

CHAPTER 9

In this chapter we have,

I. Judgment threatened, which the sinners shall not escape (v. 1-4), which an almighty power shall inflict (v. 5, 6), which the people of Israel have deserved as a sinful people (v. 7, 8); and yet it shall not be the utter ruin of their nation (v. 8), for a remnant of good people shall escape (v. 9). But the wicked ones shall perish (v. 10).

II. Mercy promised, which was to be bestowed in the latter days (v. 11-15), as appears by the application of it to the days of the Messiah, ~~4456~~ Acts 15:16. And with those comfortable promises, after all the foregoing rebukes and threatenings, the book concludes.

~~3001~~ AMOS 9:1-10

THE CERTAINTY OF THE SINNER'S DOOM

We have here the justice of God passing sentence upon a provoking people; and observe,

1. With what solemnity the sentence is passed. The prophet saw in vision *the Lord standing upon the altar* (v. 1), the altar of burnt-offerings; for the *Lord has a sacrifice*, and multitudes must fall as victims to his justice. He is removed from the *mercy-seat* between the *cherubim*, and stands upon *the altar*, the *judgment-seat*, on which the fire of God used to fall, to devour the sacrifices. He stands upon *the altar*, to show that the ground of his controversy with this people was their profanation of his holy things; here he stands to avenge the quarrel of his altar, as also to signify that the sin of the house of Israel, like that of the house of Eli, shall *not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever*, ~~0034~~ 1 Samuel 3:14. He stands on the altar, to prohibit sacrifice. Now the order given is, *Smite the lintel of the door* of the temple, the chapter, smite it with such a blow *that the posts may shake*, and *cut them*, wound them *in the head, all of them*; break down the doors of God's house, or of the courts of his house, in token of this, that he is going out from it, and forsaking it, and then all judgments are breaking in upon it. Or it signifies the destruction of those in the first

place that should be as the door-posts to the nation for its defence, so that, they being broken down, it becomes as a *city without gates and bars*.

“Smite the king, who is as the lintel of the door, that the princes, who are as *the posts*, may *shake; cut them in the head*, cleave them down, *all of them*, as wood for the fire; and *I will slay the last of them*, the posterity of them, them and their families, or the *least* of them, them and all that are employed under them; or, I will *slay them all*, them and all that remain of them, till it comes to the last man; the slaughter shall be general.” There is no living for those on whom God has said, *I will slay* them, no standing before his sword.

2. What effectual care is taken that none shall escape the execution of this sentence. This is enlarged upon here, and is intended for warning to all that *provoke the Lord to jealousy*. Let sinners read it, and tremble; as there is no fighting it out with God, so there is no fleeing from him. His judgments, when they come with commission, as they will overpower the strongest that think to outface them, so they will overtake the swiftest that think to out-run them, v. 2. Those of them that flee, and take to their heels, shall soon be out of breath, and shall not flee away out of the reach of danger; for, as sometimes *the wicked flee when none pursues*, so he cannot flee away when God pursues, though *he would fain flee out of his hand*. Nay, *he that escapes of them*, that thinks he has gained his point, *shall not be delivered*. *Evil pursues sinners*, and will arrest them. This is here enlarged upon by showing that wherever sinners flee for shelter from God's justice, it will overtake them, and the shelter will prove but a *refuge of lies*. What David says of the ubiquity of God's presence (~~139~~ Psalm 139:7-10) is here said of the extent of God's power and justice.

(1.) Hell itself, though it has its name in English from its being *hilled*, or *covered over*, or *hidden*, cannot hide them (v. 2): “Though *they dig into hell*, into the centre of the earth, or the darkest recesses of it, yet *thence shall my hand take them*, and bring them forth to be made public monuments of divine justice.” The grave is a hiding-place to the righteous from the malice of the world (~~17~~ Job 3:17), but it shall be no hiding-place to the righteous from the justice of God; thence God's hands shall take them, when they shall rise in the great day to *everlasting shame and contempt*.

(2.) Heaven, though it has its name from being *heaved*, or lifted up, shall not put them out of reach of God's judgments; as hell cannot hide them, so

heaven will not. Though they *climb up to heaven* in their conceit, yet *thence will I bring them down*. Those whom God brings to heaven by his grace shall never be brought down; but those who climb thither themselves, by their own presumption, and confidence in themselves, will be brought down and filled with shame.

(3.) *The top of Carmel*, one of the highest parts of the dust of the world in that country, shall not protect them: “*Though they hide themselves there, where they imagine nobody will look for them, I will search, and take them out thence; neither the thickest bushes, nor the darkest caves, in the top of Carmel, will serve to hide them.*”

(4.) *The bottom of the sea* shall not serve to conceal them; though they think to hide themselves there, even there the judgments of God shall find them out, and lay hold on them: *Thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them, the crooked serpent, even the dragon that is in the sea,* ~~(207)~~ Isaiah 27:1. They shall find their plague and death where they hope to find shelter and protection; diving will stand them in no more stead than climbing.

(5.) Remote countries will not befriend them, nor shall less judgments excuse them from greater (v. 4): *Thought they go into captivity before their enemies, who carry them to places at a great distance, and mingle them with their own people, among whom they seem to be lost, yet that shall not serve their turn: Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them,* the sword of the enemy, or one another's sword. When God judges he will overcome. That which binds on all this, makes their escape impossible and their ruin inevitable, is that God will *set his eyes upon them for evil, and not for good*. His eyes are in every place, are upon all men and upon all the ways of men, upon some for good, to *show himself strong* on their behalf, but upon others for evil, to take notice of their sins (~~(137)~~ Job 13:27) and take all opportunities of punishing them for their sins. *Their case is truly miserable who have the providence of God: and all the dispensations of it, against them, working for their hurt.*

3. What a great and mighty God he is that passes this sentence upon them, and will take the executing of it into his own hands. Threatenings are more or less formidable according to the power of him that threatens. We laugh at impotent wrath; but the wrath of God is not so; it is omnipotent wrath. *Who knows the power* of it? What he had before said he would do (~~(108)~~ Amos 8:8) is here repeated, that he would *make the land melt* and

tremble, and *all that dwell therein mourn*, that the judgment should *rise up wholly like a flood*, and the country should be *drowned*, and laid under water, *as by the flood of Egypt*, v. 5. But is he able to make his words good? Yes, certainly he is; he does but *touch the land* and *it melts*, *touch the mountains* and they smoke; he can do it with the greatest ease, for,

(1.) He is *the Lord God of hosts*, who undertakes to do it, the God who has all the power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck and call, who having made them all, and given them their several capacities, makes what use he pleases of them and all their powers. Very miserable is the case of those who have the Lord of hosts against them, for they have hosts against them, the whole creation at war with them.

(2.) He is the Creator and governor of the upper world: *It is he that builds his stories in the heavens*, the celestial orbs, or spheres, one over another, as so many stories in a high and stately palace. They are his, for he built them at first, when he said, *Let there be a firmament, and he made the firmament*; and he builds them still, is continually building them, not that they need repair, but by his providence he still upholds them; his power is the pillars of heaven, by which it is borne up. Now he that has the command of those stories is certainly to be feared, for thence, as from a castle, he can fire upon his enemies, or cast upon them great hailstones, as on the Canaanites, or make the stars in their courses, the furniture of those stories, to fight against them, as against Sisera.

(3.) He has the management and command of this lower world too, in which we dwell, the terraqueous globe, both *earth* and *sea*, so that, which way soever his enemies think to make their escape, he will meet them, or to make opposition, he will match them. Do they think to make a land-fight of it? He *has founded his troop in the earth*, his troop of guards, which he has at command, and makes use of for the protection of his subjects and the punishment of his enemies. All the creatures on earth make one bundle (as the margin reads it), one bundle of arrows, out of which he takes what he pleases to discharge against the persecutors, ⁴⁰⁷³Psalm 7:13. They are all one *army*, one *body*, so closely are they connected, and so harmoniously and so much in concert do they act for the accomplishing of their Creator's purposes. Do they think to make a sea-fight of it? He will be too hard for them there, for he has the waters of the sea at command; even its waves, the most tumultuous rebellious waters, do obey him. He *calls for the waters of the sea* in the course of his

common providence, *causes vapours to ascend* out of it, and *pours them out* in showers, the small rain and the great rain of his strength, *upon the face of the earth*; this was mentioned before as a reason why we should *seek the Lord* (~~3088~~ Amos 5:8) and make him our friend, as it is here made a reason why we should fear him and dread having him for our enemy.

4. How justly God passes this sentence upon the people of Israel. He does not destroy them by an act of sovereignty, but by an act of righteousness; for (v. 8), it is a *sinful kingdom*, and the *eyes of the Lord* are upon it, discovering it to be so; he sees the great sinfulness of it, and therefore he will *destroy it from off the face of the earth*. Note, When those kingdoms that in name and profession were holy kingdoms, and kingdoms of priests, as Israel was, become sinful kingdoms, no other can be expected than that they should be cut off and abandoned. Let sinful kingdoms, and sinful families, and sinful persons too, see the eyes of the Lord upon them, observing all their wickedness, and reserving the notice of it for the day of reckoning and recompence. This being a sinful kingdom, see how light God makes of it, v. 7.

(1.) Of the relation wherein he stood to it: *Are you not as children of Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?* A sad change! Children of Israel become as children of the Ethiopians!

[1.] They were so in themselves; that was their sin. It is a thing to be greatly lamented that the children of Israel often become as children of the Ethiopians; this children of godly parents degenerate, and become the reverse of those that went before them. Those that were well-educated, and trained up in the knowledge and fear of God, and set out well, and promised fair, throw off their profession and become as bad as the worst. *How has the gold become dim!*

[2.] They were so in God's account, and that was their punishment. He valued them no more, though they were children of Israel, than if they had been *children of the Ethiopians*. We read of one in the title of Psalm 7 that was *Cush* (an *Ethiopian*, as some understand it) and yet a Benjamite. Those that by birth and profession are children of Israel, if they degenerate, and become wicked and vile, are to God no more than children of the Ethiopians. This is an intimation of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews in the days of the Messiah; because they embraced not the doctrine of Christ, the kingdom of God was taken from them, they were unchurched, and cast out of covenant, became as children of the

Ethiopians, and are so to this day. And it is true of those that are called Christians, but do not live up to their name and profession, that rest in the form of piety, but live under the power of reigning iniquity, that they are to God as children of the Ethiopians; he rejects them, and their services.

(2.) See how light he makes of the favours he had conferred upon them; they thought he would not, he could not, cast them off, and put them upon a level with other nations, because he had done that for them which he had not done for other nations, whereby they thought he was bound to them, so as never to leave them. “No,” says he, “The favours shown to you are not so distinguishing as you think they are: *Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?*” It is true I have; but I have also brought the *Philistines from Caphtor, or Cappadocia*, where they were natives, or captives, or both; they are called the *remnant of the country of Caphtor* (^{240B}Jeremiah 47:4), and the Philistim are joined with the Caphtorim, (¹⁰¹⁴Genesis 10:14). In like manner the Syrians were brought up from Kir when they had been carried away thither, (^{246B}2 Kings 16:9). Note, If God's Israel lose the peculiarity of their holiness, they lose the peculiarity of their privileges; and what was designed as a favour of special grace shall be set in another light, shall have its property altered, and shall become an act of *common providence*; if professors liken themselves to the world, God will level them with the world. And, if we live not up to the obligation of God's mercies, we forfeit the honour and comfort of them.

5. How graciously God will separate between the precious and the vile in the day of retribution. Though the wicked Israelites shall be as the wicked Ethiopians, and their being called Israelites shall stand them in no stead, yet the pious Israelites shall not be as the *wicked* ones; no, the *Judge of all the earth will do right*, more right than to *slay the righteous with the wicked*, (¹⁸⁵Genesis 18:25). His *eyes are upon the sinful kingdom*, to spy out those in it who preserve their integrity and swim against the stream, who sigh and cry for the abominations of their land, and they shall be marked for preservation, so that the destruction shall not be total: *I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob*, not ruin them by wholesale and in the gross, good and bad together, but I will distinguish, as becomes a righteous judge. The house of Israel shall be *sifted as corn is sifted*; they shall be greatly hurried, and shaken, and tossed, but still in the hands of God, in both his hands, as the sieve in the hands of him that sifts (v. 9): *I will sift the house of Israel among all nations*. Wherever they are shaken and scattered, God will have his eye upon them, and will take care to separate

between the corn and chaff, which was the thing he designed in sifting them.

(1.) The righteous ones among them, that are as the solid wheat, shall none of them perish; they shall be delivered either from or through the common calamities of the kingdom; *not the least grain shall fall on the earth*, so as to be lost and forgotten — not the least *stone* (so the word is), for the good corn is weighty as a stone in comparison with that which we call *light corn*. Note, Whatever shakings there may be in the world, God does and will effectually provide that none who are truly his shall be truly miserable.

(2.) The wicked ones among them who are hardened in their sins shall all of them perish, v. 10. See what a height of impiety they have come to: *They say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us*. They think they are innocent, and do not deserve punishment, or that the profession they make of relation to God will be their exemption and security from punishment, or that they shall be able to make their part good against the judgments of God, that they shall flee so swiftly from them that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them that they shall not prevent or surprise them. Note, Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the impenitent. But see what it will come to at last: *All the sinners* that thus flatter themselves, and affront God, shall *die by the sword*, the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of divine vengeance; yea, though they be the *sinners of my people*, for their profession shall not be their protection. Note, Evil is often nearest those that put it at the greatest distance from them.

~~<3091>~~ AMOS 9:11-15

PROMISES OF MERCY

To him to whom all the prophets bear witness this prophet, here in the close, bears his testimony, and speaks of *that day*, those days that shall come, in which God will do great things for his church, by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, for the rejecting of which the rejection of the Jews was foretold in the foregoing verses. The promise here is said to agree to the planting of the Christian church, and in that to be fulfilled, ~~<4455>~~ Acts 15:15-17. It is promised,

I. That in the Messiah the kingdom of David shall be restored (v. 11); the *tabernacle of David* it is called, that is, his house and family, which, though great and fixed, yet, in comparison with the kingdom of heaven, was mean and movable as a tabernacle. The church militant, in its present state, dwelling as in shepherds' tents to feed, as in soldiers' tents to fight, is the *tabernacle of David*. God's tabernacle is called the tabernacle of David because David desired and chose to *dwell in God's tabernacle for ever*, ~~438~~ Psalm 61:4. Now,

1. These tabernacles had fallen and gone to decay, the royal family was so impoverished, its power abridged, its honour stained, and laid in the dust; for many of that race degenerated, and in the captivity it lost the imperial dignity. Sore breaches were made upon it, and at length it was laid in ruins. So it was with the church of the Jews; in the latter days of its glory departed; it was like a tabernacle broken down and brought to ruin, in respect both of purity and of prosperity.

2. By Jesus Christ these tabernacles were raised and rebuilt. In him God's covenant with David had its accomplishment; and the glory of that house, which was not only sullied, but quite sunk, revived again; the *breaches* of it were *closed* and its *ruins raised up, as in the days of old*; nay, the spiritual glory of the family of Christ far exceeded the temporal glory of the family of David when it was at its height. In him also God's covenant with Israel had its accomplishment, and in the gospel-church the tabernacle of God was set up among men again, and raised up out of the ruins of the Jewish state. This is quoted in the first council at Jerusalem as referring to the calling in of the Gentiles and God's *taking out of them a people for his name*. Note, While the world stands God will have a church in it, and, if it be fallen down in one place and among one people, it shall be raised up elsewhere.

II. That that kingdom shall be enlarged, and the territories of it shall extend far, by the accession of many countries to it (v. 12), that the house of David may possess the *remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen*, that is, that Christ may have them given him for his *inheritance*, even the *utmost parts of the earth for his possession*, ~~438~~ Psalm 2:8. Those that had been strangers and enemies shall become willing faithful subjects to the Son of David, shall be *added to the church*, or those of them that are *called by my name, saith the Lord*, that is, that belong to the election of grace and are ordained to eternal life (~~438~~ Acts 13:48), for it is true of the

Gentiles as well as of the Jews that *the election hath obtained and the rest were blinded*, ^{<611>}Romans 11:7. Christ died to *gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*, here said to be those that were called by his name. The promise is to all that are *afar off*, even as many of them as *the Lord our God shall call*, ^{<412>}Acts 2:39. St. James expounds this as a promise *that the residue of men should seek after the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called*. But may the promise be depended upon? Yes, the Lord says this, who does this, who can do it, who has determined to do it, the power of whose grace is engaged for the doing of it, and with whom saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us.

III. That in the kingdom of the Messiah there shall be great plenty, an abundance of all good things that the country produces (v. 13): *The ploughman shall overtake the reaper*, that is, there shall be such a plentiful harvest every year, and so much corn to be gathered in, that it shall last all summer, even till autumn, when it is time to begin to plough again; and in like manner the vintage shall continue till seed-time, and there shall be such abundance of grapes that even the *mountains shall drop new wine* into the vessels of the grape-gatherers, and the hills that were dry and barren shall be moistened and shall melt with the *fatness or mellowness* (as we call it) *of the soil*. Compare this with ^{<212>}Joel 2:24, and 3:18. This must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which all those are, and shall be, blessed with, who are in sincerity added to Christ and his church; they shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God's house, with the graces and comforts of his Spirit; they shall have bread, the bread of life, to *strengthen their hearts*, and the wine of divine consolations to *make them glad — meat indeed and drink indeed* — all the benefit that comes to the souls of men from the word and Spirit of God. These had been long confined to the vineyard of the Jewish church; divine revelation, and the power that attended it, were to be found only within that enclosure; but in gospel-times the mountains and hills of the Gentile world shall be enriched with these privileges by the gospel of Christ preached, and professed, and received in the power of it. When great multitudes were converted to the faith of Christ, and nations were born at once, when the preachers of the gospel were *always caused to triumph* in the success of their preaching, then the *ploughman overtook the reaper*; and when, the Gentile churches were *enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge, and*

all manner of *spiritual gifts* (~~1~~ 1 Corinthians 1:5), then the *mountains dropped sweet wine*.

IV. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be well peopled; as the country shall be replenished, so shall the cities be; there shall be mouths for this meat, v. 14. Those that were carried captives shall be brought back out of their captivity; their enemies shall not be able to detain them in the land of their captivity, nor shall they themselves incline to settle in it, but the remnant shall return, and shall *build the waste cities and inhabit them*, shall form themselves into Christian churches and set up pure doctrine, worship, and discipline among them, according to the gospel charter, by which Christ's cities are incorporated; and they shall enjoy the benefit and comfort thereof; they shall *plant vineyards*, and *make gardens*. Though the mountains and hills drop wine, and the privileges of the gospel-church are laid in common, yet they shall enclose for themselves, not to monopolize these privileges, to the exclusion of others, but to appropriate and improve these privileges, in communion with others, and they shall *drink the wine*, and *eat the fruit*, of their own *vineyards and gardens*; for those that take pains in religion, as men must do about their vineyards and gardens, shall have both the pleasure and profit of it. The *bringing again* of the *captivity* of God's Israel, which is here promised, may refer to the cancelling of the ceremonial law, which had been long to God's Israel as a *yoke of bondage*, and the investing of them in the liberty wherewith Christ came to make his church free, ~~1~~ Galatians 5:1.

V. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall take such deep rooting in the world as never to be rooted out of it (v. 15): *I will plant them upon their land*. God's spiritual Israel shall be planted by the right hand of God himself upon the land assigned them, and *they shall no more be pulled up out of it*, as the old Jewish church was. God will preserve them from throwing themselves out of it by a total apostasy, and will preserve them from being thrown out of it by malice of their enemies; the church may be corrupted, but shall not quite forsake God, may be persecuted, but shall not quite be forsaken of God, so that the gates of hell, neither with their temptations nor with their terrors, shall prevail against it. Two things secure the perpetuity of the church: —

1. God's grants to it: *It is the land which I have given them*; and God will confirm and maintain his own grants. The part he has given to his people

is that good part which shall never be taken from them; he will not revoke his grant, and all the powers of earth and hell shall not invalidate it.

2. Its interest in him: He is *the Lord thy God*, who has said it, and will make it good, *thine, O Israel!* who shall *reign for ever* as thine *unto all generations*. And because he lives the church shall live also.