

—{1}. **Amos 9:1-10** **Goats & Sheep**

A. we learn early in life ways to avoid being reprimanded

1. Gary Lautens, shares his experiences in the article, 'What are you doing? ... Nothing!' of the answers to this question and what parents know to be a translation of that answer —{2}.

a. *Question: Why is Susie crying?*

(A) *Answer: I don't know.*

(B) *Translation: Susie is crying because I judo-chopped her, ate her candy bar and told her there's a big ghost hiding behind the curtains waiting to swallow her up.*

b. *Question: Who left these wet boots on the hardwood floor I just waxed?*

(A) *Answer: Susie did.*

(B) *Translation: Susie did. I left my wet boots on the new broadloom in the front room. The only thing I left on the hardwood floor was my coat, hat and the one mitt I've got left.*

c. *Question: What are you doing in the bathroom?*

(A) *Answer: I'm washing.*

(B) *Translation: I'm washing – I'm washing the walls, the floor, the medicine cabinet, the door. And I'm using the good towels as a washcloth and the expensive, scented soap.*

d. *Question: Are you getting into trouble?*

(A) *Answer: No.*

(B) *Translation: No. I already am in trouble.*

2. judgement, recrimination, accusations: all these are things that we do not like to have to face and to deal with

a. well, Amos has been throughout this book, in his mission to the Northern Kingdom, to Israel, also known as Samaria

b. has been making it abundantly clear that Judgement is coming, and they are going to have to face it

c. but in this passage, today, the fifth and final vision, the language goes beyond just the judgement that is headed Israel's way, or even that is headed to Judah as well

- d. for other nations also are included in God's plans, and some of these – as in the first few chapters of the book – are specifically named
 - e. which is why we also read today from Matthew 25, about God's great judgement that is coming upon all mankind
3. when the Son of Man, come in glory, will sit as King on His throne, and as Judge will divide all mankind into two groups
- a. judgement will be pronounced upon them
 - (A) the Goats, who will be put to His left hand
 - (B) the Sheep, who will be placed on His right hand
 - (C) those people on the left, the Goats, will be sent away into everlasting punishment
 - (D) and those on the right, the Sheep, unto eternal life
 - b. Now, this a terrible and terrifying picture
 - (A) one upon which we do not like to look
 - (B) because judgement is an unpleasant subject
 - (C) yet one that is important
 - (D) because first of all it is an incentive to call upon God that in His mercy and grace through Jesus' finished work on the cross He might grant to us salvation
 - (E) and because, secondly, we need to realize the terrible lost state of friends and neighbours that gives us both as individuals and as a church the incentive to reach out with the message of salvation
4. and as we look at these verses this morning,
- a. let us keep in mind a truth about God
 - b. which is found from one end of the Bible to the other
 - c. in Genesis 18:25 where Abraham asks '[Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?](#)' to
 - d. Revelation 16:7, with the heavenly voice saying, '[Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgements.](#)'
 - e. that God's judgement, unlike man's, will be perfect, and from it there will be no appeal
 - f. here are some truths about this coming judgement

B. Judgement is Sure Because God is Holy

1. Amos 9: 1^a 'I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said, "Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake, And break them on the heads of them all! Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword; ..." (NAS)
2. There are some things about this verse of which we are unsure
 - a. we don't know if God is addressing Amos or one of His ministering angels who do his bidding, although the latter seems to be more in keeping with God's command
 - b. we don't know if this is the Jerusalem altar, or the false altar in Bethel, but given the message of Amos as a whole, the Bethel altar seems likelier
3. but, this we do know
 - a. if the capitals, were at the top of the columns and held up the roof, are destroyed then the beams and the roof will fall and the whole threshold and structure will collapse
 - b. this will bring destruction on the temple and on those who are within the temple, those trusting either
 - (A) in going through the form of worship at Jerusalem but without their heart in it. God's standard of worship is found in Deuteronomy 6:5, 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.' (NAS) and half-hearted worship is not acceptable. He is Lord of all, or not Lord at all.
 - (B) or, in a false religion, a worship of idols, at Bethel, which is an affront, an insult to God. Exodus 20: 4-5a: 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God ...' (NAS)
 - (C) God is inutterably holy, altogether above and beyond His creation in splendour, in majesty, in purity: He is Holiness and merits full heart worship by His creation.
4. so, because God is holy, the clinging to some false or faulty religion will not avoid the coming judgement

C. Judgement is Sure Because God is Omnipresent

1. Amos 9: 1^b-4^a '...They will not have a fugitive who will flee, Or a refugee who will escape. Though they dig

into Sheol, From there shall My hand take them; And though they ascend to heaven, From there will I bring them down. And though they hide on the summit of Carmel, I will search them out and take them from there; And though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, From there I will command the sword that it slay them ...' (NAS)

2. Let us list the obvious from these verses:

a. you cannot flee from God's judgement

b. if you try to flee, you cannot escape

c. there is no place to hide, no matter how extreme

(A) whether this hyperbole to make the point, or a literal fact: the message is the same

(1) flee into the depths of the earth, Sheol

(2) flee into the heights of the sky, the heavens

(3) and God will find him

(B) Carmel is one of the highest mountains in Palestine: in that day it was covered with wooded slopes and had caves and dens in its base; in times of trouble as when Midian oppressed Israel in Gideon's time (Judges 6:2) or the Philistines in Saul's day (1 Samuel 13:6) people would flee to these places to hide from the enemy – but these will be useless when God's judgement comes

(C) or the bottom of the sea – even death does not deliver from God's coming judgement: Hebrews 9:27, '[And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment](#)' (NAS)

(D) or even if voluntarily, or otherwise, they are taken by their enemies into captivity, far away from Palestine, still God will command and the sword of judgement will find them ...

3. Because God is omnipresent, His Presence is everywhere

a. the writer of Psalm 139 recognized this and takes great comfort from the fact that the LORD, his LORD is everywhere and anywhere he may be: '[Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Thy hand will lead me, And Thy right hand will lay hold of me.](#)' (7-10, NAS)

b. and Paul says in a similar vein in Romans 8:38-39, '[For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor](#)

angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (NAS)

c. but what is a comfort to the child of God is bad news in the face of judgement; there is no place whither the soul that is at war with God can escape from God's judgement

D. God's Judgement is Sure Because He is Omnipotent

1. Amos 9:4b-6: '... And I will set My eyes against them for evil {or harm} and not for good." And the Lord GOD of hosts, The One who touches the land so that it melts, And all those who dwell in it mourn, And all of it rises up like the Nile And subsides like the Nile of Egypt; The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens, And has founded His vaulted dome over the earth, He who calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the face of the earth, The LORD is His name.' (NAS)

2. Look at the indications of God's power that are given

a. God has only to touch with his hand a land, a nation, a country, and, like wax, it melts, and flows away; all the flows of migration of peoples from the dawn of time have been at God's command, accomplishing His will

b. creation is His handiwork

(A) in the fashion in which He originally established it

(1) with His upper chambers in the heavens

(2) with His vaulted dome over the earth

(B) and in the way in which He maintains it, including the cycle of weather whereby He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out a rain upon the earth

c. and, repeating what was in the previous chapter, this God who causes the annual flooding of the Nile so that it covers the land of Egypt has the power to command judgement to come and cover the land of Israel

d. so, God, the Almighty, with All Power, is able to bring to pass the judgement He has determined: 'and I will set My eyes against them for evil {or harm} and not for good.'

3. let us pass on from this to

E. God's Judgement is Sure Because He is Just

1. Amos 9: 7–10: 'Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?' declares the LORD. 'Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir? Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,' declares the LORD. 'For behold, I am commanding, And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations As *grain* is shaken in a sieve, But not a kernel will fall to the ground. All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, Those who say, "The calamity will not overtake or confront us."' (NAS)

2. There are a fair number of truths in these verses but let us just look at one or two
 - a. first, as we mentioned earlier in this message: God is fair in His judgements. We find here that although God has had a special relationship with Israel, and had delivered it from bondage in the land of Egypt, there is another sense in which God considers all mankind to belong to Himself,
 - (A) So, we find Peter exclaiming as the Gentile Cornelius came to salvation, 'I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him.' (Acts 10: 34b-35 NAS)
 - (B) and Jehoshaphat instructing the judges, said 'Now then let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness, or partiality, or the taking of a bribe.' (2 Chronicles 19: 7 NAS)
 - b. second, God's judgement is careful, His scrutiny meticulous so that not one grain of good wheat is going to fall to the ground with the chaff.
 - (A) in one of the VBS presentations this week, the children were reminded 'But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."' (1 Samuel 16: 7 NAS)
 - (B) God makes no mistakes in His judgement; God can distinguish the sheep from the goats

F. Conclusion

1. people have many vain hopes of escaping God's judgement
 - a. some try to hide behind the sinfulness of others – 'I am better person than that so-called born again

Christian; he's just a hypocrite'

- b. others seek to minimize their sin – 'it isn't all that bad, its only a harmless habit, it doesn't hurt anyone.'
- c. others rationalize their sin away – 'it's only natural; everybody does it, I'm not to blame if I can't help it'
- d. others are just in denial – 'I don't believe in judgement; I don't believe that God, if there is a God, cares about what one person out of 6 billion is doing.'
- e. and some hide, hopelessly, behind their good works,
- f. or, as in the examples given by Gary Lautens, like little children they blame or accuse someone else.
- g. But this is because in seeking to avoid judgement, people have false ideas
 - (A) they have false ideas about God; they ignore that
 - (1) He is holy
 - (2) He is present everywhere
 - (3) He is all powerful
 - (B) and they have false ideas about sin; that because they have never committed a major crime they are not sinners whereas in reality we are born with a sinful nature, and as soon as we have choice, we choose to go our own way rather than God's; and so we fall short of God's standard of righteousness, Jesus Christ

2. now, that would be a dismal place to leave us all this morning

- a. but throughout this passage did you notice the hope?
- b. even though there is not one who can escape from this judgement of God, yet we find mention of the good grain being spared, and that God would not destroy all of Jacob
- c. and here we have the wonderful promise of God's remnant
- d. as even though Romans 9: 6 tells us 'But *it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel*' (NAS)
- e. still, according to Romans 11:5, '*In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.*' (11:5 NAS)
- f. and in the face of the terrifying judgement that faces all mankind, this is the message of gracious salvation that we take as individuals and as a church body to our friends, to our neighbours and to this town, with the warning, '*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*' Heb 2:3

g. and the promise, 'The Lord ... is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.' (2 Peter 3:9 NAS)

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NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
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NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. From 'Take my Family ... Please!', page 83ff, by Gary Lautens, © 1980 the Madison Press Limited; with some alterations.