

Let Justice Roll (5)- Do Not Prophecy Against Israel

(Amos 7)

I. Introduction

- A. Dr. Jeffrey Wigand has been called a whistleblower or “*the ultimate insider*”
1. In fact, “*The Insider*” was the 1999 Russell Crowe movie based on his life
 - a. Wigand was a \$300,000 Research VP for Brown & Williamson Tobacco
 - b. His job was finding ways to make cigarettes safer; that was the problem
 - 1) He found company (*later bought R.J. Reynolds*) did just the opposite
 - 2) They chemically altered nicotine to make cigarettes more addictive
 - 3) That made cigarettes harder to quit... and more likely to kill you
 2. Wigand first went to company management, but they threatened to fire him
 - a. He leaked the data; that led to interview by Mike Wallace on *60 Minutes*
 - 1) But the interview that wasn't aired; CBS was threatened with lawsuit
 - 2) Wigand was fired, harassed, received death threats (*bullet in mailbox*)
 - b. *Wall Street Journal* broke the story; *60 Minutes* finally aired interview
 3. Dr. Wigand ended up teaching high school chemistry (*teacher of year in '96*)
- B. And old saying tells us, “*If you don't like the message, shoot the messenger*”
1. Jesus has a familiar running encounter with the Pharisees in **Mark 2-3**
 - a. They are upset by the folks (tax collectors) Jesus hangs with (**2:13-17**)
 - b. They're shocked that Jesus seems to ignore tradition of fasting (**2:18-22**)
 - c. They're stunned Jesus allows disciples to pick grain on Sabbath (**2:23-27**)
 - d. They're mad (*which makes Jesus mad*) that He heals on Sabbath (**3:1-5**)
 2. What is the response of Pharisees to the ongoing disagreement? (**Mark 3:6**)
 - a. When you can't deal with the message, then you shoot the messenger
 - b. And Pharisees want to “*shoot the messenger*” only 79 verses into story!
 3. Amos runs into this same mentality in **Amos 7** with the High Priest
 - a. Amos will preach a unique message of forgiveness and destruction
 - b. Like Jesus, Amos runs afoul of a religious leader who wants him quiet
 - c. And like Jesus, Amos will not be intimidated or back down one bit
 4. Israel, in the person of the high priest, wanted to shoot the messenger

- C. Before we look at the message of **Amos 7**, let's do a very brief review.
1. Amos was a rural, southern prophet preaching to the more urban North.
 - a. Two nations were competitors & would soon go to war (**2 Kings 16:5f**)
 - b. This is like sending a rural Arkansan to preach NYC... during Civil War!
 - c. Israel wasn't interested in hearing God, especially from a Southern hick.
 2. What we also see in Amos 7 is how concerned Amos is for people of Israel
 - a. Jonah hated his audience (Nineveh) and sulked when God spared them.
 - b. But Amos is distraught by his message of the destruction of Israel
 3. Two things come across—the Message of Amos and Response of Israel

II. The Message of Amos

- A. The chapter begins with interesting exchange between Amos and God (**7:1-6**)
1. God tells Amos (*presumably so he can preach it*) of a coming destruction
 - a. The first judgment would be in a swarm of locusts (*as in Joel 1:2-4*)
(*Total destruction in a farming culture before pesticides controlled infestation*)
 - b. The second judgment was fire so hot it'd evaporate sea & parched land.
(*This common image of destruction in the OT was used by Amos in Amos 2:5*)
 2. In both cases, an urgent Amos desperate begs God to change His mind
 - a. Amos says that Jacob (Israel) is too small and too weak to survive
 - b. He begs for God to “*forgive*” (**7:2**) and “*stop*” His punishments (**7:4**)
- B. So God “*relented*” (NIV) or “*repented*” (KJV) or “*changed his mind*” (NCV)
1. But Samuel says God doesn't do this changing His mind (**1 Sam 15:29**)
 - a. Word “*relent*” in Amos is same Hebrew word as “*change His mind*”
 - b. Samuel seems to say that God unlike humans, does not change his mind
 2. But God Himself earlier uses the same word earlier in context! (**15:11**)
 - a. So God changed His mind (**15:11**) **and** God doesn't change mind (**15:29**)
 - b. **Basic Problem:** How can a God who knows everything change His mind?
 - 1) Suppose I tell you I'll take you out to Outback and pay for dinner
 - 2) The bill comes, “*I changed my mind.*” But I knew I would all along?
 - c. So does God change His mind? Absolutely! *We desperately count on it!*
 - d. That why Amos was preaching—If Israel **repents**, then God will **relent**

3. So why does Samuel say that God can't change his mind like we do?
 - a. He doesn't. He says that God wouldn't change his mind about Saul
 - 1) In fact, Samuel prayed all night for God to change his mind ([15:11](#)).
 - 2) Why would he pray if God never changes? *Why would we pray?*
 - b. Moses not only asked God to change His mind, God did ([Exo 32:14](#))
 - c. Not only does God change His mind, he remembers ([Psa 106:45](#))
 4. **Point:** God's plan for your future is not so set in stone it can't be changed
 - a. Amos prayed and God relented—prayer changes things, it changes God!
 - b. Maybe this should remind us of the potential power of our prayer!
- C. But Amos isn't through—there is one more vision (Read [Amos 7:7-9](#))
1. This third image reminds us that there the clock always finally runs out
 - a. Achtemeier sees a progression in Amos response to these visions
 - 1) When God threatens destruction in locusts, Amos says, "*Forgive!*"
 - 2) When God promises destruction through fire, Amos says, "*Stop!*"
 - 3) When God shows judgment of plumb line, Amos says **nothing** at all
 - b. A plumb line is a tool that measures to see if a building is straight (plumb)
 - c. Image is that God will measure Israel to see if the nation is straight
 2. Sometimes builders are a little slap happy; they slap things in place
 - a. **Scott Lamp:** Nail it up, bend it over, cut it in place— was close enough (*Scott used his reciprocating saw instead of a tape measure; he just kept cutting*)
 - b. God had twice relented, and Israel was spared because of His grace
 - c. Now Israel would be measured, and that would be the depth of her sin
 3. Sometimes we think that close enough is close enough. (Like Scott's saw)
 - a. We're pretty good folks, especially compared to those sinners "out there."
 - 1) I might not be perfect, but I'm so much more "holier than thou"
 - 2) Like the two guys being chased by bear, "*I just have to outrun you*"
 - b. Israel was so much better than the pagan nations around them
 - 1) But listen to how God was going to measure us ([Isaiah 28:17a](#))
 - 2) Righteousness & justice is God's plumb line. *How do we measure?*
 4. Israel didn't measure up; God promises judgment and won't change mind

III. The Response of Israel

- A. Amaziah, the Priest of Bethel responds with “*kill the messenger*” (7):
1. He does everything he can to discredit Amos and thus Amos’ message.
 - a. Misrepresents Amos’ intentions, “*raising a conspiracy against you*” (**10**)
 - b. Misreports Amos actual words, “*Jeroboam will die by sword*” (**11**)
 - c. Misinterprets Amos basic motives, “*earn your bread there*” (**12**)
 - d. Of course, he brings up geography, “*Go back to the land of Judah*” (**12**)
 2. What we see is not a clash of two men, but a clash of two world views
 - a. Amaziah saw the world that was, a world of the material and temporary
 - 1) Status Quo: Economic wealth, political power, social status
 - 2) Why would Israel want to change when everything was just fine?
 - b. Amos is operating from a spiritual world view– he sees **what should be**
 - 1) He is not focused on things of this world, like this pompous priest
 - 2) He is focused on God, and that puts him a bit at odds with the world
 - 3) That will make Amos seem out of step with the world around him
 - a) Amos may look out of place because is this hillbilly southerner
 - b) But he is really out of place because he sees things as God sees them
 3. If Amaziah thought he’s intimidated Amos, he was wrong (**Amos 7:14-17**)
- B. Will we seek to follow God even when doing so puts us out of step with world
1. Lacy Dodd was a senior at Notre Dame when she found he was pregnant
 - a. She was devastated, even more when boyfriend pressured her to abort
 - b. He dismissed God, “*All that talk about abortion is just dining-room talk.*”
 2. We must decide whether we really believe in responsibility before God
 - a. Is morality talk in the Bible really just fodder for dinner conversation?
 - b. Is God’s law & grace, forgiveness & judgment really Sunday School talk
 - c. We must decide which world view is going to be our world view
 3. We need to hear Amos—God has a plumb line by which he will judge us
 - a. Will we measure up to that standard of holiness and righteousness?
 - b. No, but or lack of righteousness can be overcome by Jesus (**Phil 3:9**)
 - c. That only works for those who God seriously. *So, are you serious?*