

Amaziah Tells Amos to Stop His Ministry and Go Back Home

Amos 7:10-17

Amos 7:10-17 – *“Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹ For thus Amos has said: ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.’”*

¹² Then Amaziah said to Amos: “Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy. ¹³ But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is the royal residence.”

¹⁴ Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: “I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheep breeder and I tended sycamore fruit. ¹⁵ Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’

¹⁶ Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord: You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not spout against the house of Isaac.’ ¹⁷ “Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by survey line. You shall die in a defiled land, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land.’”

Background Notes

The book of Amos is relatively easy to outline and remember. The brief outline that we’re following in our “Talks from Amos” is as follows:

Eight Prophecies (chapters 1-2)

Three Sermons (chapters 3-6)

Six Visions (chapters 7-9).

We’ve discussed the eight prophecies of judgment and the three sermons of judgment. The visions God gave Amos began in chapter 7. There were three visions in the first half of the chapter - the vision of the locust plague, the vision of the wildfire, and the vision of the plumb line. The second half of the chapter is an historical interlude, and the visions continued in chapter 8.

In the historical interlude, Amaziah, a false priest in Bethel, tried to silence Amos and send him back to Judah. As you know, when Israel divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, King Jeroboam I set up two golden calf idols in the northern kingdom. One of the idolatrous golden calf shrines was located in Bethel, near Israel’s border with Judah, and the other was in Dan, in the far north of the kingdom of Israel. (Read about it in 1 Kings 12.)

Although Amos lived and ministered about 170 years after the shrines were established, the shrine at Bethel was still there and the idolatry continued. In fact, King Jeroboam II had a royal residence or temple at Bethel, and he had apparently made Bethel the official state shrine. *“For it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is the royal residence” (v13)*. Notice that it was not God’s sanctuary - but the king’s sanctuary.

God called Amos, who lived in the southern kingdom of Judah, to travel north to Bethel and speak out against the social sins and idolatry of the north. The prophet Hosea began his ministry in the northern kingdom at this time. Hosea also pronounced judgment on the people of the northern kingdom for their gross idolatry.

Amos boldly preached and prophesied right at the royal shrine of Bethel. Obviously his ministry was not well received!

Doctrinal Points

1. Unbelievers will attempt to slander and silence those who speak God’s Word.

Have you ever been slandered for sharing God’s Word? Years ago, when I was working in secular employment, a very self-righteous unbeliever accused me of using “company time” to try to “convert employees to a different religion.” That was a bold-faced lie. I had been especially careful never to evangelize on company time. Yes, I taught a weekly lunchtime Bible study, but it was during the employees’ free time.

You see, unbelievers will look for any opportunity in an attempt to slander you if you’re sharing the truth of God’s Word. It happened to Elijah. King Ahab falsely accused Elijah of troubling Israel (1 Kings 18:17-18). Jeremiah was slandered. In Jeremiah 37, the prophet was falsely accused of defecting to the Babylonians. Jeremiah replied, *“False! I am not defecting to the Chaldeans” (Jeremiah 37:14)*. Our Lord was certainly slandered. And you will be misunderstood and slandered as well, if you try to share the truth of God’s Word with unbelievers. Not all the time - but it will come!

Notice how Amos was slandered. The false priest Amaziah went to King Jeroboam and falsely accused Amos of being part of a conspiracy to get rid of the king! *“Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel” (v10)*. This was a lie, and it was slander. Amos had not conspired against the king!

Notice how Amaziah reported only a part of the words of Amos: *“For thus Amos has said: ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.’”* But Amaziah was giving only a part of Amos’ message. Amos had also preached the way of life. Look back at Amos 5:4 & 14: *“For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: “Seek Me and live... Seek good and not evil, that you may live. So the Lord God of hosts will be with you.”* Amaziah, an apostate priest, distorted Amos’ full message for his own evil purposes.

Then Amaziah falsely accused Amos of being a “professional prophet.” He said Amos was “in it for the money.” That seems to be the gist of verse 12: *“Then Amaziah said to Amos: “Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy.”* In other words, he said, “Go get your bread by being a prophet back in Judah – but not here!” That’s why Amos responded, *“I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheep breeder and I tended sycamore fruit.”*

In other words, Amos said, “I’m not a professional prophet. I’m not in the ministry for the money! That’s a lie! I was quite successful in business as a sheep breeder and a farmer of sycamore trees. But God called me out of those jobs, and He specifically told me to preach and to prophesy against the sins of Israel.”

The Bible is teaching us here what we are to do if we are slandered:

1. Deny the false charge as briefly and as concisely as we can.
2. Go on with the job God has called us to do.

That’s what Elijah did when he was falsely accused. That’s what Jeremiah did when he was slandered. That’s what Nehemiah did when the enemy falsely accused him of trying to make himself king. He concisely denied the charge, and continued to build the wall (Nehemiah 6).

And that’s what Amos did as well. Amos was slandered. He was told to be silent and never again to prophesy at Bethel. So what did Amos do? He denied the false charge, and continued to preach the word of the Lord!

What a lesson for us - especially if we’re trying to share the word of God in a hostile environment – perhaps in our neighborhoods, or in our schools, or where we work. Unbelievers will attempt to slander and silence those who speak God’s Word.

2. Believers must share the good and the bad news with those who doubt God’s Word.

Amaziah, the apostate priest, doubted God’s word. Amos had shared the good news that if the people of the northern kingdom would turn from their wicked ways, they would live (Amos 5). He had also shared the bad news - that if they did not turn, they would be judged and carried away as captives by the Assyrians. But Amaziah and the rest of the northern kingdom doubted the truth of God’s Word, and they would not believe Amos.

So Amos had to press home the bad news to Amaziah, and make it personal: *“Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by survey line. You shall die in a defiled land, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land’”* (v16-17).

It wasn’t easy for Amos to share this terrible news with Amaziah. Amos predicted that Amaziah’s wife would become a prostitute, either by force or for survival. His children would be killed. The Assyrian armies would loot his property and

possessions, and he would die in a pagan land. All of this literally took place when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom in 722 BC.

Do you see what the Bible is teaching us here? God is telling us that we must share the bad news with unbelievers, as well as the good news. The bad news is not pleasant, and it will be doubted and perhaps it will not be believed - but we must share it anyway.

When I was working with a high school ministry, I became convicted that I had not been preaching the bad news as well as the good news of the gospel, so I began to include judgment for sin and the reality of hell in my messages. You can imagine what happened. The crowds of kids who had been enjoying only the good news began to taper off - but the whole truth of God's Word was communicated.

People - including teens - don't like to hear the bad news. They may refuse to believe. But some of the teens in my high school group **did hear** and **did believe** - and they're solid Christians today. I dare say some of you were "scared into the kingdom" when you heard the bad news about judgment for sin and the reality of hell if you did not believe. So I think you see the doctrinal point: Believers must share the good news and the bad news with those who doubt God's Word.

Practical Application

When you're sure God's calling you – go!

Don't let verse 14 give you the impression that Amos was a poor migrant laborer looking for a job. No! Amos was a successful businessman. He was a sheep rancher and an expert in growing the fruit of sycamore trees. Amos was successful. And Amos was well educated. Some of the finest Hebrew in the Old Testament is found in the book of Amos!

But Amos left a successful career for full time ministry for the Lord. Why? Because God called him! Have you ever wondered if God was calling you into ministry? When you're **sure** that God is calling you – go!

Notice the way I put it. I didn't say "just go." I said, **go when you're sure God's calling you!** Some people who are in full time ministry today should not be there. They jumped too quickly into ministry. But here's the point. There are more "Amoses" out there, and God still calls people to serve Him full time. God will confirm His call through circumstances, through Scripture, through the inner convictions of the Holy Spirit, and through the counsel of other mature and godly believers.

My advice is this: don't move too quickly! But when you're sure God's calling you - **go!**