

## Amos “And The Lord Relented” Amos 7

What a sublime rendering of that prophecy, which is truly what we have been reading in Amos, that in itself. Micah 6, if you remember me mentioning that earlier, it is a covenant lawsuit, and it is showing us as calling Israel to how they ought to live. As we just heard what it said, it was absolutely beautiful.

Please join me now in prayer as we come before the Lord and hear His word.

Heavenly father, we do come before you that you would bless us as you reveal yourself to us. Lord, there are things here in this scripture that boggle our minds, and we wouldn't expect anything less. because you God are a God who truly, truly is transcendent and worthy to be praised. You are not just a projection of man's mind. You are not something that man could conceive because you exist beyond man. We can gesture to your greatness, to your goodness, but we will never fully understand it Lord. Because we are but your creature does help us Lord. Now as we hear your word that we would read it, that we would understand what you have to say to us this evening, and that you would draw us to you through it in Christ's name.

Amen.

Well, now we're continuing on in our series in Amos. We've gone through, if you remember, chapters one and two that were oracles against nations. And then we had chapters three through six, which was a covenant lawsuit. Okay. Like the one that we hear in Micah six. And now you're going to notice there's a change. The case has been brought against Israel, against the northern Kingdom. Zion has been implicated in that case, as we saw last week. Remember, the mountains of Zion are called to respond as well to the accusations. So the judgments against them. And now we turn to the question of the verdict. How should the Lord respond? But there's a clear change, because we're now no longer in these oracles, these sermons of judgment and discipline against Israel, but rather now we're moving into an area of a collection of visions.

These are visions that Amos the prophet is seeing and interestingly, it's kind of remarkable, actually. He's not just seeing them, he's participating in them. Okay. So let's draw attention then, to Amos chapter seven. This is what the Lord God showed me. Notice this is first person. This is an autobiographical account by Amos the prophet. Look what he showed me.

***Behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout. And behold, it was the latter growth. After the king's wings. When they had finished eating the***

*grass of the land, I said, oh, Lord, please forgive. How can Jacob stand? He is so small. The Lord relented concerning this. It shall not be said the Lord. This is what the Lord God showed me. Behold, the Lord God was calling up a judge for a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. Then I said, oh Lord, please cease. How can Jacob stand? He is so small. The Lord relented concerning this. This also shall not be said. The Lord God. This is what he showed me. Behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord said to me, Amos, what do you see? And I said, a plumb line. Then the Lord said, behold, I am setting up a plumb, plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I will never again pass by them the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying, Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from this land. Excuse me, away from his land. And Amaziah said to Amos, Hosea, go fly away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary. It is the temple of the kingdom. The name is said to Amaziah. Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, nor a prophet, son, but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore, figs. But the Lord took me from following the flock. And the Lord said to me, go, prophesy to my people Israel. Now therefore hear the word of the Lord. You say, do you not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac? Therefore thus says the Lord, your wife shall be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be devoured up with a measuring line. You yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.*

This is the word of the Lord.

Wonderful, great. Well, let's pray about it. All right. You've probably said that before, haven't you? Let's pray about it. I probably even said that today at some point. I know if you're in worship on Sunday morning, before we gathered to read the word of the Lord, just like we just did now, we prayed about it. We said, Lord, help us to change as a result of hearing your word. Help us to hear your word. Help us to understand it. We do this all the time. If something in our lives is happening, maybe a concern that we have, or a reality about a difficult thing that's coming up and we say we should pray about it. But do you ever think, what do we really saying when we say that?

How are we going to the God of the universe, right. The Lord who has created the whole cosmos, who owns it, who's ordained whatsoever comes to pass, as we say in our confession, what does it mean for us to go to the Lord and pray, what are we doing? Are we asking him to

change his eternal decree? Or are we asking, do we think that we know something that he doesn't know, and that we can somehow convince him and manipulate him? That's how it was with the gods of Israel. That's how it was with Bale. Bale didn't know everything. So you'd go to him and you try to manipulate him. You try to bribe him. You try to even trick him or fool him. And if you could, you might be able to get things to turn out the way you want them, not the way that he intended. And yet that's not what's going on here in the Bible. Somehow we have to understand that God is both infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. And yet also he invites us to pray to him, and he hears our prayers, and he responds. So what I'd like to do tonight is look at this instance of Amos. He's watching a vision. It's probably in the heavenly throne room.

It doesn't say that he's there, but we know from other prophets it's a matter of fact. Jeremiah himself says, you're not a real prophet if you haven't been to the heavenly throne room. And if you've been to the heavenly throne room, you've seen what happens there. It's that God sits there with his heavenly angels, and they watch the events going on in the world and down below the earth, as they are now up in the heavens, and they discuss what ought to be done as a result of the things that they see beneath them.

And so here we have Amos, and he's seeing this vision. And in the vision the Lord is there. He's putting together a future, a plan for Israel. First, it's going to be a locust swarm. Then secondly, it's going to be a fire that engulfs all of Israel. And then thirdly, there's a plumb line is probably a plumb line that's being used to measure the destruction of the city.

How much will he need to tear down in order to complete the whole city? So these are all kind of three visions of judgment. But notice that in the first two visions, Amos, who's not just a passive participant watching these, these visions take place, says, oh Lord, please, please, no, please stop. Don't do that. How can Israel stand?

How can Jacob stand? He is so small. Notice what the Lord is doing. Excuse me. Knows what Amos is doing. He's appealing to the Lord. He's appealing to the Lord's care and his concern and his love for his people. But what's perhaps more remarkable than the prophet thinking that he can speak before the God of all the universe in such a way was perhaps more remarkable, is that the Lord hears him and says, it will not be.

He relents. So what are we supposed to make of that? That's what I want to talk about tonight, because this isn't just about Amos seven. This is about the whole of the Bible, really. It's about the whole of the Christian life. Why do we think that we can go to God, pray to him, respond to what he has told us in his word, and expect that this might actually change what's going to happen in history.

Why would we even think that? Even if we're just praying, Lord, give me a good night's sleep tonight. Why, why, what might we ask for that? So we're going to look a little bit into theology

tonight. This is going to be kind of a deep theological sermon. This is going to be, seminary on Sunday. I should call some of the sermon seminary on Sunday.

We're going to do some theology. Okay. Bear with me. Some of you may say these are a lot of big words and a lot of deep things, and just bear with me because I want to show you how these are all eminently practical for us and ultimately will aid you as you worship the Lord. So I want to begin with the character of God, and I want to begin by reminding us what we actually believe about who God is in his deity, in his, in his Godhead, who the Lord is, how he's presented it to us in Scripture.

And so I want to highlight three things about God in his transcendent nature. Okay. We're going to talk about the parts of God that we can gesture at, that we can put words on, but we don't fully understand because they are transcendent. They're above and beyond and over and against us. We are not transcendent. We are immanent. We are here in this place in time.

But God is above and beyond and overall. And by the way, the things that I'm going to say here are not things that are just reformed. These are just reformed Presbyterian ideas. This is all this is known as classical Christian theism. Okay. This goes all the way back to the beginning. This is what the church has been declaring about God from the very beginning of its foundation.

So let's start with this. I want to talk about how prophecy works in light of what we know about God's transcendent character. And so I want to draw attention to four things four attributes of God. We could call these incommunicable attributes, as theologians do, because they mean they're not attributes that we get to have. Okay? God has some attributes that we get to share in, like holiness, we can be holy. God is holy, God is good. We can be good. Those are communicable attributes. But there are some attributes that are incommunicable okay. And so that's the first four that I want to focus on today. And I'm going to give you your first word. And this is the hardest word okay. But if you know this word you have not only sounds smart at parties, okay. If you're at the kind of parties where people talk about theology, but you also will have a just I'm going to give you a word that's going to help you understand what we believe to be true about God. And that first word is the word ascetic. You see that at the top? I know these slides are packed full of information. And Landon did a great job getting these into the slides so that they could fit all in there. Feel free to take a picture if you don't get it. If you don't get all the biblical text and you want to look them up later, that's fine. You can email Amy Lattner if you like, and I will give all of these notes to her, and she'll just beam them right back to you. If you want to have a copy of these. But we're going to start with this idea. Idea of a safety divine, a safety elsewhere. We talk about this doctrine as being the doctrine of divine simplicity. And what does that mean? It means that God is whole. He's singular. Right? He's not made up of complicated parts. He's not he's not a machine that has a lot of different parts that have to all work in order for him to operate.

Okay. He is singular. He is whole. He is. And this is important. He is non contingent. He's not relying on anything in order to exist. Right. For him to rely on a thing would mean that he was complex. But he's not complex. He's simple. He exists by himself unto himself. Now again, this is a word that I can gesture at.

I can say this word and give you that definition that I just gave you. And yet we all have to acknowledge that we don't really fully understand this. Why? Because we're terribly, terribly contingent. We're terribly reliant on other things. We are very, very dependent. God is not dependent. As a matter of fact, when I think about God being independent or having a it right, I basically think of something that has a lot of dependencies, and then I try to remove all the dependencies, right?

And then whatever's left, that's God. But even in that image, that kind of rough illustration is just a gesturing at a truth about God. Okay? God has a society, which means he is not dependent on anything. I'm dependent on air pressure from me holding my body together. I'm dependent on gravity. I'm dependent on biological processes working. I'm dependent on reason.

I'm dependent on my own experiences. I don't know what I don't know. You say, well, what don't you know? There's a lot I don't know. I just don't even know that I don't know it because I'm only able to engage with what I know. God is not that way, okay? God knows all because he is not dependent on anything.

There's no lack of knowledge. There's no lack of awareness. There's no thing that God relies on to make himself work. Does this make sense? I'm trying to say it in ten different ways so we can get our heads around it, and we never fully will. So God has a saying he's not contingent, he's not reliant on anything else, and that means anything, including time.

Okay, I'm contingent on time. Even as I speak right now, I'm speaking in time. One word is coming after another. It's coming out of my mouth. My thought, thought it. My lungs exhaled the air. My voice said the thing. I am contingent on time. I can't imagine what it would be like to not be in time. But God is not bound by time.

So it's a remarkable thing to think about. C.S. Lewis used to illustrate it this way. He take a piece of paper and he draw a dot, and he'd say, this is the beginning of time, and they draw a line, and then he'd have a dot, and he says, this is the end of time. So here we have all of time.

And then he would say, God is the paper, right? God's not bound by time. He exists eternally in every direction. Even when I talk about having eternal life as a Christian, I don't really mean it in the way that God is eternal. My eternal life means that I will exist forever and ever in communion with him. That's glorious.

That's wonderful. I can't even imagine that. But God is not bound by time, okay? He is eternal. He's also not bound by space. He's immense. Okay, this is the doctrine of the immensity of God or the omnipresence. There's no time when God is not so. He doesn't learn, right, doesn't grow. He doesn't develop in that way because there's no time when he is not existing.

There's also no space where he's not existing. Think about what David says. He says, where shall I go? Can I go to the farthest reaches of the land? No, you'll still be there. We can say it this way. It could I go? I wonder if I went all the way out to Neptune. And I got underneath those ice floes out in Neptune.

Would you not be there? No. God would be there. Just as he is here in Birmingham, because he's not bound by time. It's not that he's big. It's not. He's not bound by time. Excuse me? Not bound by space. So you can't get far away from him. As we see, those galaxies are on the web. Telescope. I forgot the name of it the other day.

The Webb telescope is. It's. It was. It looks way out to the distant parts of our universe. And we see those galaxies out there. God's out there to. He's orchestrating the events of those cosmos, of those of those planets, of those stars. He's at the sixth layer of gases in Jupiter, and he's present and he's active there right now, even as he's active here with us today, because he's not bound by space and he's not bound by time.

And if those two things are true, then that means he does not change. You think about what change is. Change is having been at one time, and then you go through a process of something happening and now you're different, right? But if you're not bound by time, then you don't change that. We call that divine immutability. Or maybe you're in a place and you're one thing in one place, but then you go to another place and you're a different thing, because now you're in a different place.

But you can't do that if you're not bound by space. So God is not bound by time. He's not bound by space, which means that he does not change. You remember earlier we talked about how God will never stop loving you because he never started right? His love is eternal. It just is. It doesn't change. It doesn't develop over time.

Something different in one place and different in another because God has a say in it. And that applies to all of existence. Okay. As a result, this is a bit of a logical jump. But I told you, we're doing seminary on Sunday as a result. Think about this. If you if you get if you really dwell on this and go down deep with it, you realize this.

That means that everything else that exists is not God because it is contingent, even if it's only contingent on one thing. And that's God, right? So God exists is not contingent on anything. Therefore, everything that does exist is contingent on him, including all of the events of world

history. They all come out of him. He doesn't come out of anything, but all things come out of him.

This is what the scholastics meant in Christian history when they talked about God being the first cause or the primary mover. Right? He's the thing that moves the first thing, and then after that, all the other things move, but nothing moves him. He's unmoved, and yet he moves. He moves other things. That's where we get in the Westminster Confession teachings like this. This is the Westminster Confession, chapter three, verse one. God from all eternity did by his most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeable, ordain whatsoever comes to pass. In other words, if God is not dependent on anything, and all other things are dependent on God, then everything that is ordained out of his divine perfect will.

Now I want to point out, notice how they say this his eternal will, his holy counsel out of all eternity. This is talking about the will of God that exists within him, in his self, which is non contingent. Okay, this means the divine will that all things spring out of. You know, I want to be clear about something and reform folks need to remember this because we talk about God's sovereignty so much.

We talk about predestination. We talk about how God ordains whatsoever comes to pass, we need to remember this. We don't have access to his eternal will. His eternal decree. This is something that exists only within God. And we don't have access, not because he's unveiling it from us, he's not hiding it from us or something like that. We don't have access, because to have access would mean that you were now God.

And we're not. We're creatures. So we sit here, we respond, we react, we live out his eternal decree, and yet we can't access it. And it's not because he's mean. It's not because he's hiding it from us or something like that. You won't understand this even when you're in heaven. It's not a matter of sin. This isn't a problem of sin, though.

Sin does shade our knowledge, no doubt. Okay, there are effects of sin on the way that we think. And yet when we are redeemed, when we are in our new bodies, our imperishable bodies, and we're united with Christ again, we will still not know the full extent of the eternal decree because it is eternal. It is a thing of God. It's not a thing that we have access to. So you see, God is non contingent and everything kind of springs out of that because everything that comes out of him is contingent on him. And therefore we can say this because God has existed at all times and in all places, and everything springs out of him that is ordained.

Whatsoever comes to pass, we can recognize that God for knows the future. Why? Because he's not bound by time. It's not because he knows about something that doesn't exist, okay? It's that he is not bound by time. He exists at all times in himself. He for knows, he controls, and he fixes the course of history. Okay, all things spring out of this eternal decree.

And think about it. The alternative is worse because if you say, well, all things spring out of the eternal decree, except for bad things. Bad things don't come from God. If you believe that that's true, then now you have to say God is therefore contingent because there are things that are not out of his eternal decree. Right? There's some other, you know, space, there's some other domain that God is not is actually contingent upon. It exists apart from him, and he has no power over it. That makes God contingent. That's a dangerous thing. That's what you see in religions that believe that there's kind of a good and an evil that are at war with each other, sort of like a yin and the yang of Zen Buddhism, or the light side and the dark side of the force and Star Wars. And they're at odds with each other, but they're contingent upon each other. That's not the case in the scriptures. All things spring out of the eternal decree of God.

Now, that doesn't mean that he's the author of sin, okay? But it does mean that he has created a world in which sin exists. Why? Unto his glory somehow I don't get to see it. I can look at instances of it. The Bible will sometimes tell me about them. We'll see about, you know, Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery. And then as a result, they are saved from the famine decades later. And Joseph says to them, what you meant for evil, right? The Lord meant for good. He used for good. He took your evil, and he brought glory out of it.

As a matter of fact, this lies at the very heart of our gospel itself. The greatest injustice against humanity that's ever been done was that the Son of Man, the creator of the universe, took on flesh in order to save his people, and we killed him for it. It's the greatest evil ever done. You would never want to be one of those Roman soldiers who's nailing the nails into the flesh of Jesus.

And yet, out of that greatest evil, the Lord brings the greatest act of redemption ever known in history. It's a remarkable. He uses evil unto his glory. And yet we have to acknowledge. I don't get to see. I can see this in little packaged instances like that, but I don't get to see how that's worked out over the course of history.

So God for knows he controls and he fixes the course of history, and true prophets declare the Word of God. Okay, so I'm just bear with me now. I want to connect this to prophecy. If this is true about God, then when he sends a prophet to speak his word, guess what? We can trust those prophets because they're speaking the word of a God who's not, who's not ignorant.

He's not bound by time. He doesn't really know what's going to happen next, is he's not bound by space, and he just hasn't been to that other side of the city. So he doesn't know what they're doing over there. He's not bound in that way. So when he says things about the world, they are true. They are authoritative.

We ought to follow them and they are compelling. They should move us to change notice what Moses says about the Lord in numbers, chapter 23, verse 19. He's trying to say this to the

Israelites is when you don't understand, God is not like you. He's not a big man. He's not an old man in the sky who's judging us.

Okay? God is not a man that he should lie. God doesn't lie. Nor is he a son of man that he should change his mind. Has he said it? And he will not do it? Has he spoken and he will not fulfill it? Now I want to point this out for a particular reason. There's some Hebrew in here.

Okay. You see it there in that weird stuff in the middle? It's in parentheses. Okay. Just bear with me because I want you to hear this because it's going to have some import for what we're talking about this evening. Notice that Hebrew is a language that is built around these roots. You have these root letters, okay. In this case. And in an H with a dot on it. Okay. And then an M that's a, that's noon hat and an MIM. Okay. If you want to say something like how do you change a tire? Okay. In classical Hebrew you'd say something like, you knock on the tire, okay? You change the tire. However, in Hebrew, there's also a way to say, how do you change yourself? Okay, this is what we call a reflexive, okay? Anyone's ever learned French or Spanish or other languages. You know about reflexive verbs? Okay. In English, we just add yourself to the other side of it to make it reflexive. Okay, but you may know in French you don't just wash in French, you wash yourself. Right. It's a reflexive form of the verb. You don't just sleep, you sleep yourself. You don't just lie down. You lie yourself down. Okay? You. These are a special kind of verbs. They're talking about a reflexive activity where you're doing the thing to yourself. Okay? In Hebrew, if you want to say that, you put a little tip. Excuse me, a pupil. Put a tub rather into the middle of the verb. It's a way of making it reflexive. Notice this is a reflexive form of the verb. Not come. Can I see that little t in there that's telling you this is reflexive. He's saying he's not like us. God's not like us in that he changes himself. We change ourselves, right? I might think a thing. And then something else happens and I change myself. My whole disposition changes towards the thing. I can be feeling happiness and joy. And then someone says something to me in the hall, and I get angry and upset, and now I'm down and I'm distraught. Right? I've changed myself. But God is not a man that he lies. He's not the Son of Man, that he changes himself. If he says a thing, he will do it because he is a God of immutability. He is a God of a city. He's not contingent on what happens around us. We have to recognize this as we read about the God of the Bible. This is at the end of the day, our high view of God in Christian theology. Now with that said, I want to move on to how do then we as humans, who are very contingent, who are living in time or living in space, we're living with these ideas and then we have thoughts.

And I can only formulate thoughts, in time. Okay. How do I deal, then, with the God who is outside of time, who's outside of space, who is already ordained whatsoever comes to pass, even until the ends of the earth, from the beginning till the end, how do we deal with him? And

so that then brings us to the idea of prophecy and what we can call divine imminence or divine presence.

Now, to a certain extent here, this is going to be a mystery because again, we're not gods, so we can't get our heads around all of these things. But we do know this. God has made the world in such a way that he can come and condescend to it and interact with us. God can come and he can.

He can see us. He can talk to us. He can respond to us. God is, in fact, in the Bible is involved. He's vocal, he speaks, he's present, and he's responsive. I want to draw our attention again to the Westminster Confession. This is how they say it. Okay? They say it this way. Although in relationship to the foreknowledge and the decree of God, that's the eternality stuff that we were just talking about.

Although in relationship to the foreknowledge and the decree of God, the first cause. You hear that cause language, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly so all things come out of the eternal decree. And they come up, they come to pass. Immutably there's nothing that can stop them, because God's not contingent on anything. They all come about immutably and infallibly yet.

Okay, yet. And here's the mystery by the same providence, by the same way that he's working out his eternal decree in our lives, he orders, I'm going to update this language a little bit. He orders them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily freely or contingently. Okay, what he's saying here is this God is the first cause.

Everything that comes out of him comes from this first cause, and yet he works in us through this kind of network, this myriad network of secondary causes. Now, what are secondary causes? Secondary causes are all the things we're doing here. You know, I, I hit this pulpit and you hear a noise that's a secondary cause. I want to be clear about something.

It's not painting a picture that's like this. God is first cause, and then you have secondary causes, and then there's like our awareness or something like that. Secondary causes just mean everything. That's not the first cause. In other words, as God is being himself out of his eternal decree, this whole network of existence is now taking place. Okay?

And he is bringing about his eternal decree through this vast, glorious, cosmic level network of secondary causes. Now, this is a thick understanding of divine sovereignty. Okay? We don't want to have a thin understanding of God's divine sovereignty. This is not God just right behind the veil, kind of manipulating us and lifting my arm up and putting my arm down, or kind of using you like a puppet.

This is a vast array of things happening in the world that bring about existence. It's not just me speaking to you now. This is this is God's Word. As I'm proclaiming God's Word in Amos seven. This is a speaking of God's Word. And yet God is not just active in the speaking of the word right now. He's active in how the air molecules are working.

He's active in the machinery of this building, holding it together. He's active in the laws of nature that make it so that these pillars hold up the ceiling. He's active in the cosmos right now. Whatever's happening in Mars right now, he's active in that way, too. He's bringing it all together to create this rich universe that we all live in.

And that's why when reformed people are talking to non-reformed people, sometimes the people will say, so what are we just puppets on strings? You go, no, you're not. You have a vast consciousness, you have imagination, you have dreams, you have desires. We even believe in free will, in that you can act out freely that which is within you.

Okay, that's all the free will is, because you're a part of this vast universe, this reality that God has created as the primary cause. This is a thick view of sovereignty. I'll give you just one example, just to kind of get us just a pinprick of an understanding of what I'm talking about here. Back in May 6th, 2010, there's a thing that was called the flash crash of the market in 2010.

Okay. Some of you may remember that or have heard about it. And what happened was this, you may know, the market up in New York City is, is kind of operated just by servers these days. It's just constant trades happening according to algorithms. As a matter of fact, the trades are happening so quickly. We're talking about tens of thousands of hundreds of thousands of trades happening within a second.

It's so fast that the distance between the server and the market server has to be measured so that everyone has the same length of a wire, because if you have just an inch shorter, you can make trades faster. That's how fast it's happening. So is this constant, constant amount of data being created in this human-made system? That is the market in something happened on May 6th, something happened and one decision kicked off, another decision which kicked off another decision, and the whole market began to crash and dropped by about a thousand points in just a matter of just seconds. And of course, what happened is that we had all these safeguards. And so the safeguards kicked in, the market turned off, you couldn't make any more trades. It was off for a moment of time. They turned it back on and flipped and went back up to normal. So a bunch of scientists got together to study what happened, what happened in the servers that this market crashed.

And so they looked at this. Just a brief matter of a few seconds leading up to the flash crash, and they pulled out all of the data from all of the different servers that are interacting with the

market. And they analyzed it. And after months and months of study, they came back and they said, we just don't know.

I heard an interview with one of the men who was in this project and he said this. I thought this was this is a remarkable term that I want to use all the time in theology. Okay. He said this. We looked at all the data and we slowly realized it just wasn't human readable. It was just too much information.

And that's in a small human made set of servers in one building in New York City. And it was so vast, the information that was being created, the data that came out of it, was so vast that humans, even with the best computers of their day, couldn't understand it. It was too much. Now take all of the data, all of the information of reality in any given second, across the whole of the cosmos.

That is the level at which your God is sovereign. That's why when we say he holds the cosmos in his hand, that's what we're saying. I'm not just saying it's planets kind of spinning around in his hand. That means that all of the cosmos is ordained by him and controlled by him. According as Westminster says, according to the nature of secondary causes.

So God has created a universe that he has ordained and he has fixed, and yet it is a vast array. It is a rich, rich, manifold universe. And yet he is still God. When he comes to this universe, he speaks. He questions, he hears prayers. He intervenes in history. He brings about blessings and curses. Whereas we see here with Amos, he says all day to do this.

And he says, please, Lord, no. And he goes, okay, I won't. Now does that mean that Amos has changed the eternal decree? No, he can't do that because the eternal decree is not bound by time or space, right? It's immutable. And yet his prayer, his response, his heart yearning, his righteousness, and his righteous desire for the northern kingdom, even though he's been railing against them in judgment, he really, at the end of the day, wants them to be saved, wants them to be protected.

The Lord hears it, he responds, and all of that is an outworking of God's eternal decree. We see, going all the way back to Exodus 32, where the Lord presents Himself to Moses after the golden calf events. And he says, I'm going to destroy Israel. They have turned away from me. They've broken the covenant before I even had a chance to bless them with the land.

They already turned away from me. I'm going to destroy them, Moses, and I'm going to start out of you. I'm going to start a new people God out of you. So they'll still be the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But it's just going to be a little bottleneck, okay? There's going to be a genealogical bottleneck. Everyone's going to pass through you, Moses.

So I'll still be faithful to covenant, but they've done too much. And what does Moses do? Moses prays. He says, Lord, please don't. And he gives them two reasons. Says, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the Lord could come back and say, no, no, no, I thought of that. I've thought of that. It's going to still be through you.

So Moses says, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the word says, okay, keep going. And he goes and for the sake of the Egyptians, because they're going to see that you let us out into the desert, than you killed us. And that's going to make your name, you know, the current diminished in the country around us.

You wanted them to see your glory, but they'll see you just as a judge. And you know how the Lord responds. They say, no, no, it's my eternal decree. It can't be changed. Moses, stop praying. It says the Lord relented. The Hebrew word that's actually there. Is this the Lord not harmed? Okay. It's the same root that we saw in that previous section, but it's not that reflexive to use.

It's not. The Lord changed himself, but it's rather the Lord relented. He heard Moses prayer. We could say Moses prayer that was ordained from before the foundations of the earth to be said, and yet was said in full free will of Moses. He wasn't constrained. No one made him say it. There wasn't a gun held to his head.

He said it because that's what he wanted to say. He said the prayer and the Lord said, I hear you. I won't do it. You see, true prophecy of the kind that we see here with Moses, with the Lord telling Moses, this is what I plan to do. Respond right? Or as the Lord does with Amos here, here's my locusts.

I'm getting them ready. I'm going to send you to the country. What do you have to say about that? Do you want to respond? You want to say something? Amos? You see, that's the true use of biblical prophecy. When the Lord declares a thing, it's not. This thing is going to happen no matter what. You're stuck, but rather respond.

I love to use prophecy to change the hearts of my people. Now, once you're aware of this, you can't miss it. It's all over the Bible, right? Think about Jonah. Jonah sent and he has one message for Nineveh, right? The Lord is going to destroy the city in 40 days. That's the message. Doesn't say, but if you repent, I'll show mercy. It doesn't say that. He says the Lord's going to destroy the city in 40 days. And notice, the king of Nineveh has the same insight that that Moses had back in Exodus 32. He says, Lord, have mercy upon us. They repent as a city. He says in Hebrew, which is kind of funny because this is an Akkadian Assyrian speaker. Right? But he says, me you are. You guys know what that means now from Amos. Me, Judea. Who knows, maybe the Lord will relent. And guess what the Lord does relent. 40 days pass. He doesn't destroy the city. Does Jonah then go to the Lord and say, Lord, you turned me into a false prophet. You lied. There's no to say that. No. What does he say? I knew you were going to do that. That's how you use

prophecy. That's how you work. That's why I didn't want to go to a story in the first place. Because I knew a prophecy of judgment met. You're inviting them to repent. You see, the Lord has created a universe in which he, without losing any doing any hostility to his eternal, transcendent character, he can still enter into this world, condescend to us, and without in any way changing the eternal decree.

Because that would be insane. That can't happen. It's irrational. It cannot take place. The eternal decree is said because it's not bound by time. And yet God can still enter into creation and interact with us so that we freely offer him prayers and worships. And we plead to him, and we say, Lord, please don't do this thing. My friend is ill. Please heal him. It looks like he's going to die. The doctors say he's going to die. Please heal him. Lord. And sometimes the Lord does. He always answers our prayers. It may not always be the way that we want him to, but he is always hearing and answering our prayers. You see, we have to recognize that when we hear prophecies of judgment or blessing.

And yes, I know in the Old Testament they're hearing them from the mouths of prophets, but we still hear prophecies of judgment and blessing today when we read the Bible right. It's filled with prophecies of judgment and blessing. It says, if you live this kind of life, you can inherit the kingdom of God. And if you live this kind of life, if you're a person of repentance and faith, you can inherit the kingdom of God. That's who it's for. When you hear that, and let's say one of your sins is listed like gossip or slander, and it says slander is can't enter into the kingdom of God. And you say, wait a minute, I just slandered earlier today, Lord, should your response be, well, that's the eternal decree. You know the proper response. So say, Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.

We were talking right before this about, Jeff, this, rash now in judges where he says, I'll sacrifice the first thing that comes out of the gate and what comes out of the gate. His daughter, what should he have done? She said, well, I guess that's the eternal decree. No, he should have said, Lord, have mercy upon me.

That was a foolish vow. And the Lord loves to show mercy. We see this today in this passage of Amos. The Lord loves to relent. He loves to say, I'm going to wipe them out. And the people say, have mercy, Lord, because, okay, I want. As a matter of fact, we see four ways in which he relents of judgment and also relents of blessings at times too. He will also declare blessings on people. They'll become complacent, and the blessing will turn to a curse. Sometimes the Lord postpones the judgment or the blessing. Sometimes he says, it's going to happen now, but wait, wait, wait now because you repented.

Remember when Hezekiah is on his sickbed and he's about to die, and actually the prophet comes in and says, get your house in order. You're going to die. And Hezekiah turns and prays

one more time. He had been praying, but he prays one more time to the Lord after receiving that prophecy.

Well, he says, don't worry, you can't do anything about it. You're going to die. Hezekiah prays one more time. And what does the Lord do? Says, okay, you won't die for another 15 years. It's been postponed so he can postpone it. He can mollify it. I'm gonna give you a bunch of examples here. The one from Second Chronicles is this, the southern kingdom is being invaded by an Egyptian pharaoh named Ishak or Shushan because, as he would have called himself. And he's they're coming into the southern kingdom, and the Lord says they're coming in judgment against you. This is the judgment of the Lord. You're going to be destroyed. And Rehoboam and his men respond with repentance, and the Lord sends a prophet back. And the prophet says, now you won't be destroyed, but you will be made a vassal state of Egypt for a period of time. You see, he's mollified it. He's. That just means he's lessened it. It was a harsh judgment. And now it becomes a lighter judgment. Sometimes he'll annul them like we see here in Amos. I'm going to send a Lucas, and he says, please, no, Lord. The Lord says, okay, I won't. He doesn't postpone. It isn't mollified. He says, I won't do it.

We can even have reversals. As a matter of fact, our salvation in many ways, when we are converted to Christ, that is a reversal. We were alienated from God. We had judgment of death, eternal death, eternal absence, eternal alienation from God. And then we repent and we believe. And now that judgment is reversed and it's no longer it's not like a lesser judgment.

It's like not quite eternal death or something. It's not that eternal death becomes eternal life. Alienation becomes loving communion. Okay, okay. Loss in death becomes life and gain. It's a total reversal. And this is the way God made the universe to work. You see, when we hear prophecies of judgment, the only proper concern is that we respond in a certain way when we hear prophecies of blessing, the only proper concern of us should be that we respond in a certain way.

When you hear prophecies of blessing, when you hear things like the benediction that we're about to hear, may the Lord bless you and keep you, or may the Lord sustain you until the day of Christ Jesus, when we hear those blessings, our response should be one of thanksgiving and praise and caution. Don't become complacent. Don't turn away from the Lord.

He will discipline you. He'll never forsake you, but he will discipline you. Likewise, when you hear prophecies of judgment, when sins that you yourself commit are kind of talked about in Scripture and you say, wait a minute, Lord, what am I doing? How should I respond? The proper response is conviction and repentance. Media. Who knows? Who knows? Maybe the Lord will lift from me this burden that he has placed on me.

No matter what our response is, should never be complacency. On one hand, we hear a blessing and we think as well, since we have all the blessings, we can do whatever we want. That's complacency. It also should never be fatalism. I knew a man one time he was an older man. It was a terrible, sad case. But I remember talking to him and he said, I affirm everything that you believe as a Christian.

I just believe that Satan has won in my life. So he told me to, God doesn't want me. Satan has won. So this is this fatalism. It's brother. No, don't buy into that. He goes, no, no, I know about all your doctrines of predestination. I'm just not predestinated. And I go, no, no, no, that's not what that means.

What it means is repent, believe, strive in for the Lord. He's calling you back to him. Perhaps he's calling you back to him. So it should never be complacency. It should never be fatalism, nor should it be passive anticipation. And I put that out there because of the modern Christian tendency to say, well, we know how it all ends.

We've seen the book of revelation, so let's just wait and watch it happen. It's never about passive observation, passive anticipation of what's going to take place. The Word of God is always inviting us to respond, either with thanksgiving and praise and caution, okay, or with conviction and repentance. Be careful about becoming passive in your view of God's Word.

Now, it is a bit frightening in this passage that there are two instances of visions. He says, Lord, please know how can Jacob stand? He is so small. The Lord relents. But then do you notice? We have a third vision of the plumb line? And it's interesting, isn't it? Amos cuts it off after the judgment is declared. There's no back and forth of relenting.

Instead of actually having a back and forth, he says, please, no, Lord, how can Jacob stand here so small? And the Lord says, okay, I relent. He stops there, and he goes back to the people of Israel. The vision dissipates, and now he's back there with the high priest of the of the high place, whose name was Amaziah.

And he's already made a complaint about Amos. And he said, Amos deserves to die. He should leave. He should flee away. And Amos says, listen, I'm not here for my own good. I'm not here because I'm from some long line of prophets. I'm here because this is the word of the Lord to you. You tell me to stop prophesying.

Then the judgment that you are afraid of is coming. And that, lastly, is how we ought to think to in this world today. We need to be careful about just trying to silence difficult teachings. The church has to be careful about telling people who are preaching the Word of God. Don't preach. Don't preach it anymore, okay? It's a terrible situation to be in.

That's a being given over to your sin. Rather, the Lord is telling us, repent, even the northern Kingdom come back to me. The Lord loves to show mercy. He loves to show grace. And this is true for us in Christ, as it was for the people of God in the old Testament.

Let's close in prayer.

Heavenly father, as we consider these things, I pray, Lord, that you would have mercy upon us. I pray that we would be just struck with all about the glory, the glory of your s.a.t, the glory of your eternality, the glory of your immensity, and of your immutability. What a wondrous God we serve and yet what a merciful God, because he comes to us, you come to us in this world, and we can hear your voice, and we can talk with you, and we can respond, and we can feel your presence. What a gift it is to us. Lord, thank you for making the universe this way, and thank you for making us this way in Christ Jesus in his name we pray. Amen.