

SPIRITUAL CAT SCANS

AMOS

Paul “*Bear*” Bryant was the legendary football coach for the Alabama Crimson Tide. The Bear is one of the greatest coaches of all time. But at practice most of the actual coaching was done by his assistants.

The Bear did his coaching from an observation tower that stood high above the field. On occasion he’d notice a mistake his assistant coach failed to correct. He’d grab his bullhorn, and shout down instructions.

In a sense this is what God did in the Old Testament.

Often God’s on-field assistants - the priests and Levites and kings - grew corrupt and failed in their job. They refused to follow the playbook, the Scriptures. And God would have to take up His bullhorn, and shout down instructions from on high. *The prophets were God’s bullhorn.*

And no one fits that description better than Amos.

Amos was the [in-you-face prophet](#). He was loud - like a bullhorn.

Amos was a contemporary of Hosea. They both had a message to the northern kingdom of Israel. Hosea spoke from a broken-heart, but Amos was tough as nails. Amos was hard-nose - no-nonsense - tell is like it is.

Amos introduces himself in verse 1... “The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.”

According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, the date of the earthquake was probably 756 BC - so Amos wrote two years beforehand in 758 BC.

Apparently, this was *quite a quake*. The book of Zechariah was written 250 years after Amos, but Zechariah 14:5 still talks about this killer quake.

Understand, not ever natural disaster is God’s judgment. When Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans several religious leaders referred to it as God’s punishment on the city’s wickedness.

There’s no doubt, the Big Easy is a vile and wicked place. And at first, I was tempted to draw the same conclusion - until I visited...

I was in the French Quarter just days after the storm. The Quarter and Bourbon Street are the city’s most sinful and shameful sections, yet the Quarter was built on the highest ground, and was the least impacted.

You scratch your head... Either God missed or not every disaster is God’s judgment. We live in a fallen world subject to randomness. That’s why we should be careful about affixing blame and interpreting causes.

Yet in Amos' day, God did send a message through an earthquake.

Josephus described how this earthquake was so severe it altered the topography around Jerusalem. Amos will predict some fire-and-brimstone type judgments. It's possible this earthquake set off the lightning storms and prairie fires that fulfilled and corroborated Amos' prophecy.

There are times when a natural disaster is a word from God.

And notice how Amos refers to himself in verse 1, "*who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa...*" Amos didn't hang out with *the religious leaders in Jerusalem*, but with *the sheepbreeders in Tekoa...* Hey, vocationally and culturally Amos was from a different neck-of-the-woods – the backwoods.

Later in 7:14 Amos says to the king, "*I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet...*" You could say Amos was a non-prophet organization.

Amos wasn't a member of the recognized clergy. He'd never been to Bible College – had no diplomas. Ministry to Amos wasn't a career, but a calling. It wasn't a profession, but a passion. It wasn't a job, but a joy.

Amos wasn't a pro pastor, he was an amateur. And since I've learned the meaning of the word I also want to be an amateur. It's French, and it's translated, "*For the love of it!*" Amos served God because he loved God.

We need more men like Amos today... on fire instead of for hire...

In chapter 7, Amos tells us what he was not, but he also tells us what he was, “**But I was a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit.**” Amos was both a *rancher* and a *farmer*. Amos was a country boy.

Amos was a prophet who wore jeans and drove a pick-up. He listened to Trace Adkins and Carrie Underwood. Climb into his truck to go hunting or mudding – and you might just hear Lynard Skynard’s greatest hits...

Amos snacked on moon pies and RC Colas. He liked his food *dirt grown* and *deep fried*. To Amos “**moving up in the world**” meant *climbing a tree*. He was a good-ole boy from the Deep South.

Notice, verse 1 says he was from “**Tekoa**” – a country town about 12 miles southeast of Jerusalem on the edge of the Judean wilderness.

To say you’re from “**Tekoa**” is like saying you’re from “**Walnut Grove**” or “**Social Circle**” or the town of “**Between.**” Tekoa was a hick-town – a one-stop - single traffic light town. “**Everybody was somebody**” in Tekoa...

Tekoa was the kind of place...

Where dogs live under the front porch...

Where funeral homes have neon signs...

Where a quarter horse is a ride out in front of the Wal-Mart...

Where there's a tire swing in everybody's front yard...
Where children are named after good dogs...
Where the fifth grade is considered your senior year...
Where the stock market has a fence around it...
Where fast food is hitting a opossum at 65 mph...
And where on Thanksgiving you have to decide which
pet to eat...

Amos reminds me of Ebb Fox. Ebb pastors the Calvary Chapel in Meridian, Mississippi, and Ebb is a true southerner. He's as country as country can get. Ebb calls himself "a [cornbread eating preacher.](#)"

I really like Ebb. He's down-to-earth – he's genuine – he's as-honest-as-the-day-is-long. There's nothing phony about Ebb Fox. You trust what comes out of his mouth. And that's how I picture the Prophet Amos.

I'm not sure though, if Amos was as funny as Ebb. This week Ebb sent me a photo of [the Redneck combo - baby seat and teething ring... \(pic\)](#)

Amos was just a country boy from down South who'd been called by God to minister in the urban jungles of the northern kingdom of Israel.

And minister he did – with power, and boldness, and courage.

Amos *said it* like God *saw it*. He was fearless. His approach was simple. Say what God tells you to say, and let the chips fall where they may.

Amos begins with a roar, in verse 2, “**And he said: The LORD roars from Zion...**” The voice of God is not the chirp of a bird, or the squeak of a mouse, or the purring of a cat – God’s voice is like a lion’s roar.

And notice from where God roars? From Zion, or Jerusalem...

By the time of Amos the Hebrew nation had been split in two kingdoms for 160 years. The northern nation worshipped in the cities of Bethel and Dan, yet God’s presence and glory remained in Zion – in the Temple.

And this created a problem for the northern kings... If their people went south to worship, they’d risk losing their loyalty. So they established a rival religion in their own borders at Dan and Bethel. They claimed to worship the true God, but with their own altar, feasts, priests, and sacrifices.

God never approved of this rival religion. He considered it idolatry.

It was important to God not only be worshipped, but to be worshipped the right way. *This remains the heart of true worship...* Real worship seeks to love God - not just in a way that’s convenient for me. If I really love God I’ll go *out of my way* to love Him in ways that He desires to be loved.

This is what all 19 kings of the northern kingdom failed to do.

If I invite Kathy to the Bulldog game it doesn't prove much. I wanted to go anyway. But if I say, "**Honey, I purchased us tickets to the Nutcracker.**" This is an extravagant expression of boundless love. I'd rather get a root canal than attend the Nutcracker. The Nutcracker drives me nuts.

But love is measured not by **convenient acts** but **costly acts**. The same is true with worship. Do I love God enough to please Him - not just me?

Beginning in verse 3 Amos rolls a series of nations through the spiritual Cat Scan. You know about CT Scans. These are tubes that take multiple X-rays, and deliver a 3D image of what's going on inside the patient...

The Minor Prophets we're studying are like spiritual Cat Scans. And in the first 2 chapters of Amos, the prophet puts 8 nations on the gurney.

He starts with Damascus and the **Syrians** – Gaza and the **Philistines** – Tyre and the **Phoenicians** – Bozrah and the **Edomites** – Rabbah and the **Ammonites** – Kerioth and the **Moabites**...

Amos begins his words against each nation with the same formula.

Verses 3, 6, 9, 11, 13, and 2:1 all begin, "***For three transgressions... and for four, I will not turn away my punishment...***" The phrase, "***For three transgressions and for four...***" is God's way of saying enough is enough. Here's the straw that broke the camel's back.

In baseball lingo, “three strikes and you’re out.” Here it’s 4 strikes.

And in each case God’s grievance against these foreign nations is how they mistreated Israel. This is how God has always judged nations...

In Genesis 12 God promised Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you...” God blesses nations and entities that bless Israel, and He curses nations that curse Israel.

It’s interesting, none of the nations judged in Amos exist today.

When is the last time you had lunch with a Moabite, or a Phoenician? Ever worked with a Philistine? These folks are no longer a people due to God’s judgment. Violence toward the Jews caused their extermination.

And this still happens with modern nations. The reason Nazi Germany was defeated – and the British Empire has diminished - and the Soviet Union fell apart – can be traced back to their mistreatment of Israel.

In Amos 2:4 God shifts gears and judges a nation a little closer to home.

He says to Judah, Israel’s southern sister, “For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment...” And here is God’s indictment, “Because they have despised the law of the LORD...”

They worshipped God. Said they loved God, *but refused to obey God.*

There are folks today – church-folk – who don't like admitting there's someone who can tell them what to do. They too despise God's law.

Up until now Amos' target audience, the northern kingdom of Israel, has been sitting smugly. They're listening... agreeing... responding with polite applause... and an occasional "*Amen...*" As long as Amos rails on their enemies, the northerners are happy. *You go Amos. Preach it, brother!*

They may've even hooped and hollered when he mentioned Judah.

Israel and Judah were archrivals. Judging Judah was like railing on Tech at a Bulldog Club meeting. Israel loved to see Judah lose.

But Amos doesn't stop with Judah – guess who he judges next?

Verse 6, "**For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment...**" And for the rest of his prophecy, the next 7½ chapters Amos focuses on God's displeasure with Israel.

Here's what Amos has done... He's drawn a bull's eye. He started with far-away nations – Syria, Phoenicia – then he got closer – Gaza, Edom – and then he narrowed down to Judah, Israel's next door neighbor.

Finally, he hits dead center – the bull's eye – Israel.

And Amos has a multitude of reasons to justify God's judgment. They sell their own people as slaves, mistreat the poor, indulged in idolatry.

Judah despised God's law, but Israel despised and rejected God.

In 3:2 God says to both Hebrew nations, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

Here's what the Hebrews were saying... *God, why judge us! We're the chosen people?* Yet that's exactly the reason God does punish Israel...

American Express use to have an ad campaign: "Membership has its privileges." Indeed it does, but if you ring up a bunch of charges on your card you'll soon discover, *membership also has its responsibilities.*

God chose the Hebrews to be His special people. And they enjoyed the privileges, but failed to accept the responsibilities. God expected more from Israel and Judah than from Philistia and Phoenicia. The foreign nations sinned against their conscience. Israel had the Scripture.

Thus, they were held to a higher, stricter standard.

One Jewish historian prayed facetiously, "Lord, thank you for choosing us as Your chosen people, but how about choosing someone else for a while." He understood that membership also has responsibilities.

And the lessons for us are obvious. As members of the Church we've been blessed with amazing spiritual blessings, but with them God raises the bar. We become responsible to walk in a way that glorifies God.

We enjoy the privileges, but do we accept the responsibilities?

Let me get more personal. You go to a church that teaches you the Scriptures. I'm sure I let you down in other ways, but you are well fed.

You come each week and take and take - but are you giving back? You enjoy the privileges of being part of this church family, but what about the responsibilities - *to share talents, to give time, to help pay a few bills?*

We'll be judged if we accept only privileges, and no responsibilities.

I like Amos 3:3, "**Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?**" For two people to walk together they need a strong, mutual agreement.

Is there a shared vision – and a common purpose – and compatible goals – and like-minded motives - and mutual respect? Keep Amos 3:3 in mind when you chose a spouse, or a friend, or a partner, or a church.

The bulk of Amos 3 envisions the judgment that occurred 36 years later when the Assyrian army destroyed Israel and its capitol of Samaria.

Israel is depicted as a lamb that's been dismembered by a lion. In verse 14, God promises to destroy the rival altar at Bethel. It'll be a dark day.

I read of an FBI agent on special assignment who took a short cut to save time. He ignored a “Do Not Enter” sign, and several barricades.

This man was on a special mission. But his importance didn't stop him from driving his government car into 6 inches of freshly poured cement.

He was caught up in his privileges and forgot his responsibilities.

Ignore God's warnings if you like – think the rules don't apply to you. In the end you'll find out the hard way – God makes no exceptions.

Chapter 4 begins with a word to the Israeli women.

Once in Sunday School the kids were asked if they knew the story of Adam and Eve. A little girl raised her hand, “God made man, then looked at him, and said, ‘I can do better than that’ – so He created the woman.”

Maybe that's what you believe - and it might contain some truth.

Generally speaking, women are *stronger morally* and *deeper spiritually* than men. It's more difficult to corrupt a woman. They tend to be purer.

This is why when a society's women no longer stand for what's wholesome and righteous – that civilization is in serious decline.

This was the case of the women of Samaria.

Israel's women-folk were cruel, and greedy and selfish. Commoners were dying of thirst and starvation why they got drunk on fine wine.

You've probably heard the expression, "**Jewish princess.**" It's a young Jewess who lives an extravagant, luxurious lifestyle funded by her rich daddy. She's stuck-up and stuck-on-herself. She's spoiled rotten.

This was the Samaritan sisterhood. They were grazing while the poor were dying. In 4:1 Amos gives them an unflattering title "**cows of Bashan.**"

A woman is a cow of Bashan if she's always *grazing* and never *giving*.

In verse 2 God promises to break up their party. The barbaric Assyrians will put fishhooks in their painted lips, and lead them away into slavery.

In 4:6 God says, "**I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities.**"

That sounds like they all got a free trip to the dental hygienist – but "**cleanness of teeth**" is another term for famine. In other words, the cities of Israel won't have enough food to get your teeth dirty.

Chapter 4 ends with predictions of drought, pestilence, locust, disease, fire – yet after each plague, God says,

“Yet you have not returned to Me...” Israel was hard-hearted and hard-headed. They refused to learn.

In 5:21-24 God makes a strong statement to Israel. Read these verses the day before Christmas and Thanksgiving. They’re good preparation.

God states, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies.” In other words, “Bah Humbug!” God might not enjoy our holidays as much as we do. They’re supposed to be **holy days** not just *holidays*. Yet we use them as an excuse to party and splurge and shop.

Israel sang festive songs and prayed, but their hearts were absent.

God isn’t impressed with hollow performances and empty praise. If you want to love God as He wants to be loved, then, “Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream...” Be fair and do right.

Chapter 5-6 are a series of three “**Woes.**” My friend, Skip Heitzig says when he hears the word “**woe**” he changes it’s spelling to “**w-h-o-a.**”

A “**woe**” in Scripture is like a speed bump. It slows us down and makes us think. Israel was rushing to judgment. They needed to whoa down.

Did you hear about the pastor who owned and trained horses?

When he sold his steed he explained to the new owner the commands he taught his horse. Rather than “giddy-up” and “whoa” – to get the horse running it was, “Praise the Lord.” To stop him the command was “Amen.”

The new owner mounted the horse and shouted, “Praise the Lord!” The horse took off... Every time he “Praised the Lord” he picked up speed.

All of sudden he saw the edge of a cliff up ahead.

He shouted, “Whoa” – but nothing happened. “Whoa” – no response. In his panic he couldn’t recall the command. Finally, it came to him, “Amen!”

The horse came to a screeching halt inches before the drop-off. That’s when the rider breathed a sigh of relief, and whispered, “Praise the Lord!”

I also got that joke from Skip Heitzig, so don’t blame me.

In chapters 7 Amos has 3 visions... God judges Israel with a swarm of locusts, but He has mercy and it subsides. He then punishes Israel with an out-of-control brush fire. Again, God has mercy - it’s extinguished.

Finally, God drops a plumb line, and warns Israel not to get out of plumb, or there’ll be no mercy. If they can’t stay aligned with God’s will – if they bend in a crooked direction - God will see to it they’re punished.

These visions get the attention of Israel’s king at the time, Amaziah. He meets with Amos, but rather than repent, he tries to run Amos out of town.

He says in 7:12, “Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy. But never again prophesy in Bethel.”

And I love Amos’ response. He has nothing to lose... Amos isn’t even a prophet... He can’t lose his salary, he doesn’t get paid. The board can’t fire him, he doesn’t have a board. They can’t undermine his promotion. He’s got nowhere to go... Amos pulls no punches. He speaks God’s truth.

Amos says to King Amaziah in 7:17, "Thus says the LORD: 'Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by survey line; you shall die in a defiled land; and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land.'"

Now put that in your pipe and smoke it, big guy! We learn from Amos, “It’s when you’ve got nothing to lose... that you have nothing to fear!”

In chapter 8 Amos sees a vision of ripened fruit. It means Israel is ripe for judgment. He says in verse 2, “the end has come upon My people...”

And here’s the sure sign God has turned a nation over to judgment...

Amos says in 8:11, "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, 'That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, (*much worse...*) but of hearing the words of the LORD.'"

And if you've moved around the country a lot lately, and have looked for churches that teach the Word, you'll understand Amos's next statement...

“They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it.”

There is a famine today. I spoke to a lady not long ago who'd attended church her whole life, yet was tragically ignorant of the Bible. She'd never been taught. All she'd heard were little *sermonettes* for *Christianettes*.

Where are the churches today who teach God's Word? The biblical illiteracy among Christians is epidemic. Some churches believe the Bible – even fight for its inspiration – yet just don't teach it.

In Amos 9 the Lord shakes the doorposts of the temple. *The temple will topple.* In verse 8 God promises to destroy **“the sinful kingdom.”** Yet not all God's people bite the dust. There'll be survivors. God will leave a remnant.

God will sift and scatter His people, but one day they'll be restored.

The end of Amos 9 sounds like today's Jerusalem Post... *plans to rebuild the Temple - Israel's military superiority – cultivation of the land – the return of the Jews to Israel – and the rebuilding of their cities....*

Amos' predictions are coming true for the first time in 2000 years.

I love Amos' conclusion. God promises, "I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them."

Let me close by condensing down and summing up Amos' message.

Amos has a lot to say, but one verse boils it all down. In 4:12 listen to Amos' thunder ominous words, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

Let that settle in your mind and heart this morning. One day you will meet the awesome, majestic, consuming God - the God upon which no man can look and live. God had to cover Moses' eyes to God's glory.

Yet you'll meet this God one day. He's your Creator, and Redeemer, and Prosecutor, and Defense Lawyer, and Jury, and Judge.

He's taught you how to live, and commanded you to obey, and in the end will check the plumb line to see how aligned you are with His will.

CS Lewis describes what we're all in for the nanosecond after we die.

"And there will be God without disguise: something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side... that will be no time for choosing. It will be the time when we discover which

side we have really chosen, whether we realized it or not...”

Now – not then – is the time to prepare. Today, I want to encourage you to wrap your mind around one thought...

“Prepare to meet your God.”

JR Tolkien, author of *Lord of the Rings*, wrote of God, “It does not do to leave a dragon out of your calculations, if you live next door to the dragon.”

If you were next door neighbors with a fire-breathing dragon it would be a concern. It would effect how you live – when you came and went – and what you did outside... Ignore the dragon and you’d get burned.

Well, God is also a fire-breather. He’s a force to be considered. And He lives in your neighborhood. You can’t ignore Him, or pretend He doesn’t exist. You best factor Him into your plans. You cannot escape God.

Amos 5:19 speaks of the day of the Lord, or our day of reckoning – the day we meet our Maker. *“It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him!”* Amos says run from a lion and you’ll get eaten by a bear.

In other words, you can’t escape God’s scrutiny. It’s best to prepare.

Joe Louis may’ve been the greatest boxer of all time – and during his reign as champ he fought a challenger named *Billy Kahn*. Billy was quick and fleet of foot. His strategy was to stay out of his opponent’s reach.

When a reporter asked Louis if he could beat Kahn - Joe answered, “**He can run, but he can’t hide!**” And neither can you hide from the Heavyweight of the universe... Recall the words of Amos, “*Prepare to meet your God...*”

In 5:4 the Lord calls out to Israel, “**Seek Me and live...**”
The only way to live is to seek the Lord.

And this is why it's important for Americans today to vote for leaders sympathetic to Israel. Not that we have to approve of everything the Israelis do – not hardly. We need to insist on *just policies*.

But Israel's *right to exist* and their *right to the land* deserve a Christian nation's support. These are issues central to God's prophetic promises.

Verses 11-13 tell us the officials in Israel were guilty of mistreating the poor, over-taxing, subverting justice, taking bribes. Their politicians were corrupt.

Verse 18 reminds the people if they refuse to turn to the Lord *the day of the Lord* will be a dark day. Rather than salvation, there'll be wailing in the streets.

Their church services, and holiday celebrations, and financial offerings, and praise songs were all worthless. God is unimpressed with prayers and songs and service - if our hearts are AWOL. Hypocrisy is one thing God hates!

Verse 24 is what God is after – not hollow performances and empty praise... **“But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.”**

Chapter 6 could double as a word of warning to the United States of America.

Verse 1 warns, “Woe to you who are at ease in Zion.” Prosperity is a blessing, but it can also be a blight. It can lull us to sleep. It can cause a false security. We assume God’s blessing means God’s approval – but that’s not necessarily so.

And just because God chooses to bless us today, doesn’t mean our situation can’t change overnight. Look at verse 3, “Woe to you who put far off the day of doom...” Things look good now, but judgment could be just around the corner!

Guys, let’s not take God’s grace for granted. Let’s live our gratitude everyday.

Intercession is powerful. Prayer can avert judgment, and bring blessing. Twice Amos intercedes successfully for Israel. The prophet sees two visions – a swarm of locust and a consuming fire. Both times he asks for God to spare the nation.

He says 7:2 and 5, “O Lord God, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!” And both times we’re told, “So the LORD relented concerning this...”

God delivered Israel on account of Amos’ prayer.

But 7:7 brings about the moment of truth. Amos has another vision. He sees a construction worker’s plumb line. The plumb line was an ancient level – a weighted string that hung through the hold in a board. It was used

to determine if a wall was “*in plumb*”, or straight. If the string touched the board you had a crooked wall.

Which reminds me of the riddle a plump friend of mind asked, “**How do you know if a person is on the level?**” He rubbed his stomach and answered, “**Their bubble is in the middle.**” God places the level against Israel, and discovers the nation is *out of plumb* – crooked and corrupt. It has to be torn down and rebuilt.

Guys, as followers of Jesus we need to be careful we don’t shift *out of plumb*. Jesus is our plumb line - and the question for the Christian is are we growing more and more like Jesus? We need to put the plumb line up against every area of our lives. In this realm of my life am I exhibiting the image and character of Jesus? In my family life – with my friends – at work – in the church. Am I *in or out of plumb*?

We’re told in verse 10 when Amaziah the priest hears Amos’ predictions of an invading army he goes to King Jeroboam and accuses Amos of conspiracy to bring down the kingdom. He says, “**The land is not able to bear all his words.**”

In fact, Amaziah confronts Amos in Bethel, and banishes him from Israel.

But I love the response of the prophet Amos in verses 14-15, “**Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the**

LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'

Amos was a rancher by trade. He also tended sycamore fruit. So he was a rancher and a farmer. Remember 1:2 we're told he was from the town of Tekoa. And understand, Tekoa was a hick-town - *a town with a single traffic light*. It was a country village about 12 miles southeast of Jerusalem in the Judean wilderness.

Tekoa was the kind of place “where dogs live under the front porch, where mailboxes are made out of old auto parts, where funeral homes have neon signs, where there's a tire swing in everyone's front yard, where children are named after good dogs, and where everyone in town knows how to milk a goat.”

This all meant Amos wasn't a member of the professional clergy. He'd never been to seminary - had no formal training. He was just a country boy from down south that God called to minister in the urban jungles of the northern kingdom.

Amos wasn't *a prophet for profit*. He made his living from his ranch. He didn't view the ministry as a *profession*, but as a *passion* - as a *calling*, not a *career*.

Amos was an amateur. I also want to be an amateur – ever since I learned the meaning of the word. It's French, and it means “*For the love of it!*” Amos served the Lord because he loved the Lord. *And we need more men like Amos today.*

There is a famine... and notice it's consequences in verse 13, "In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst." Think of the sad, pathetic pictures we see on television of the starving tribes in Africa – shriveled, bony bodies - sunken eyes - protruding stomachs. People are dying of starvation.

But if you could see the souls of people in our own hometown you'd see a similar picture. People are starving spiritually. They're wasting away for lack of solid food.

There is a famine in the land. This is why our priority has to be God's Word.

In Amos 9:1 God speaks again of the Assyrian invasion, "He who flees from them shall not get away, and he who escapes from them shall not be delivered."

Then in the succeeding verses He shows how no matter where they run, God will track them down. "Though they dig to hell... though they climb to heaven... though they hide at the bottom of the ocean..." It's a sobering passage. The Lord sounds like Joe Louis. He says to the sinner, "you can run, but you can't hide!"

Verse 8 says God will destroy the Hebrews, but not completely. He'll preserve a remnant with which to start over. These last verses speak of the last days...

God makes six promises to the Hebrew people...

In verse 9 He promises the *purification* of the people. He sifts them among the nations, and that's what God has been doing with Jews for the last 2000 years.

Verse 11 promises the *restoration* of the Davidic dynasty. Some people believe the raising of David's tabernacle refers to the rebuilding of the temple. It more probably refers to the restoration of an heir of David to the throne in Israel.

Verse 12 speaks of Israel's *domination* over her enemies.

Verse 13, the *cultivation* of the land of Israel.

Verse 14, the *accumulation* of the Jewish exiles back to the land.

And verse 15, the *perpetuation* of the nation. God says to the wandering Jew – the sifted house of Jacob - **“I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them.”** And God is faithful to His promises.

Notice, two kingdoms are mentioned... By the time the Minor Prophets wrote, the once united empire of David and Solomon had been divided.

Twelve tribes split into *two kingdoms*. The ten northern tribes formed a kingdom called "*Israel*." The two southernmost tribes went by the name of the largest tribe, "*Judah*." The Hebrew nation split - north and south.

Did you hear about the man who went to see his doctor? When he walked into the examination room there was a dog and a cat. The dog was wagging its tail, and the cat was peering around the room.

The presence of the two pets didn't seem to bother the doctor, and neither was it mentioned by the patient. After the exam the patient went to the front desk to settle up. He noticed an extra charge.

He inquired, "*What are these extra fees?*" The reception told him, "*That's for the lab report and the cat scan.*"

During the middle of the 8th century BC – 100 years after Joel - a flurry of prophets shouted God's Word to both the northern and southern kingdoms.

To the nation Judah, God sent the prophets Isaiah and Micah.

And to the northern kingdom of Israel He sent Hosea, Jonah, *and Amos*.

“Cat Scan” is an acronym for “Computerized Axial Tomography” - a noninvasive diagnostic tool used by physicians to examine a patient’s medical condition. The technology is sometimes called a “CT Scan.”

A cat scan is a sophisticated X-ray that rotates around your body and sends out multiple beams of radiation. It takes cross-sectional pictures.

The scanner photographically dissects your body into thin slices that the computer software reassembles into detailed images. A cat scan gives a doctor a multi-dimensional view of a patient’s insides. CT Scans are a quick way to examine a person’s chest cavity, or abdomen, or pelvis.

Cat Scans are used to detect a wide range of ailments and injuries.

There is a section of Scripture I think of as **Spiritual Cat Scans**. The last twelve books of the OT are commonly known as the Minor Prophets.

We like to call Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel the **Major Prophets**.

Then starting with Hosea, the next 12 books are **Minor Prophets**.

And note the distinction has to do with *size* not *significance*. Each of the Major Prophets averages 46 chapters - the Minor Prophets just 6. Yet Joel and Amos and Zephaniah are just as inspired by God, and vital to us, as Isaiah and Ezekiel. **“The minor prophets pack a major message.”**

These Minor Prophets are **Spiritual Cat Scans**. God puts the patient - usually the nation Israel or Judah - on a stretcher, slides them into the X-ray tube, spins around them taking slices of what’s going on under the surface of their national life - then spits out a picture and a diagnosis.

On the surface of the nation, there’s buying and selling – kids go to school or folks head to work – there are weddings, births, celebrations, and graduations taking place. In most cases it’s business as usual.

But God let’s the prophets see what’s going on inside, under the surface of people’s lives. And in many cases there are cancers growing, and organ disease, and hidden malignancies that would’ve been undetected without the scan. These prophecies were God’s attempt to save His people.

For the next 12 weeks we’re going to study the Minor Prophets.

We’ll take one prophet a week – *introduce his background, spell out His circumstances, summarize His message* – then *explore how the prophet’s message*

applies to our lives today. And I think you'll be surprised at just how timely, relevant, and applicable these prophecies will prove to be...

These ancient Cat Scans may just help us diagnose our problems – even provide us a cure, and get us on the road to spiritual health.

This morning we'll look at another of these prophets, **Amos.**