

A Fallen House Restored

A Sermon On:
Amos 9: 11-15

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A few years ago a movie hit the screen that was appreciated by a lot of people. Perhaps you remember it. It was called **THE MONEY PIT**.

It featured a young couple who purchased what they thought would be their dream home. All it needed, said the real estate agent, was a bit of minor renovating.

Well, needless to say, when the poor couple walked into the place it turned out to be a total disaster zone. They ended up sinking every last penny they had into the place. Every time one thing was fixed up, another problem surfaced. The plumbing would be redone, only to have the electrical catch fire. The carpet would be delivered only to discover the floor weakened by termites. That sort of thing.

There seemed to be no end to the discouragement and despair and frustration; no end to the money and energy they sunk into the place.

I think the movie went over so well because the viewers could resonate with it; because somewhere along the line all of us have experienced some sort of a money pit - some sort of a drain on our time, finances, or energies in ways that we never expected, and certainly didn't appreciate. All of us have experienced some source of despair and discouragement and frustration that never seemed to resolve itself.

Perhaps our "money pit" was also a home.

Perhaps it was a car.

Or maybe it was something different - like a relationship with someone, a relationship that didn't go as smoothly as expected, that seemed to suck you dry, where every time one area got patched up, another problem seemed to surface.

Can you remember such an experience, such a draining "pit" in your life? Maybe you're wrestling with one or more of them right now. How often haven't you been tempted to just give up, pack it in, write it off as an expensive learning experience and hope you never have to face this one-headache-after-another fiasco ever again.

If you can relate to all that, to this "money pit" syndrome, then perhaps you can relate somewhat to what God must have felt like over the centuries of his dealing with the human race, and specifically with the people of Israel, his covenant community.

For, let's be honest, they were a real drain on the LORD - a source of constant headaches, one frustration after another, one disaster after another. Every time the Lord patched up one area of their relationship another problem would soon appear somewhere else. Or the patch would, so to speak, spring a leak.

That frustration of God's, that disastrous relationship, has been made very clear to us over October and November of last year as we have had a peak into various corners of the prophecy of *AMOS*.

Think, if you will, back to whatever you may know about God's dealings with the people of Israel -- how he paved the way for the very existence of that nation through His gracious dealing with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;

how he rescued the people from captivity in Egypt;

how he led them through the desert, sparing them after their idolatrous wanderings and episodes of grumbling time and again;

how he provided leader after faithful leader for them, both political and spiritual;

how he protected them in a military sense, again and again.

Think of that, and then think of how, time and again the people casually walked away from Him, their faithful heavenly Father; how they so easily wandered off to the spiritual red light district to commit adultery against the Lord; how they ignored and lived counter to His revealed Will for their lives;

how they served, quite bluntly, as a giant hole in His heavenly wallet of divine grace and care. They suck up all that the Lord offers and give virtually nothing back to Him; there is nothing long term to show for it.

Things decayed over the centuries so that finally the once might nation, the glorious house of David, has now, by their own arrogance and sinful rebelliousness, been reduced to a hovel, a dilapidated tent, if you will.

The Hebrew word in v.11 is meant to convey the picture of a little shack that stands simply because it is not sure in what direction to fall - rotting, poked full of holes, ready to totally collapse: *David's fallen tent*.

Their social system, and judicial code, religious fervor, sense of longing for the coming of the Messiah -- all of that had rotted from the inside out.

Glorious chosen people of the Living God?

Hardly!

Now, given all this, would you, as people who have yourself experienced money-pit-like situations in your own life, as people who know how frustrating they can be,

would you have blamed God if He had totally packed it in?

Would you condemn Him for trashing those people;
for wanting to start anew with a different race?

Not at all! Not at all.

The punishment and condemnation that God prophecies as being the destiny of this people is totally deserved. If anything we may wonder how the Lord managed to put up with them so long -- those draining "Pit" of a people.

And yet He does. The incomprehensible marvel of it all is that He **does** stick it out with those people.

Yes, there will be punishment.

No, the sins of the people cannot be swept under the carpet.

Recall the words of Psalm 89.30-32:

*If his children forsake my law and do not walk according
to my ordinances,*

*If they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments
then I will punish their transgression with the rod*

And their iniquity with scourges [Ps 89.30-32]

That was the warning of God to His people, a warning they disregarded. They squandered the blessings God had lavished on them. They put down the poor whom He considered as precious.

Now finally, the great price would have to be paid. The land would be devastated. The nation would be destroyed. All the material and social structures which the Israelites had begun to hold in idolatrous esteem would be taken away from them.

Divine punishment would be their end.

It could be no other way.

But **beyond** that, beyond the time of chastisement and pain **there will be restoration.**

God, in His divine and everlasting mercy and grace, will **NOT** sell off the money pit called the House of David. He will not walk away from it. His determined love will stick with it, holding on to whatever is left -- whatever the cost.

Ah yes, for those who insistently remain in their hard-hearted and arrogant unbelief and disobedience, there will be no hope. For them the final end will be eternal damnation.

But for those who in their chastisement repent, there will be salvation,
there will be new hope, a new beginning.

And that is the whole point of these closing verses of the very dark, prophetic book of *AMOS*.

Amos prophecies of the restoration of Israel.

But not just Israel.

He prophecies also of the restoration of the world in which Israel lives. He speaks of the restoration of all those who, along with the believing remnant of Israel, place their trust for life and death in their Heavenly Redeemer

- the restoration of believers all through the centuries
- including you and me in the church of the 20th century.

What is prophesied here in Amos 9 is the ushering in of the final phase of the Kingdom of God, when it will be unveiled in all its glorious splendour, the day when it will be ushered in for good.

It's is Amos' early foretelling of that day which *Revelation 21* speaks of:

Then I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from god, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband....

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

It is the day when the money pit will finally be restored, all the leaks plugged, the walls shored up, floors replaced, lawns manicured.

*"I will plant Israel in their own land, **NEVER** again to be uprooted from the land I have given them."*

NEVER again --

Hence Amos could not have been referring to the first return from exile. For the Jews were dispersed again in 70AD because of their refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah. He is speaking of another re-gathering, the re-gathering of the New Testament people of God, the New Israel, the true children of Abraham, namely all those who believe, Jew and Gentile alike between whom there is, in Christ, no longer any distinction.

In that day I will restore David's fallen tent... so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name.

In Acts 15.16-17 the apostle James makes reference to this prophecy as foretelling how the Gentiles would be gathered into the Lord's Kingdom Community; how they, too, as believers in Jesus Christ, would become citizens of God's nation, part of God's chosen people.

What does Amos foresee?

The coming into being of the New Creation,
the creation after the final judgement,
the creation that has gone through the final cleansing fire, that has been set free of all effects of sin,
the creation that has been restored to the beauty of Eden, only this time without any prospect of another Fall;
Paradise.... forever.

"In that day," declares the Lord through Amos, "...they may possess the remnant of Edom..."

It's important to understand that Edom, of all the nations that surrounded Israel, was the one expressing the most animosity and bitterness towards God's chosen people.

They were the picture *par excellence* of the enemies of the Lord.

They were sin personified.

In that final day all their territory will be reclaimed by the people of God. The realm of creation that the imposter Satan now claims as his own, that realm which he has usurped from the Creator and which he now controls as the alien invading force, will be set free from his shackles of sin.

It will be restored to its rightful owner and its rightful inhabitants.

Sin, the Devil and his whole dominion will be swept from the face of the earth once and for all.

As Jesus put it, the wheat will be gathered into the barn, while the weeds will be rooted out, piled up and burned. Then, in that New Creation, unmarked and unopposed by sin, the people of God will be able to live and work and play in the way that God first envisioned when He created Eden.

There will be no more times of drought or famine.
There will be no more uselessness or futility in labour.
No uncertainty.
No lack, no want.

It will be the final fulfillment of the promise that God made to Israel in Leviticus 26.5, the promise to those who fear Him:

Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.

See how that is reflected in Amos 9.13:

"The Reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes."

It is a picture of the seasons running together. No longer will there be times of want in between.

Prosperity will be all pervasive.

It is similar to Joel 3.18:

*In that day the mountains will drip new wine
and the hills will flow with milk;
all the ravines of Judah will run with water.*

Oh, what a glorious time that will be.

Oh, how I long for that day to come.

Lord, bring that day, and bring it quickly!

It's a grand vision, a wonderful prophecy, isn't it?

And brothers and sisters, it's a prophecy that even now is on the road to fulfillment.

No, it hasn't come.

But it is on the way - absolutely for sure.

For in the moment when things seemed the darkest, when the once-mighty house of David, restored to Palestine, was almost forgotten and the proud Roman army had overrun the land, God took a tiny shoot; he worked in a forgotten corner of the fallen tent of David bringing together a carpenter and a virgin girl.

The One through whom the promise would be restored was born in a hovel surrounded by animals.

In this season we celebrate his birth.

We remember the life of the one who gave a vision of what the season of new wine would be like when he attended a wedding banquet where the goods ran out, and performed the miraculous sign of providing a superabundance of the most delicious wine imaginable;

he gave a vision of food provided when he fed 5000 with next to nothing, and then again 4000, each time with many baskets left over.

Yes, the vision of Amos is being fulfilled through Jesus Christ, the Son of David, who even now reigns on the throne of power at the right hand of God the Father Almighty in heaven. He holds the reins of history and is moving them towards the day of his return, when time as we know it will be brought to its final conclusion, and the New Creation, as we have been promised it, will be ushered in.

And even now, though perhaps we can only see it by faith, time is moving towards its conclusion.

And by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of David, we can be a part of that movement as well. Our church, by faith, is a part of that movement; that steady march of the Kingdom.

All by faith.

Only by faith.