



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# “SHEPHERD OF TEKOA”

John Galbreath  
Bible Study Series

Text: Amos 7, 8  
Date: December 16, 1956

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on December 16, 1956.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Amos 7 and 8).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

The following prayer was included in the bulletin:

Eternal God, who has formed all hearts to love thee and created all desired to be unsatisfied save in thee, quicken within our souls a continuing longing to worship thee. Wherever we may be, enable us to draw near to thee in spirit and in truth. In quietness and confidence we would open the door that thou mayest enter. Do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

We bring to thee our consciences, dulled and insensitive. Quick them by thy holiness. We bring to thee our minds, captured by the trivial and partial. Feed them with thy truth. We lift before thee our imaginations, stained by impurity. Purge them by thy beauty. We lift our hearts, wherein selfishness dwells. Open them to thy love. Into thy hands we place our wayward wills. Fashion them to thy purpose.

Send us from our worship into the affairs of life so strengthened within by thy Spirit that we may be co-workers with thee, revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## I. Introduction

### A. The divided kingdom.

1. The military greatness of Israel under Saul, David and Solomon was due largely to the political vacuum at the time.
2. With increasing influence of other nations, Israel became decreasingly influential.
3. With the split, Judah was about the size of Allegheny County, and Israel somewhat larger.
4. The caliber of kings ranged from bad to mediocre.
5. But the period that brought Israel's political bankruptcy brought the greatest advances, and deepest spiritual insights of the Old Testament.

### B. Religiously, as well as politically, Israel was inclined to live from the impetus of occasional great leaders.

1. Moses' commandments and personality dominated the religious life of Israel for two hundred years.
2. Samuel and Nathan, under the period of the monarchy gave undergirding to carry them through two hundred more.
3. Elijah and Elisha, who came to spiritual ascendancy under King Ahab, re-established the supremacy of Jehovah worship.
4. With Amos began a final chapter of Israel's spiritual pilgrimage.
  - a) *He was the first of the "Writing Prophets" -- whose influence was more to be felt in later generations than their own.*
5. Amos is not mentioned in the other books, for they scarcely caused a ripple upon the generation in which they lived.

## II. The Times of Amos.

### A. Might have been characterized on the surface as a period of peace, prosperity and progress.

1. Assyria had put down Israel's principal enemies
2. Commerce was good, for there was great trade through the land.
3. Her armies had been able to defend her borders, and occasionally whip a neighboring country just to make sure they remained peaceable.

### B. A "Back to church" period.

1. Jehu had with ferocity put down Baal worship.
  - a) *The great conflict between Jehovah and the false gods had been rather conclusively settled.*
2. The sacrifices were very bountiful.
3. Worship was accompanied by great music -- by choirs, with violin accompaniment.
4. The places of religious pilgrimage were well patronized.
5. The religious holidays were regularly and sumptuously patronized.
6. Tithes -- over paid
7. Injustice in the land
  - a) *The poor exploited for their labor.*
  - b) *Usurious rates for borrowing.*
  - c) *The poor denied justice in the courts, for the judges were subject to a bribe.*
  - d) *Even the coat was taken from those in debt.*
8. Luxury and carousing in high places.
  - a) *Chapter 4: "Listen you cows of Bashan."*

### III. Bethel

**A. In the midst of one of these "solemn assemblies" at Bethel, there appeared a burly shepherd, uncouth in appearance.**

1. Heads turned, as though to ask, "Who let him in?"
2. Unabashed, he went before them and spoke, "Thus says the Lord..."
3. The prophecy against Damascus -- threshing sledges. (chapters 1, 2)
  - a) *Gaza -- enslavement for pay*
  - b) *Edom -- cruelty, born of revenge*
  - c) *Ammonites -- excessive cruelty in conquest -- disemboweling even those with child.*
  - d) *Moab -- for sacrilege*
  - e) *Judah -- apostacy*

#### **B. Indictment of Israel**

1. The plumb line -- to measure their righteousness.
2. A basket of fruit -- ready for decay and rottenness.
3. "Jeroboam, will die by the sword, and Israel will be carried away into exile."

**C. Amaziah, the high priest, sends word to the King, Jeroboam, to have the man silenced.**

1. "O seer of visions, go flee to the land of Judah, and prophecy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."
2. Amos' reply -- your wife shall be a harlot in the streets, and your sons and daughters shall die by the sword, and your land shall be parceled out by line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land.

#### **D. The offenses of Israel**

1. "I hate, I despise your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them. And the peace offerings of your fatted beasts, I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; To the melody of your harp I will not listen. But let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. (Chapter 5:21)

#### IV. The Import of Amos

A. The prophets before had been so concerned about false gods, that establishment of the worship of Jehovah seemed in itself the end.

B. They had merely substituted the name of their gods, and life had changed not at all.

1. The only proof of our loyalty to God lies in our relationship to our fellow man. "Prepare to meet thy god."

C. The monotheism

1. Jehovah is no tribal god, but the god of all nations.

D. "Jehovah's Witness"

1. The Witness who came to Bethel a year ago, made such an obnoxious demonstration that he had to be thrown out.

2. He spoke, not out of love, but indignation.

3. He left no value upon those to whom he spoke.

#### V. Conclusion

Southern Baptist Convention -- announced their increase in giving, new congregations, new members, but no word concerning injustice within their land.

**Study Questions -- Part I**

*Bible Reading:* Amos 7 and 8

Amos 7 says:

<sup>1</sup> Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, he formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. <sup>2</sup> And it came to pass that, when they made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small. <sup>3</sup> Jehovah repented concerning this: It shall not be, saith Jehovah. <sup>4</sup> Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, the Lord Jehovah called to content by fire; and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land. <sup>5</sup> Then said I, O Lord Jehovah, cease, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small. <sup>6</sup> Jehovah repented concerning this: this also shall not be, saith the Lord Jehovah. <sup>7</sup> Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. <sup>8</sup> And Jehovah said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more; <sup>9</sup> and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. <sup>10</sup> Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. <sup>11</sup> For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. <sup>12</sup> Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: <sup>13</sup> but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house. <sup>14</sup> Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees: <sup>15</sup> and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. <sup>16</sup> Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac; <sup>17</sup> therefore thus saith Jehovah: Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

- Why do you think the chapter specifically mentions Israel and the house of Isaac but doesn't reference Abraham, as so many other passages do?

Amos 8 says:

<sup>1</sup> Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, a basket of summer fruit. <sup>2</sup> And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said Jehovah unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. <sup>3</sup> And the songs of the temple shall be wailings in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah: the dead bodies shall be many: in every place shall they cast them forth with silence. <sup>4</sup> Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, <sup>5</sup> saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; <sup>6</sup> that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat? <sup>7</sup> Jehovah hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. <sup>8</sup> Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River; and it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. <sup>10</sup> And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. <sup>11</sup> Behold, the days come, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah. <sup>12</sup> And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Jehovah, and shall not find it. <sup>13</sup> In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst. <sup>14</sup> They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, As thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, As the way of Beer-sheba liveth; they shall fall, and never rise up again.

- Why do you think this chapter speaks of Jacob?
- The chapter speaks of a famine of the words of Jehovah. Do you see places in our world today where such a famine seems to exist? How can we help to end that famine?



## Study Questions -- Part II

*Sermon :*

I.A.2. -- What can we as a country learn from Israel's lesson losing influence?

I.A.5. -- Why do you think having society facing problems led to great spiritual insights?

I.B. -- Who do you think have been some of America's great political leaders? What about spiritual leaders? Is anyone on both lists?

I.B.2. -- There is a handwritten comment "Israel lived off their legacy."

II.B. -- Where do you think we stood in terms of being in a "back to church" period in 1956? Where do we stand today?

II.B.3. -- There is a handwritten note: "Under John".

II.B. -- Points 7 and 8 were originally placed in III.D.

II.B.7. -- What do you see as the five most serious injustices in our country today? In the world? What can we as Christians do to address them?

III.B.1. -- What would a plumb line look like for the America of today? Would it be truer or worse than in 1956?

III.C. -- Do you think we, as individuals, have a tendency to send away those who speak a truth we don't want to hear? As a church?

III.D.1. -- The passage "let justice roll down like water" is a famous one. What can someone do, as an individual, to help that happen?

IV.B.1. -- In what ways does your relationship to others show your loyalty to God?

IV.D. -- Dr. Galbreath seems to be referring to someone who came to the community in 1956. What might someone today accuse our community of? Would that person be right? How can we as Christians begin to fix those things?

V. Are there faith communities you see that seem on the surface to be prospering but may in fact be simply talking a good game? How does a congregation avoid letting that happen?