

THE DISPERSION OF ISRAEL

TEXT: AMOS 9:1-10

Introduction:

1. Amos 9 can be divided into two sections. The first part of the chapter (vss. 1—10) deals with the dispersion of Israel. The LORD says He “will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve” (9:9).
2. The second part of the chapter (vss. 11—15) deals with the restoration of Israel. Although the book of Amos is largely about God’s judgment upon the nation of Israel (cf. 9:10), the book does end on a positive note (9:15).

I. THERE WILL BE NO ESCAPE

1. First, we notice “the Lord standing upon the altar” (9:1). The Scofield Study Bible says this refers to the altar in Jerusalem. “The position of the Lord (Adonai) is significant. The altar speaks properly of mercy because of judgment executed upon an interposed sacrifice, but when altar and sacrifice are despised the altar becomes a place of judgment.”
2. However, the altar is probably the idolatrous altar erected in Bethel (cf. 8:14). The idea is that judgment would begin at the very center of their idolatry.
3. The Lord told Amos, “Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake” (9:1). The posts would come down upon the heads of the idolaters (9:1).
4. This is a reference to the Assyrian invasion, though Assyria is not mentioned.
5. Note the repetition – “Though they...” (9:2, 3, 4). There will be no escape.
6. Notice also the parallelism (9:2) – dig into hell, climb up to heaven. Top of Carmel, bottom of the sea (9:3). This type of parallelism is found often in the Bible, especially in the book of Proverbs (cf. Pro. 11:1ff).
7. There are about a thousand caves on Mount Carmel, but there will be no place to hide from God (9:3).
8. The “serpent” in the bottom of the sea is a sea monster (9:3; cf. Isa. 27:1).

II. THE LORD WILL BE THE ONE WHO WILL DRIVE THEM OUT OF THE LAND

1. God used the Assyrians to judge Israel. The Assyrians were just an instrument in His hand (cf. Isa. 10:5, 6). “Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them...” (9:4; cf. Lev. 26:14-33).
2. The LORD drove the Israelites into captivity. “And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land...The LORD is his name” (9:5, 6).
3. In Amos 9:1-4, we see that Israel cannot escape from the omnipresence of God (cf. vss. 2, 3). In Amos 9:5, 6 we see that Israel cannot escape from the omnipotence of God.
4. God controls men and their armies, the animal kingdom, the weather, earthquakes, floods, volcanoes, drought, etc. (cf. 4:13; 5:8, 9; 8:8).
5. All nature is subservient to God. It is only man who defies the will of God. The LORD told the great fish to swallow Jonah, and the fish obeyed. The LORD told Jonah to go to Nineveh, and Jonah disobeyed God.
6. God directs the forces of nature to judge rebellious men. This is brought out vividly in the book of Revelation.
7. In Amos 9:7, we are reminded that Israel behaved no better than her heathen neighbors. They were complacent because of their position as God’s elect nation.
8. “Privilege grossly abused and grace trodden underfoot carry special responsibility and entail greater chastisement” – Merrill Unger.
9. Verse 7 also reminds us that there really are no “indigenous people.” God transplanted the Philistines and the Syrians, as well as the Israelites.
10. Amos chapters 1 and 2 emphasize that God is the Lord of all the nations. God controls geography and history.

III. GOD WILL DESTROY ISRAEL FROM OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH

1. Israel had gotten so bad that God referred to her as “the sinful kingdom” (9:8).

2. This means the LORD would destroy Israel (the northern kingdom) as a separate kingdom. When the Lord brings the children of Israel back into their land, they will not be a divided kingdom but will be one united nation under the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. How can God destroy Israel “from off the face of the earth,” while at the same time promise that He “will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob” (9:8)?
4. By sifting out the wicked and saving the repentant. God will preserve a remnant of faithful believers (9:9: cf. Deut. 30:1-4; Rom. 11:5, 25, 26).
5. The LORD knows who is part of this remnant (Rev. 7:3-8).
6. The Israelites are likened to corn sifted in a sieve among the Gentile nations – “yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth” (9:9).
7. The LORD does the sifting (9:9). This sifting is a picture of Israel’s unsettled condition – the dispersion, persecutions, terrorism, etc.
8. The whole world is one great sieve in which Israel is shaken from one place to another, but the kernels – the faithful remnant – will be preserved and restored.
9. While the good grain will stay in the sieve, the chaff (representing the wicked) will fall through the sieve and “die by the sword” (9:9, 10; cf. Zech. 13:8, 9).
10. The defiant unbelievers will say, “The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us” (9:10b).

CONCLUSION:

The wicked ones among them who are hardened in their sins shall all of them perish (9:10). See what a height of impiety they have come to: “They say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.” They think they are innocent, and do not deserve punishment, or that the profession they make of relation to God will be their exemption and security from punishment, or that they shall be able to make their part

good against the judgments of God, that they shall flee so swiftly from them that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them that they shall not prevent or surprise them. Note, Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the impenitent. But see what it will come to at last: “All the sinners” that thus flatter themselves, and affront God, shall “die by the sword,” the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of divine vengeance. – Matthew Henry

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