

shakes its fist at the throne of heaven must suffer the same annihilation!  
Let all the nations of the earth take heed!

## QUIZ

1. What does Amos intend Israel to see in the "cart pressed" down?
2. Would there not be some who would escape?
3. When did Israel's captivity come? Whom did God use to accomplish it? (cf. Isa. 10:5-19)
4. Is there a lesson to be learned by nations today from Israel?

## PENITENCE PROMOTED—

### REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— THE LORD DOES NOT ROAR WITHOUT CAUSE

TEXT: 3:1-8

- 1 Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying,
- 2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.
- 3 Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?
- 4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?
- 5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all?
- 6 Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?
- 7 Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets.
- 8 The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?

## QUERIES

- a. Doesn't God know any other people than Israelites?
- b. What is the message of the epigrams in verses 3-6?
- c. Does Jehovah reveal *every* thing He does to the prophets?

## PARAPHRASE

Listen, you chosen people, to the indictment which the Lord brings against you—against all the covenant people which I brought up out of the land of Egypt! Be reasonable, and think: I chose you over all the other nations of the earth to grant special knowledge and privileges and you are unique in being blessed; it is logical, then, since you have openly defied Me and disobeyed Me that I should punish you with a special severity! Does not common sense tell you that when two people meet together at an appointed time and place there was a previous cause for such a meeting—an agreement to do so? Will a lion roar in the forest without cause—unless his prey is doomed? or will the young lion growl in his den if he has not taken his prey there for his feast? Does a bird ever get trapped unless someone places a trap there to catch it? or when you see a trap being sprung does it not indicate to you some cause behind its springing? What if the warning signal is blown on the trumpet in a city—will the people pay no attention to it and go on their way heedless? I have been blowing a warning trumpet in your ears over and over—do you not realize that the evils which have befallen you in the past were from Me as warnings? Most assuredly God will not visit His judgment upon anyone without first warning them by revealing it through His messengers. But I tell you truly, God has roared like a lion who is about to pounce on His prey—whoever does not fear is doomed! The Lord God has spoken! His prophet cannot remain silent—he must deliver the Lord's message!

## SUMMARY

In a series of seven questions the Lord teaches a lesson in clear logical thinking in matters of sin and judgment, privilege and responsibility.

## COMMENT

v. 1-2 HEAR THIS WORD . . . AGAINST THE WHOLE FAMILY WHICH I BROUGHT UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT . . . YOU ONLY HAVE I KNOWN . . . I WILL VISIT UPON YOU ALL YOUR INIQUITIES. God's indictment is against the whole covenant people. Judah has already been warned (2:4) that she will be judged. But for the moment this particular prophet is concerned with the northern kingdom, Israel. No other people on earth were, at that time, privileged to be the recipients of the grace of God and the oracles of God in such a measure as Israel. She was a favored nation in this respect. Much was given her, much was

expected! Romans 9, 10, 11 show in no uncertain terms that God's choice of Israel was not due to any necessary merit in the case of Israel whereby God owed it to them. Their special privilege came by the Divine sovereign choice of God. Their blessing was unmerited favor—grace! This unique distinction demanded from its very uniqueness a special obligation of reciprocal love and obedience on the part of Israel (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 4:5-8; 32:34; Psa. 147:19-20). With greater privilege comes more severe punishment if the obligations are despised (Lev. 26:14ff).

v. 3-6 SHALL TWO WALK TOGETHER, EXCEPT THEY HAVE AGREED? . . . SHALL THE TRUMPET BE BLOWN IN A CITY, AND THE PEOPLE NOT BE AFRAID? SHALL EVIL BEFALL A CITY, AND JEHOVAH HATH NOT DONE IT? In a series of seven questions the Lord teaches a lesson in clear logical thinking in matters pertaining to sin-punishment relationships. Reason demands repentance! Verse 3 has often been quoted in treatises on "Unity." However, verse 3 has nothing to do with the subject of unity. It is simply an illustration of the universal law of cause and effect! Two people do not meet and walk together (effect) without previously making some appointment (cause) or arrangement to do so. Just so, says Amos, since every effect has its cause, your sin will cause God's judgment to come upon you due to the special relationship between you and God and even as God promised in His word.

These people of Israel had rationalized their sins so long they had lost the ability to see the very basic principle of cause and effect and to apply this to their relationship to God. But God is roaring like a lion—does a lion roar in the forest unless his victim is doomed? God does not roar without a cause any more than a lion does!

Birds caught in a snare logically demands that someone previously had set the snare. And when one sees a snare being sprung he must logically reason that something caused it to spring.

If a mighty blast of the warning trumpet is blown in the city do the people pay no attention to it? Do not all the disasters happening even now in your cities and villages sound a warning trumpet to you that God is beginning His judgment? How senseless and indifferent can this nation be? But, just like the unbelieving and scoffing today, Israel probably rationalized, "All these droughts, famines, disasters, wars are bound to happen in every country." But the prophet warns them, "Shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?" Local and national calamities *are not* due merely to natural causes, are not only the consequence of human mistakes, or faulty legislation, or political folly, or inadequate statesmanship. These and other matters may be secondary

or contributory causes. But the Prime Mover of this Universe is Jehovah God! He has done it (Isa. 45:1-7)! God is the author of both *weal and woe!* He does what He does from a just cause and for a just and merciful purpose. He does what He does from an omniscient sovereignty! The cause is man's sin, against which God has warned man time and again. The purpose is to warn man against rebelling against his Creator and to call the sinner to repentance, back to his God, the highest Good! Whatever the Lord does, whether tribulation or triumph, is good (Rom. 8:28) Incidentally, there is excellent manuscript evidence today that Romans 8:28 should be translated, "*God works all things together for good . . . etc.*" instead of "All things work together for good . . . etc." *This divine sovereignty working all things, weal and woe, together to serve His purposes, is one of the exhilarating thrusts of prophetic literature!*

v. 7-8 SURELY THE LORD . . . WILL DO NOTHING, EXCEPT HE REVEAL HIS SECRET UNTO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS . . . THE LORD . . . HATH SPOKEN; WHO CAN BUT PROPHECY? God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11-20); He is not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9); so He revealed His secret plans for the judgment of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous to His prophets (watchmen and shepherds) (Isa. 6; Jer. 1, etc.) and they revealed them to man as facts to be believed; commands to be obeyed; warnings to be heeded; promises to be enjoyed. In the sure word of prophecy we have a "light shining in a dark place," (II Pet. 1:16-21); in His word we have all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3-4); in His word we have doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, (II Tim. 3:16). So the Lord has roared; who is so insensible that he will not fear? God has spoken; how can God's messenger be silent? Even as Paul said, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel . . ." Necessity is laid upon every man called of God (and all Christians are called of God); the love of Christ should constrain every man (II Cor. 5:11-15) and knowing the fear of the Lord, we should persuade men! The Lord has spoken; who can but preach!

## QUIZ

1. In what way did God "know" the covenant people?
2. What scriptures should they have known that promised severe punishment if they forgot His commandments?
3. What universal principle of reasoning is taught in verses 3-6?

4. Is God actually the author of woe? What scripture says so?
5. Why does God bring woe upon men?
6. In what way is God justified when He punishes men for their sins?
7. Why should men who know God's will speak to other men about it?

## REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— ISRAEL'S SINS ASTONISH EVEN THE HEATHEN

TEXT: 3:9-15

- 9 Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults are therein, and what oppression in the midst thereof.
- 10 For they know not to do right, saith Jehovah, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.
- 11 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: An adversary there shall be, even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be plundered.
- 12 Thus saith Jehovah: As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed.
- 13 Hear ye, and testify against the house of Jacob, saith the Lord Jehovah, the God of hosts.
- 14 For in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.
- 15 And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith Jehovah.

### QUERIES

- a. Why "publish in the palaces" of the heathen the sins of Israel?
- b. Who will the "adversary" be?
- c. What are "winter and summer houses?"

### PARAPHRASE

The Lord says to the prophets, Go to Ashdod, whom Israel regards as a godless heathen city, and go to Egypt where Israel saw and experienced the ungodliness of that people, and tell them to come and see

the overflowing excess of the sins and abominations of Israel. Tell these godless nations to come and be astonished at the godlessness of Israel where justice and righteousness is topsy-turvy. Israel does not even know how to do right. Her people are so eager to sin they pile one sin upon another in their palatial mansions like people storing up treasures. So, says the Lord, I will allow an enemy of Israel to surround her country and this enemy will bring upon Israel humiliating defeat and plundering and looting of Israel's treasures. Furthermore, all that will be left of Israel will be a few pieces like what a shepherd is able to gather up after a lion has taken one of his sheep for a meal. This is what will be left of all of Israel's luxurious trappings. Now, you heathen people, as you bear witness against Israel's profligacy, also listen to the judgment that the Great God of All The Universe is going to bring upon her. When I judge Israel I am going to especially overthrow her religion and show its impotence. I will completely tear down her altars at the very center of her religious worship in Bethel. I am going to make shambles out of all the ivory-inlaid palatial mansions—summer and winter houses—all these great houses shall come to an end, says the Lord.

### SUMMARY

The heathen are called to testify that the sins of Israel are so great that the judgment God is about to bring will be more than just.

### COMMENT

v. 9-10 PUBLISH YE . . . AT ASHDOD, AND IN . . . EGYPT . . . ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF SAMARIA, AND BEHOLD . . . TUMULTS . . . OPPRESSIONS . . . FOR THEY KNOW NOT TO DO RIGHT . . . K & D point out that these two heathen nations are called to "(1) see the acts of violence, and the abominations in the palaces of Samaria; and (2) . . . bear witness against Israel (ver. 13)." This, of course, implies that the sins of Israel are even worse than those of these heathen. Israel thought of the Philistines and the Egyptians as the worst of sinners. If such heathen as these are called to look upon the ungodliness of Israel, how great must have been her ungodliness! Everything was upside down. They were calling evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20). They had perverted every good thing into something evil. Justice and order were overthrown by open violence (shades of 20th century America)! When they refused to have God in their knowledge (Hosea 4:6; 5:15—6:3; 6:6; 7:1-7; 7:14-16), God gave them up (Rom. 1:18-32) and they became worse than the heathen—insensible

to practically everything that was right! They not only did not know how to do right they did not know they should do right! This is what disregard for the revelation of God leads to—idolatry, ignorance, licentiousness!

v. 11-12 . . . AN ADVERSARY THERE SHALL BE . . . THY PALACES SHALL BE PLUNDERED . . . AS THE SHEPHERD RESCUETH . . . TWO LEGS, OR A PIECE OF AN EAR, SO SHALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BE . . . Just who this enemy (adversary) will be God does not choose to announce through Amos. From prophets very nearly contemporary with Amos (Hosea, Isaiah), we learn that this enemy shall be Assyria. The enemy will surround their beautiful, luxurious country with all its ivory-inlaid palaces and mansions and tear it to pieces. Israel will be so completely destroyed that about all that will be left is a few pieces, like what is left of a sheep when a lion gets through with it! The rich, luxuriant pleasurable things the rich have gotten themselves by oppressing the poor will be taken away from them by the Assyrians. They will have nothing left!

v. 13-15 . . . TESTIFY AGAINST THE HOUSE OF JACOB . . . I WILL ALSO VISIT THE ALTARS OF BETH-EL; AND THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR SHALL BE CUT OFF . . . I WILL SMITE THE WINTER-HOUSE WITH THE SUMMER-HOUSE . . . Now the heathen are called to witness the punishment Jehovah is going to visit upon reprobate Israel. *Jacob* is a term used (cf. Hosea 10:11) along with Israel, Ephraim and Samaria, to signify the northern kingdom. It may be, however, as K & D say, "Jacob is the whole of Israel, of the twelve tribes, as in ver. 1; for Judah was also to learn a lesson from the destruction of Samaria." The smiting off of the horns of the altar signifies the complete destruction of the altar. It may also have this special significance: the four horns on the four corners of the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:2), to which the sacrificial blood was applied (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 4:25-34; 8:15), were symbolic of sure, reliable forgiveness and salvation. To these horns clung the guilty transgressors for safety (I Kings 1:50ff; 2:28-38; Ex. 21:14). So, even the symbols of salvation were to be torn off the altars of Bethel, which had neither God's permission nor promise, no right of existence, no authority to forgive sins, no power to save. Though nominally built in honor of Jehovah, they were tangible evidence of Israel's rebellion, an abomination in the eyes of the Lord. The Lord will strike down Bethel, the very heart of Israel's religion. He will wipe out this vain, idolatrous religion from the land. Together with the altar at Bethel, He will tear down the luxurious homes of the rich and great built by the blood, sweat and tears of the oppressed poor. They had built them-

selves winter-houses and summer-houses. Ahab's palace at Jezreel evidently was his summer home (I Kings 21:1; II Kings 9:30ff). These homes were expensive with walls and furniture inlaid with costly ivory. These wicked and powerful rich (their power was dependent upon their riches) will be stripped of the riches in which they so vainly trusted. They would be powerless, destitute, prisoners! How foolish men are to seek satisfaction, joy, power in the fleeting, temporal, vain *things* of this temporal existence. We are reminded of Solomon (Ecclesiastes) and the Foolish Farmer in Luke twelve!

### QUIZ

1. What does the calling of the heathen nations point out concerning the extent of Israel's sin?
2. What happens to people when they refuse to have God in their knowledge?
3. What did Amos mean to say to Israel by the figure of a shepherd rescuing pieces of his sheep?
4. What did tearing off the horns of the altars of Bethel signify?
5. Why would the people of Israel especially feel the loss of their luxurious homes?

### REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S HOLINESS DEMANDS PUNISHMENT FOR EVIL

TEXT: 4:1-5

- 1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, that oppress the poor, that crush the needy, that say unto their lords, Bring, and let us drink.
- 2 The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your residue with fish-hooks.
- 3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight before her; and ye shall cast yourselves into Harmon, saith Jehovah.
- 4 Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days;
- 5 and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill-offerings and publish them: for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.