes? Obviously the women. The women are running the home, the women are running society. They tell their husbands what to do and the husbands, oh yes ma'am, whatever you say, just keep the cows well fed so we can have some peace and quiet around here. Apostasy, absolute apostasy. The men weren't men, they were effeminate idiots. Sign of an apostate church today, women leading the men, women elders, women pastors, women teachers, all signs of apostasy. The men follow the women, just like Adam and Eve all over again, "Come here honey, take a bite of this fruit. Whatever

you say darling, I'm an idiot." And by the way, the Bible does state that women are more prone to be deceived than men. Now the men are more prone to just outright disobedience. They see it coming, the women don't see it coming. The Lord says, in this situation, the men lead, even though they are rebellious. I can work with rebellion, I can't work much with deception, you girls get yourself in a fix. So the way the problem is fixed is if the men stand up and take their responsibility as head of the family and love their wives and cherish them and nourish them and study the word of God then the women would come into line underneath their authority and be protected from the deception. The biblical view is that men and women are equal in essence, we are all made in the image of God and we are all saved by grace through faith. But men and women have different roles. Men and women are different physically and spiritually and therefore in both the physical and spiritual makeup there are different functions or roles the two sexes are designed for and when they function in those roles they flourish and complement one another. Neither sex is inferior to the other, both are equal in essence but they have different roles. The northern kingdom was in apostasy and one of the signs of apostasy is women leading, men following.

Turn to chapter 6 for a sixth mark of apostasy; poor leadership. Verse 1, The distinguished men of the foremost of the nations, To whom the house of Israel comes." Just scan the verses down to verse 6, do these leaders really care for their people? Or do they only care about their own prosperity and luxury, food and drink, enjoyment of life. They have not grieved over the ruin of their kingdom. They have oppressed and leached a living off those whom they were supposed to give justice and truth and nourishment. Always a sign of apostasy when the leadership is corrupt and oppressive.

There are a number of these we could go through. I'll just list them and if you want to ask questions about them or something else we'll have time for that. Empty ritual, worship will be marked by empty ritual, just going through the motions (4:4-5; 5:21-23; 8:4-6). I must say we have a lot of that going on in churches today. There is a lot of religious motion but no true inward seeking of God, no true heart worship, it's just religious duty. Economic injustice (8:4-6), corrupt business practices. False prophets or teachers who drive away the truth-tellers (7:10-17). Drunkenness and Sexual Promiscuity (2:7-8). Legal Injustice (2:6-7; 5:7, 12; 8:4).

Do we have any of these marks of apostasy in the Church today? Have we learned from the mistakes of Israel? I often wonder why when the replacement theologian says the Church has replaced Israel in the plan of God, that Israel has been cast off permanently and the Church has now replaced her, have we done any better than Israel? Why, if God has cast them off permanently might He not then cast us off permanently? And obviously the Bible doesn't teach that. God, Paul says in Rom 11, has not cast off His people Israel forever; He has a plan to restore that nation because He made certain irrevocable promises in the Abrahamic Covenant. Amos teaches the same thing in chapter 9:11-15. He'll restore the nation Israel not because of Israel's goodness but because of His name. And He'll preserve you and I eternally secure not because of our goodness but because of who He is, for His names' sake. He gets all the glory.

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