

# Route Sixty-Six

*Part Thirty*

*Amos*

*Nor A Son of A Prophet*

*(John 5:39; Amos 7:12, 13)*

*With Study Questions*

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*Amos*

*Nor A Son of A Prophet  
(John 5:39; Amos 7:12, 13)*

**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).**

**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” (Amos 7:12, 13).**

## **Introduction**

Can’t say I’ve ever been a fan of Ricky Gervais. I’ve always found him to be a bit of an aggressive, condescending, neo-atheist who doesn’t always accurately represent his opponent’s side. Having said that, I must say that his opening monologue at the recent Golden Globe Awards may be the best speech ever at a Hollywood award ceremony. I say “may” because I don’t generally watch award shows and a great portion of what he said was bleeped out in the feed that I did watch.

Nonetheless, I am not alone in my assessment. Other than the people in the actual room (and maybe some of their fans) the monologue received stellar reviews. I have no intention of repeating his jokes, many of which were foul and censored by the time it hit popular outlets. But it was not merely that his jokes were funny (no doubt that was part of it) or that they were, in large part, true, especially his chastisement about the Hollywood elite knowing nothing about the “real world.” It went beyond that.

What I think was impressive to many people was his willingness to say these things to a room full of the most powerful people in his industry—some of whom are the most powerful people/companies in the world (e.g. Apple<sup>1</sup>, Amazon, Disney). Perhaps this is why his monologue was laden with indications that this would be his last time hosting. He could say all

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<sup>1</sup> Apple CEO, Tim Cook was in the audience.

these offensive things without fear of not being invited back. Add to that his mogul status. His income has reached into the hundreds of millions (he produced the American version of *The Office*), which also gives him a great deal of liberty.

How rich or strong does one have to be in order to have no fear of repercussions? It is one thing to be respectful and sensitive to your audience (whether your audience is huge or one person), it is another thing to grovel or fear how they may respond to what you have to say. We all may think we're above this, but we fool ourselves. If we realize that what we're about to say may have a negative impact upon us economically, socially or in terms of our reputation, we may find ourselves stifled.

I mention these things because Amos was not a prophet, nor **"a son of a prophet" (Amos 7:14)**. He was a farmer and shepherd. But when the Lord called him to prophesy, he obeyed, unapologetically. He might be compared to streetwise kid from Brooklyn called to deliver a message to the Queen of England. It was a time of political stability and prosperity in Israel and Judah. But it was also a time of idolatry, extravagance and corruption.

There was no interest in what Amos had to say. In fact, there were concerted efforts to shut him up. Amaziah, **"the priest of Bethel" (Amos 7:10)**, accused Amos of conspiring against the king.

**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" (Amos 7:12, 13).**

In other words, 'Get out of here.' Now I don't think it is necessarily a good idea to immediately rush to harsh tones in a conversation. You'll catch more flies with honey than vinegar, or to put it in Biblical terms, **"the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4)**. Yet there are times to up the ante in our dialogues. Amos was not about to allow himself to be intimidated into silence. He was ready to be removed from Israel's social calendar when he referred to the upper-class ladies as **"cows of Bashan" (Amos 4:1)** and Israel's worship songs as **"noise" (Amos 5:23)**.

Let us pray for the boldness of Amos. One of the recurring themes in the New Testament is that God's word went forth with boldness (Acts 4:13, 31; 9:27; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 26:26; Eph. 6:19). As he languished in prison, it was the prayer request of Paul,

**...that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,<sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Ephesians 6:19).**

Ricky Gervais may be a mogul and worth a hundred million dollars. These are chest-expanding items on a resume'. Amos had no such items on his resume'. He did not have chariots and horses. He wasn't part of the prophet's guild. You may not either. But when the King of kings and Lord of lords indicates that it is time to speak the truth, we are to have boldness in the knowledge that He is our Father, He owns a cattle on a thousand hills, He is the maker of the heavens and the earth, and He has promised to be with us.

## **Survey of Amos**

Amos was a prophet in the mid-seventh century B.C. The book opens with his prophecies of judgment on the surrounding nations. He did not receive pushback from his congregation when they heard that the hammer was going to come down on their enemies. Things became more difficult for Amos when he turned his attention to God's impending judgment on Judah and Israel-the covenant people of God.

It is much easier to take comfort in the faults of others. But it is never an excuse for our own bad behavior. If you fancy that you are the more mature person, then you should have the more mature behavior. Our primary and strictest judgments and evaluations should ever be of ourselves. It may very well be that judgment begins "at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). But let us make every effort to ensure that our suffering is as a Christian (1 Peter 4:16). Make sure our first judgment is of ourselves.

**For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.  
<sup>32</sup> But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world (1 Corinthians 11:31).**

Throughout these proclamations of judgments we see three-four literary model: **"For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will**

**not turn away its punishment” (Amos 1:3).** This is an often-used Hebraic device indicating what we might call *the last straw*. It was an evil that was both dishonoring to God and inhumane to people.

They did not merely struggle to obey the law of God, as with even the most devout believer, they **“despised the law of the Lord” (Amos 2:4).** They had engaged in sinful, manstealing slavery, grotesque sexual immorality, drunkenness and more. All accompanied by a command to aid in the way of darkness, that God’s word be extracted from the dialogue:

**But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, And commanded the prophets saying, ‘Do not prophesy’ (Amos 2:12)!**

It is truly a sad day when God accommodates our fleshly desires. It is in Amos that we read that God will send a famine on the land.

**Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos 8:11b).**

The truth can be very inconvenient and uncomfortable to those who wish to travel a path of waywardness. And the inevitable victims of this waywardness, when it reaches a national level, are the poor. Those in power will promise them comfort and provision, if they bow the knee, not to God but to them.

**They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, And they abhor the one who speaks uprightly. <sup>11</sup> Therefore, because you tread down the poor And take grain taxes from him (Amos 5:10b, 11a).**

In all of this, the people of God would not accept correction. They would receive a series of minor judgments (Amos 4:6-10) before a major judgment would come. God does not grow weary either in His judgments of the wicked or the correction of His own children. He will ever patiently and unwaveringly direct us back to Himself.

There is an old movie, that is high on the list of people’s favorite movies, entitled Cool Hand Luke with Paul Newman, made in the 1960’s. The movie is laden with Christian allegory. Luke is on a chain gang for the crime of ripping the heads off of parking meters, so he is much more innocent than his fellow prisoners. He is so undaunting in his convictions

that the other inmates find inspiration in him. They begin to live and have hope vicariously through him. They are emboldened by his courage in refusing to bow to unsavory authority figures running the prison.

Yet there is a religious narrative in the movie where Luke is struggling with his own faith. In one of his many escape attempts (this one with the Peter figured in the movie, played by George Kennedy), he finds himself in a church and he begins to pray. It is a touching scene. Not necessarily theologically sound. He is asking God make sense of his own difficult life. He finally acknowledges that he is a “hard case”. The church is silent. He waits for an answer from God. But none comes. But then the Peter figure arrives at the door of the church surrounded by police. Luke laughs and responds: “This is your answer? Well, I guess you’re a hard case to.”

We may grow weary of doing good. But the same can’t be said of God. The great, yet often uncomfortable, promise:

**...that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6b).**

It must be noted that in all of this, the people of God had not ceased to be religious. How we see that world and the church in Amos. The world loves to point out the faults in the church-the great evils done historically and to this day. I don’t argue. One needn’t go beyond the text of sacred Scripture to read of evil in the church. We read that God hated **“their feast days...(and) the noise of their songs” (Amos 5:21, 23).**

Of course, the contempt the surrounding nations had for an apostate Israel did in no way exempt them from their own judgments. At the same time, a corrupt church gives the world a cause to blaspheme (2 Samuel 12:14). And the salt, light and vehicle of redemption the church is called to be to the world is trampled under foot (Matthew 5:13, 14). All this to say that being religious is not always a good thing. We must ever pray and work that our own church not become a stench in the nose of God.

As with the other prophetic books, we learn that Israel and Judah would not repent. They would find themselves in captivity. It is here that we read, time after time, that there is a greater redemptive message than the mere national deliverance of a singular nation. There is another city, **“whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10b).** It is toward the end of that we begin to see that the central focus of Amos is Christ.

## Christ in Amos

As Amos completes his prophetic task there is this, yet unmistakable reference to the sun going “down at noon” and the darkening of the “earth in broad daylight” (Amos 8:9). Though this language is often used as a sign of calamity or divine judgment (Jeremiah 15:9; Ezekiel 32:7-10), all three of the synoptic gospels record this happening at the crucifixion of Christ (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). I wouldn't consider overreaching to conclude that this was a sign of God's divine judgment falling upon Jesus.

Similar to what we have read elsewhere, God “**will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob**” (Amos 9:8). God had made a promise that through Abraham all families of the earth would “**be blessed**” (Acts 3:25). And God would keep that promise in Christ. We see the promise of Christ in Amos with the words:

**On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old (Amos 9:11).**

In the book of Acts, we see this is fulfilled in Christ:

**After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,<sup>17</sup> that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things<sup>18</sup> known from of old' (Acts 15:16, 17).**

John uses similar language early in his gospel.

**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).**

“**Dwelt**” *eskenosen* is used only here and in Revelation. It carries the idea of pitching one's tent. Some might say that Jesus “tabernacled” among us as Immanuel, God with us. Amos conveys a beautiful and uplifting picture of the restoration found in Christ with gardens and vineyards—“mountains dripping with sweet wine, and all the hills shall

flow with it" (Amos 9:13). The glorious promise of God bringing back the captives of His people (Amos 9:14) is found in what the wine ever points our hearts to. Let us have that in our meditations as we come to the Lord's Table this morning.

## Questions for Study

1. Can you think of circumstances which might tempt you to remain silent when you truly believe God would have you speak? Explain (pages 2, 3)?
2. Are there times when we are called to be more aggressive or assertive in our dialogue? When is that right or wrong (pages 3, 4)?
3. What are some dangers in taking comfort in the fault of others? Where should our first judgments be and why (page 4)?
4. What is the difference between struggling to obey the law and despising the law (pages 4, 5)?
5. How can it be a bad thing for God to accommodate our fleshly desires (page 5)?
6. Explain what the truth does to those who desire to lead a wayward life (page 5)?
7. How can it be uncomfortable for God complete His work in us (pages 5, 6)?
8. Where do we find Christ in Amos? What should our response to this be (page 7)?