

Amos
“Planted, Never Again Uprooted”
Amos 9

Well, please rise with me as I read Amos chapter nine. 15 verses of good old classical Hebrew poetry. I talked a little bit about this over the course of this series, and I just draw your attention again to the way that the Hebrew poetry works is say a thing and then you say it in a slightly different way, or you advance the idea in the second line. Most lines are couplets. They're one line followed by a two line. Sometimes we have triplets, sometimes we have quatrains in Hebrew poetry, but for the most part it's kind of based around that structure of two saying something one way than saying something slightly different. So consider that as we're reading through this last poetry. There are some parts in here that are probably prose, and our ESV translators may or may not agree on when they should be prose and when they should be poetry. And that's part of the beauty of reading old texts that are written by people whose style we don't understand anymore. So we have to look at it from the outside. We don't get to be on the inside like those who feel it from the inside. And so that's the nature of reading the Bible.

I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said, strike the capitals until the thresholds shake and shatter them on the heads of the people and those who are left of them. I will kill with the sword. Not one of them shall flee away. Not one of them shall escape if they dig into Sheol. From there shall my hand take them. If they climb up to heaven from there, I will bring them down. If they hide themselves up on top of Carmel from there, I will search them out and take them. And if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and I shall, and it shall bite them. And if they go into captivity before their enemies there, I will command the sword, and it shall kill them. And I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good. The Lord God of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it more. And all of it rises like the Nile and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt, who builds his upper chambers in the heavens and founds towns, his vault upon the earth, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the surface of the earth. The Lord is his name. Are you not like the Kushite to me, O people of Israel? Declares the Lord. Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Calf Dor, and the Syrians from here? Behold, the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, declares the Lord. For behold, I will command and shake the house of Israel among all the nations. As one shakes a sieve. But no pebble shall fall to the ground. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword. Who says, who say disaster shall not overtake or meet us? And that day I will rise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its

ruins, and rebuild it, as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edam, and all the nations who are called by my name, declares the Lord. Who does this? Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes, him who sows the seed in the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them. And they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens, and eat their fruit. And I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted but out of the land. Excuse me. They shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them, says the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord. He speaks. Please be seated.

Well, here, as we come to the end, you may remember that earlier on in the series I mentioned to you as I was introducing the book that the prophets really do have kind of the same message as you go from prophet to prophet. They're all basically calling Israel to the same thing. As a matter of fact, when you really see the difference is in the relationship that they have to the thing that they're talking about. But their basic message is this Israel or Judah, you've turned away from the Lord, either in the manner of your worship, the object of your worship, or your injustice. Okay. As a result, you must repent, because the Lord will come and he will come and discipline you. Now discipline means that he will judge the wicked and he will chasten or circumcise.

Okay? The righteous, the remnant, as they're called. And this can happen through exile. But it would be better. It would be better. The prophets always say be better if you just repent. Okay. The Lord. Yes. He's spoken prophetically of an exile that's coming. But that could be a spiritual exile. That could be a short exile. It might just be a few weeks.

The Lord's not bound to it being 70 years. Okay. And I even told you. Jeremiah says it's 70 years. You're now a baked vessel. You can't be formed. God's going to shatter you. It's going to take 70 years. And yet even read the very end of this of Jeremiah as he's getting dragged out the door of Jerusalem. He's kind of holding on to the doorframe, saying, even now, if you repent, the Lord says he will let you live in this place. He loves to show mercy, but after that discipline, after that judgment comes. All the prophets say the same thing. The Lord will restore the people of God, and as he restores them, it'll be a better place. It'll be a more prosperous life. It'll be more people. Even the nations will come. Remember, Isaiah, all flesh will see it together. Even the nations will come and see the glory of Zion. All the prophets are saying the same thing. The difference again. Sometimes they're before the exile, long before it, like Amos. Sometimes they're right up against the exile. Like it's happening, like Jeremiah, you know, getting dragged out the door of Jerusalem. Sometimes they're in the exile, like Ezekiel, who is in, you know, a refugee camp.

Sometimes they're after the exile, like Daniel or Zechariah or Haggai or Malachi, and they're after the exiled. They're now saying, okay, we need to get this, get this job going. We need to instigate this restoration community. The Lord's called us to gain by renewing the community, renewing the temple, renewing the people, renewing the city. Okay. But they're all at the end of the day saying basically the same thing.

So what it falls to us is to draw back after we've got that message down and to actually note, okay, so what are the each of the prophets rather adding, and what does each book and what does each chapter and each oracle adding to this basic framework that really we get going all the way back again, as I said to Deuteronomy 30, what are they adding to it?

Well, Amos is drawing our attention this evening. Now to the nature of God as a God who is doing all of these things. And he's pointing out some very specific parts, about God's character that should lead us to respond to the prophecy in a specific way, particularly this. He wants to point out to us that God is a God who seeks us.

He seeks us and he finds us. He's an inescapable judge. And then secondly, he's going to draw attention to that. He's a God who doesn't just seek us and find us, but he's a God who sifts us. And then lastly, he ends with, God is a God who saves us, who brings us restoration. And we see the whole arc of this, the coming judgment.

You can't escape the Lord, the judgment that comes, it's going to sift between the righteous and the wicked. And then finally we get the final part the restoration that is to come. It's an important passage, and I want to get to that restoration part, because as we learn in acts, this was an important passage for the apostles. Even though the church today doesn't think about it a whole lot for acts when they gather together in their first presbytery meeting.

Okay, in the next 15, this is the verse they're reading. It's fascinating. All right. So let's start with the God who seeks notice. What happens here. We go back to a vision. This is a vision that's kind of recalling what we saw in chapter seven where the Lord is showing things to aimlessly saying, oh Lord, please relent. How can Jacob stand?

He is so small. And the Lord says, I will relent. And he pulls back here we have another vision again, and I think we shouldn't. We can assume that he is seeing this vision over the high place, perhaps the one in Bethel, because he's over the altar and the Lord is addressing the altar that he sees below him.

But it's like you're seeing the throne room. Possibly we don't get all the details, but we know from Isaiah, sometimes you would have a vision filling a space that you were in, and the vision in this space would be kind of like interacting with Isaiah when he's in the temple. In the year the king Uzziah dies, he says, he saw the Lord, and the Lord's robe filled the temple.

And you're like, wait a minute, what is this, a vision or is this happening in real life? It's kind of hard to tell, actually. The cherubim then goes, member of the Seraphim rather goes and he gets a coal out of the altar in the temple in Jerusalem, and he brings it back to Isaiah and sutures his lips with, and you're like, okay, now we're really seeing the heavenlies interact with the earthly realm.

And it seems like something like that is going on here. You know, I don't know if he's in Bethel, if he's looking at the altar or if this is all a part of this broader vision. But he sees the Lord over the altar and the Lord points down to the altar, and he says, strike the capitals until the thresholds shake and shatter them on the heads of all the people.

The imagery here is one of an earthquake that's coming to shake and destroy the high places. You remember that this is how Amos begins. He begins with this earthquake that's coming. He even dates the book as before. This certain period of time, before this earthquake comes, he picks up with that theme again, that there's this coming earthquake. And when it comes, it's going to be an earthquake of judgment against Israel.

Or maybe even put it a better way. When God comes to judge Israel, it's going to be like an earthquake that leaves no stone on top of itself. The whole of the high places will be destroyed.

You see, there's no escape for Israel as long as she is worshiping the Lord in this perverted way, not hearing what he's commanded of them to bring his sacrifices and their offerings and their worship to him in Jerusalem, but rather to do it in their own way with this more convenient for them, a way that's more sort of culturally acceptable for them, because they're in the Northern Kingdom, not in the southern kingdom.

Right. There's all kinds of good practical reasons to worship in the high places. And the Lord said, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. I've told you how to worship me. And as a result, the judgment will come against the northern Kingdom. But Amos kind of goes right past that. And it's interesting how he doesn't spend a lot of time on the high place, but rather he goes to this series of like, rhetorical vignettes about how the people might try to escape the coming judgment.

Right. He goes to this, this kind of, you know, recycling of a formula where he goes, you could go here, but I'll still find you. You can go here, but I'll still find you. You can go here, but I'll still find you. It's actually reminiscent of what we find in Psalm 139 where the psalmist is asking this question. He goes, where shall I go, oh, Lord, from your spirit, or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed and shiel, you are there. If I take my wings, the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall find me.

If I say, surely the darkest darkness shall overcome me, and the light about me be like night. Even the darkness is not dark to you, Lord. The night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. You know as what the psalmist is saying. He's saying it as a cause for worship. By the way, I can't get away from you. Isn't it great? The notice what Amos is saying. You can't get away from. That's a it's not just a cause for worship. It's a cause for worship if you want to be near the Lord. But if you're trying to avoid the Lord, then that's a cause for caution. We call this the ubiquitous presence of the Lord throughout the Old Testament. As the character of God is being established, we learn that he is uniquely present in places like in the Holy of Holies or on the Mount Sinai, when Moses is there or in the tent of meeting.

There are times when God is uniquely present. He's with his people, and when he's there, those places become holy. They're special places because they reference his special presence. We are to expect to find that here, that that when we are here gathered in his name. What does he say when two or more of you gather in my name, I am there.

This is the unique presence or what is Paul? Tell us in Ephesians when you gather together, O church, you are the dwelling place of God on earth. He's saying, you are temple. This is holy ground. And yet we shouldn't think that. That means that God is somehow absent from the rest of the universe when we're here. That's not stealing God's presence from the rest of Birmingham.

Now they're all in darkness because we've got all of God over here at Brier Hood. That's not how it works. God is uniquely present with us. And yet we must remember that he's always ubiquitously present. He's always generally present in all of the cosmos. For all those reasons that we just said a couple of weeks ago. Right. He's not bound by time. He's not bound by space. He's not bound by Changeability. You go to the fourth layer down in the gases of the atmosphere of Jupiter. He's there just like he is out on to 80. Okay, you could go out of the one of those candy wrapper galaxies. Wait out there in the distance of, of the Webb telescope. Right. You see, you could go out there and he's there just like he's in your backyard. Where can you go and get away from him? You can't go anywhere. You can't even go into captivity. Israel. Think what I'm saying. You might even find in your deluded mind. Oh, Israel. That. Well, when we're taken captive and we go back to Babylon, then we'll be safe for Assyria.

In this case, we go to Nineveh. Then we'll be safe, because even in captivity he'll find you. It's a temptation for many of us to try to find places where we can avoid God. Isn't it? It's all over the scripture. People who say things like there is no God or God does not pay heed. Remember those elders who are hiding underneath the temple in Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel eight through 11, and one of them is named Yasnaya, and his name itself means the Lord pays heed. And yet they're gathered together, and they're all saying, the Lord doesn't pay heed. He doesn't know what we're doing down here. It's always ask ourselves, where do we go? Hoping that God won't

notice. What religious places do we thrive after and look for so that we can turn them into hideouts rather than places of repentance and faith? The prophets telling us don't think that just because it's inside your head he doesn't know about it. He knows you. He knows you through and through. And it's not because he's some kind of cosmic voyeur. It's again, because he's not bound by time or space. He made you. He made everything about you. He made your whole world. He knows you. You can't hide from him. And yes, that should be a cause of caution and concern. But it's also a cause for hope. And the last part of this opening section, the Lord identifies himself. He says, I am the Lord. And I love this description. It seems to be almost like a hymn or something. That was sung about the fact that the Lord is the one who touches the earth and it melts. He's the one who has control over the water of the world.

And that's the chaos of the world. Okay, in the Bible, oceans, rain, rivers, underground currents these are all just the ambassadors of chaos and death. And the Lord is always holding them back, pushing them away, forming them, bringing up life out of them. Just as we see in Genesis one, the earth is pulled up out of the waters.

How does he recreate the earth? He decree it through the flood, then recreates it again. And then what does he tell Noah? Go out, fill the earth and subdue it, just like he told Adam and Eve. What does he do in Egypt? He breaks down Egypt in its final plague and it really is a plague. The final plague against Egypt is that he unleashes the waters on Egypt and the Red sea.

You see, God is the one who controls the things of chaos and death. He's. He's the one who rules over at all. This is the God that you're contending with, Israel. It's not Bale who's limited to his little, you know, natural phenomenon. Okay? It's not Asherah who's kind of limited to her little thing that she does, but to her little region.

This is the god of the whole cosmos who is seeking after you, and he will find you. So the only right response is to repent. But he's not only a God who seeks you, the inescapable judge, he's a God who sits you. Now look again. Amos is using this, earthquake metaphor. He's using this idea of the shaking. Right. Says the Lord is going to shake you. The northern kingdom is going to be shaken. You're going to be shook, but you're going to be shaken like a sieve. And then the picture here is a picture that we would find in every northern Israelite would be aware of that. When you're out and you're, you're farming your grain, you're harvesting your grain, there's a variety of different ways that you can separate the grain out from everything.

That's not the grain. Right? And you've probably been around brier wood long enough. You've probably heard about all the different ways that that wheat gets threshed. Right. And you can you can do it where you shake it up in your hands and you throw it in the air and you let the wind blow. That seems to be what a lot of the threshing floors are in the southern kingdom.

But here we see another example of it. And this is a kind of sifting. It seems like what they had was they had these, these screens of some kind maybe made out of reeds. And what you would do is you would scoop up all of the sheaves that were on the ground. You'd scoop them up and you'd shake them out.

And as you did, all of the grain would fall through the filter to the ground. But the stones and the pebbles and the sticks that had been cutting up all the chaff that had been caught, not the large leaves that you don't want would stay in the filter. And the Lord is saying this don't beat. Don't worry, I'm not blind in my rage against the Northern Kingdom.

I'm not going to judge the righteous remnant. I'm only here for those who don't believe. So. I'm filtering them out. I'm saving them out. I'm sifting them out. Not one of the stones will fall. Only the living grains that I'm looking for. All of the stones, all the chaff will be caught up in the filter. And that is the filter of exile.

So you see, the Lord is judging both the righteous and the wicked. And this is a key dynamic that we see throughout Scripture, that the Lord will bring the same event on two different kinds of people, those who are repentant and those who are on those are unbelieving, those who are apostate. So you have those who believe in those who don't believe, and they'll both go through the same event.

And yet, for one, it'll be until life. It'll be judgment that leads to life. And what do we call that? We call that discipline, right? Judgment that leads to life. But for those who aren't following the Lord, they'll go through the same event, and it will be judgment that leads to death. And what do we call that? Condemnation, perdition?

Lostness. There are all kinds of words that we have for that. Okay. For the prophets of the Old Testament, the exile is the event. Everyone goes into the exile, the righteous and the wicked. The Jeremiah's in the remember the false prophet that he goes against Hananiah, the Jeremiah's and the Hananiah is in to exile. The Ezekiel's go into exile, but so do the unbelieving male worshipers go into exile.

And yet for Ezekiel and for Jeremiah, and for the believer, the exile becomes discipline unto life and repentance and faith. And for those who don't believe, exile becomes judgment and condemnation unto death. I'd actually argue for you. This is true about every aspect of the human life. Okay, you can have two people, the same people. One is repentant and faithful or being drawn to repentance and faith.

One is rebellious. An apostate is turned away against the Lord, and they'll both get cancer. And for one, that cancer will be disciplined unto life. It'll be one of those things of which Paul says, I'm convinced that the glory that awaits us is not even comparable, or the other. The suffering we're experiencing now is not even comparable to the glory that awaits us all.

Things are being worked together for the good and the glory of those who are in Christ Jesus, and cancer will be that for you, and there will be others who will say, cancer was just one more step for me on my way to condemnation. But they're both the same thing. This is why you can't point at one person and say, oh well, well, they've had this experience.

That means that they don't have the Lord with them or they've had this experience, and that means that they don't have the Lord with them. This is actually the whole argument of Ezekiel, because he's in exile and he's looking back to Jerusalem, and everybody in Jerusalem is saying, Ezekiel, you're the false, you're the false prophet. Look, you're in exile.

We're still in Jerusalem. And the Lord's message to Israel through Ezekiel is actually they're the ones being judged, not you. Okay. You're given opportunity for faith and repentance. So the Lord is not just blindly bringing his judgment against Israel. Rather, he is sifting and looking for those who ought to believe, ought to be saved, who will be disciplined unto life.

The final passage, the restoration God is a God who saves. Verses 11 through 15. There's a lot to say here, but let me just tell you this. Notice what happens here. This whole restoration prophecy is built around the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. This is the messianic kingdom. That's what it means for the booth. Booth just means tent.

Okay. This is one of those things. As a child, I always get confused by this. When we talk about booths all the time, there's like kissing booths or something. What are these booths? These are just tents, okay? These are tents. These are babies. They're devo acts that are built out in the wilderness that you can live in.

Okay, the tent of David is going to be reestablished in the restoration. And much like the messianic vision of Isaiah 55, where it says, you know, you can come and drink milk and you don't have to pay for it. There's going to be water and there's bread and everything you can possibly imagine. We see the same thing here.

This messianic kingdom is going to be so wonderful, so wonderful that grapes are just going to be like popping off of the trees. Okay, you will be able to keep up with the harvest of grain and grapes as they're flowing out of the city as rivers of wine. You know, it's going to be an incredible, wonderful place.

But here's something fascinating about it. It's not going to merely be Israel there, but rather the nations will be there. You notice what it says.

Where does I need to notice what it says? I need to find my Bible verse here. Okay, here we have it. All right. Notice what he says here. He says, in that day I'll raise up the booth that is fallen and repair its breaches and raise up its ruins and rebuild it. As in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edam and all the nations who are called by my name. You go. Wait

a minute. We will wait a minute. The booth of David the Ten is going to be reestablished, and the Lord is going to be calling up the name out of the nations, his people, to return. Notice the general language there, the language of nations that the Lord is going to be calling up. And then you have this interesting part, the remnant of Edam.

Okay, now if you're reading this and you say, wait a minute, it's kind of there's a little bit of a pause. What does he mean by Edam? Why are we talking about Edam all of a sudden? It's an interesting question, and we fast forward to acts 15, where Paul and Barnabas have returned to Jerusalem and they've said, we're going out to draw in the remnant of Israel.

But the problem is this the Gentiles are coming in more quickly than the Jews are coming in. The Judeans are not responding in the same way that the Gentiles are the finished foundations are okay. The Arameans, they're responding better than the people who should be responding because they are the people of God. And so they come back to the gathering of the church in acts 15.

And James calls everyone together. Interestingly, James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, not the bishop of Rome, calls the whole church together to organize this meeting. Around, around this one question. And they have Peter come in. They have everyone come in, all the big guys are there, and Paul and Barnabas come and they give their testimony, and the group gets together and they vote.

It's a very Presbyterian gathering. All the apostles get together, those who walked with Christ, and they vote. Vote on it, and they come out on the other side of the vote. And James says, because of passages like Amos nine, we have to accept these Gentile brothers and sisters into the church. And then he cites this passage. But here's the only difference in his citing of it.

Now he starts off, if you look at verse 11, instead of saying, in that day I will raise up. He says, in that day I will return. That's what James says. But I think he's just paraphrasing. He's paraphrasing the opening of this, of this prophecy. But then in verse 12, you know how he reads this. He reads that they may possess the remnant of mankind.

Okay, now you don't have to know Hebrew to know that there's a word that sounds like Edam and Hebrew. It actually has the same consonants and it seems as if James is reading this other word here, and it's the word Adam, the remnant of Adam. And we know that there are some manuscripts that read the consonants here, not Edam, but Adam, I want to point something out.

This is not about a mistake in the Bible. This is about a difference of interpretation of one word. Okay, now interestingly, theologically you end up in the same place either way, because he might just be using Edam to say here a remnant coming out of Edam, because the Lord is

drawing remnants out of Edam just as he as we just saw earlier, he cares about calf and Syria, and he cares about Egypt.

Now he's using Edam as an example. Or he's using Adam here to say a remnant of Adam that is a remnant of all mankind, not just Israel. And that would line up very well with the next poetic line, right, that he has here the poetic, term that he uses the possess the remnant of Edam and what all of the nations, which is clearly a Gentile word, all of the nations who are called by my name.

You see, it was always the plan. It was always the plan that the nations would be involved in the restoration of Israel. We go all the way back to Adam and Eve. What are they called to do, fill the earth and subdue it? But then you have the fall. And what happens next? If Abraham called out and his redemptive plan started out of Abraham?

But what are we told in Genesis 12? We're told that he's not just for his kids, but he's for all the families of the earth. As we continue to read on, we read that Moses has given instructions not just to go into the land, but actually to spread the belief in the worship of Yahweh over the face of the earth built around Israel.

We get to the psalmist, and we learn from the psalmist that all of the nations are supposed to kiss the sun, lest they perish.

That oh God, oh God, how majestic is your name in all of the earth we learn in Ruth that even an Israelite like Naomi, who goes into exile out of the land, will return and have her fortunes tied up with the Moabite, with the Gentile, and will not find her Redeemer again, will not find her lineage reestablished unless she finds it in line with the Gentiles who return with her after the restoration.

You see, the plan was always for Israel to expand over the face of the earth, but we just needed an Israelite who could actually run the race. We needed an Israelite who could actually be not just the Son of David, but the righteous Israelite that Moses was looking for, who could actually be the word of God, not just a prophet crying out to people who were in rebellion, who could actually be the son as Israel was told to be the firstborn son who's being taken out of Egypt back, way back.

We're going to talk about this in about two weeks. In advent, when we talk about Jesus being the son, we needed a real Son of God who could come out of Egypt, survive the temptations of the desert, and bring about the kingdom of God. You see, the plan was always about moving beyond the small piece of real estate on the east coast of the Mediterranean, and it was always meant to go beyond the bloodline of one family.

And that's what we get to celebrate starting next week. What does it look like when this Restoration Kingdom comes to bear on this earth? In the Christmas season, as we remember in the Christmas season? So I look forward to delving into that with you as well. Let's now close in prayer.

Heavenly father, as we come to you, we do pray that you would hear our words, our prayers, our reflections of thanksgiving that we give now, Lord, that this would be to your glory and to our deep encouragement.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen.