

## **Tuesday, June 30, 2020—Amos 7-9**

Farmers know the devastation of swarms of grasshoppers. They come in like an unstoppable army. They march through, leaving nothing to show for all the farmer's effort and nothing to provide for those in need.

Amos saw this devastation coming for Israel, and he begged God to relent. God agreed but showed Amos the deeper issue. Using a plumb line as an example, God demonstrated how His people did not line up with His standards of righteousness. The idolatry of Israel would be their downfall. This news was not well received by the king (7:16), but Amos said he was called by God to make this news absolutely clear.

The famine they experienced because of locusts was nothing compared to the famine they would experience in the future. God would no longer speak to them (8:11). There would be hunger and thirst for His word and find no provision or satisfaction. They had not listened for generations, and now, when they wanted to hear Him, they would not be able to do so.

Like crops ripe for harvest, Israel was ready for punishment. The time had arrived for God to bring justice to them, but He would not totally destroy them (9:8). He had a plan to repair the broken pieces and restore His people to their home (9:11-12). Justice would give way to mercy.

Praise God for His righteousness and His expectations for righteousness in His people. Pray for humility to hear the Spirit's words and to walk in the Spirit's way for the glory of God.

## **Monday, June 29, 2020—Amos 4-6**

Because God is loving, He confronts His disobedient children. He doesn't allow them to continue in their selfish, destructive ways. A parent who will not address misbehavior is not loving but lazy.

Addressing the people of Israel, God called the women "cows of Bashan" (4:1). He may seem harsh or critical, but these women have become so self-consumed that they mistreat people and call on their husbands to bring them more to drink. They have lost all concern for others. They continue to go through the religious motions and brag

about it (4:4-5), but they refuse to repent even when God allows them to struggle.

God laments over the destruction they are destined to experience (5:1). He wants them to avoid exile and to seek Him with all their heart. “Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is” (5:14). They claimed to be righteous but weren’t. They wanted to see God bring judgment, but they would fall under it themselves (5:18-27). God was not interested in their hypocritical worship. He wanted to see them live in justice and righteousness (5:24).

Many were complacent. They lived in comfort. They had the best foods and the finest lotions. God said they would be the first to go into exile (6:7). They had no need for God, so He would let them be taken away.

Consider the way you treat God and others. Pray for humility before Him and service to everyone around you.

### **Sunday, June 28, 2020—2 Kings 14:26-29, Amos 1-3**

Grace is receiving what you do not deserve. You haven’t earned it. Mercy is not receiving what you have earned. You deserve punishment and don’t receive it. God pours out grace and mercy through Jesus.

God has consistently shown grace and mercy to His people. He saw how badly Israel was suffering—as a result of their sinful leader and their sinful actions—and knew there was no one to help them (14:26), so he used a flawed leader to save them (14:27). Grace and mercy abound in God.

Israel, the northern kingdom, had numerous enemies surrounding them. These pagan people brought a wide of variety of sorrow and burden on God’s people. They were immoral. They were vicious. They were filled with guilt, so God promised judgment on all of them (1:1-2:3).

God did not overlook His people’s sins, however. Judah, the southern kingdom, would face His fire because of their guilt (2:4-5). Israel, the audience of Amos’s prophecy, would also face the consequences of their guilt (2:6-16). If God was gracious and merciful, how was Israel’s facing punishment gracious and merciful? Didn’t God

promise deliverance?

God's grace and mercy involved delivering them from all their enemies. This did not mean removing their responsibility toward Him. They would not face torture or immediate relocation. They would have to consider how to repent so their relationship with God would be restored. In grace and mercy He did not completely destroy them, but if they did not repent, another outsider would take them down (3:1-15).

Thank God for grace and mercy. Walk in humble obedience.

### **Saturday, June 27, 2020—2 Kings 14:21-25, Jonah 1-4**

For decades, the kingly carousel continued in Israel and Judah. None of them were perfect, but in general the kings of Israel were much more overt in their sinful pursuits and idolatrous practices. Jeroboam II did some good things in obedience to God's commands that benefitted the country (14:25), yet he did not turn away from idolatry. He may have benefitted the economy and increased safety, but he did not enrich the soul.

Jonah, God's prophet to Jeroboam II, was himself a man of mixed results. God called him to go preach in Nineveh (1:2), the capital city of Israel's despised enemies, the center of influence for their part of the world. Jonah responded as any man who loved his country and his life. "No!" He was focused on his own ideals and expectations of God and how God should be working in his life rather than being completely surrendered to the true King. Jonah ran to the sea, but God saw him the whole time.

God sent a storm, and the sailors came to Jonah for answers. Jonah admitted his guilt and offered himself as a "sacrifice," being thrown into the sea. God calmed the waters. The pagan sailors worshiped God, and Jonah rested in a great fish for three days and nights. Jonah repented, obeyed God's second command, and preached repentance to his enemies (3:4).

Jonah was troubled deeply (4:1-9) by the grace God showed to "those people." He failed to see the depth of God's grace toward him himself. Pray for obedience to share good news and joy when others repent.

## **Friday, June 26, 2020—Joel 1-3**

The first six months of 2020 gave the world experiences like never before yet eerily similar to biblical descriptions. Natural disasters, global disease, and swarms of insects were only a few of the events that either paralleled the plagues and judgments of the Old Testament or foreshadowed the apocalyptic pictures in Revelation.

As the northern kingdom of Israel unraveled due to their sinful idolatry, God sent the prophet Joel to call them to repentance. God also sent swarms of grasshoppers (locusts) to devastate their crops. “Has anything ever happened like this?” Joel asked (1:2). The people needed to recognize the hand of God and His call to return. They needed to teach this to their children and make sure the mistake was never repeated.

The ruined fields and stripped vines were a symbol of their souls. God wanted weeping and mourning, not because He is hateful and sadistic, but because He is loving. His people could not continue in this way. They were killing themselves, and He wanted them to flourish. He would repay for the years the locusts had eaten (2:25) but only if they repented. If not, the Day of the Lord would come, and the judgment would be devastating.

God foresaw a day when He would not only restore the land for His repentant people but would pour out His Spirit on them (2:28). In great power, He would save those who called on Him (2:32). One day, He will judge the nations and be a refuge for His people (3:16).

Thank God for the blessing and protection of faith and repentance.

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#### **Thursday, June 25, 2020—2 Kings 11:1-14:20**

Athaliah was a murderous, selfish woman. She wielded power. She got her way. She never went to church. When she began her killing spree, one of the king's sister hid the king's son, Joash, at the Temple. For six years, he remained hidden from her at the house of Yahweh.

When Joash was seven, Jehoida the priest organized a rebellion that brought an end to Athaliah's tyranny and moved the people to destroy the pagan temple in the land. The people rejoiced because they were free (11:20). Generations of disobedience now had potential for change.

Joash did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh. There were lingering compromises (12:3), but he addressed the dilapidated condition of the Temple and charged the priests with its repair. Sadly, to prevent an attack from Aram, he gave away all the precious items in the Temple dedicated to the Lord (12:17-18).

While Joash was leading a bit of a revival in the south, the kings of the north continued to lead into further sinfulness. God loved them, listened to them, and provided for them because of His

covenant promises (13:23), but their overall sinfulness was debilitating. Joash's son became king and continued his father's move toward faithfulness, but the growing spiritual weakness in the north and the south led to a civil war.

Pride became the downfall between two kings who should have made the glory of God their primary concern. Pray for increasing humility and decreasing compromise in your pursuit of the Lord.

### **Wednesday, June 24, 2020—2 Kings 7-10**

In times of distress, emotions run hot and prevent people from thinking clearly. Often, those who are hurting want to lash out and place blame on someone—even if that someone is not responsible. During a time of severe famine and occupation, the king of Israel called for the head of Elisha, accusing him of causing all of Israel's grief.

Elisha stood up to the king and told him God would do something miraculous. Within a day, there would be more than ample supplies provided for the city. The king asked why he should wait any longer, and Elisha told him why—deliverance was only a moment away. The king's officer didn't believe it (7:2) and, as a result, didn't enjoy it (7:17-20).

While Elisha ministered in the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom continued its own destructive path of disobedience. Jehoram and his son Ahaziah led for 30 years collectively and did evil in the eyes of Yahweh (8:18, 27). Elisha sent a disciple to anoint Jehu the new king of Israel, and Jehu delivered the news himself to the kings of Israel and Judah.

Jehu made clear there would be no peace in the land as long as idolatry and witchcraft were tolerated and practiced (9:22). Peace is not the absence of conflict but the abiding presence and supremacy of God. The violent cleansing from sin required the blood of many guilty parties.

Pray for faith and facts to override feelings. Seek His presence and supremacy in your daily life to know peace in spite of circumstances.