

Kings and Prophets 15-02-13b

We continue our study now. We're in Kings and Prophets and this is the prophets part. We spent way too much time on the kings So we're catching up.

We're just obsessing on the prophets for a while and we have our third writing prophet after Jonah and Hosea We have Amos the words of Amos who is among the sheep breeders of Tekoa which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. This is old leprosy on the forehead Uzziah. I'm I'm too cool for staying in the palace I'm going to go in and offer holy fire before God and he got smacked down with leprosy and the days of Jeroboam Jeroboam the second and we know that he is going to Come to a bad end The son of Joash king of Israel two years before the earthquake we'll talk about the two years an earthquake a little bit later, but the clues we have so far because What we're looking for here is not a detailed exegesis or an extended analysis, what is the big idea? What's the big idea of the the book of Amos? What was God's purpose in unleashing this prophecy at this time and then preserving it in his word all the way down to our time? Well, we've gotten our clues in his name in his occupation and in his location so his if you want to be fancy, you can say his denomination his occupation and his location and He is a burden bearer He is in the sheep business the animal husbandry business and We know about Tekoa Tekoa is strongly associated with southern Judah with Caleb with victory with conquest Give me the mountain full of Giants Even if I am the oldest man in Israel and so then he begins and Declares his prophecy beginning in verse 2 and we'll look at that, but we want to finish Identifying Amos and normally we'd wait and get these other clues in their context But because we're in big idea mode, we're gonna skip down and find them directly.

So there are three big biographical details that Amos Let's out with here in this prophecy. The first is that he's a sheep guy from Tekoa. The second one is in chapter 7 verse 14 Amos chapter 7 verse 14 Amos is answering and talking to Amaziah who is Amaziah? He's the father of Uzziah remember the co-regency They overlapped we get the idea.

Maybe Amaziah got messed up when he boldly went where no man had gone before and tried to conquer the northern kingdom and got Defeated and kind of sent back home on a stretcher. And so his son Uzziah co-reigns with him for 25 odd years but this is that Amaziah he is still the king of Judah Formally at this time and so Amos is talking to Amaziah and he says look I'm not a prophet and You see the word was is in italics there. All it says is I know prophet Me not a prophet not my not my business not my occupation Instead And I'm not the son of a prophet We don't know who his father is many times people are identified by their father Amos doesn't give his patrilineage.

I Was no prophet nor was I a son of a prophet. I was a sheep breeder and once again, we have the Word sheep breeder in English, but it's a different Hebrew word This is not one of the nook name and it is not a knock out or a no-cade This is a different word, this is Boker B-o-k-e-r from Bacar b-a-k-a-r But you remember the o-e infix makes it a participle and somebody doing a thing continuously he is a Boker well This is another sort of unique word in Scripture It basically

means a herdsman And it doesn't necessarily refer to sheep If you look this up in the Root mode and find out what it is Associated with Bacar is a word that means to to search out to secure to To study in the sense of study to show yourself approved, you know to diligently apply yourself toward a thing Bacar has an Arabic cognate that means to split or divide hence the Non-concrete meaning to discern to to be a discerner Rightly dividing the word of truth means properly discerning Knowing what goes on which side? And this is the Old Testament Equivalent of that. So for example in Leviticus 13 36 the priest examines the guy that's got this the skin spot and If the scale has spread over the skin the priest doesn't have to Determine what color the hair is it's growing out of this is all about spots and molds and various kinds of surface maladies but it says the priest shall examine him Bacar and This Came to mean even to investigate But it also is the word for ox cattle herd Beasts of meat big big animals Bacar It's used this way about a hundred and eighty times in the Old Testament so People have said well Amos was a cowboy he was He was a rough He was just kind of a jack-of-all-trades when it came to animal husbandry.

He was a shepherd Part-time and he was a cowboy part-time. He was out managing the the flocks and the herds And of course that is Possible because we don't have a wealth of detail here but We know the region around Tekoa was rich pasturage between Tekoa and Bethlehem. There's lots of grazing Territory they're easy to to raise animals Well in this same verse we get the third detail He says I was a it says in your New King James sheep breeder change that to herdsmen We'll use herdsmen for now.

We'll use sheep breeder just for convenience I don't think sheep breeder gets it. There's nothing about sheep and Bacar means cow not sheep We've got zone as the Hebrew word for sheep, and we've got other words for flocks But the third detail is he is it says here a tender of sycamore fruit Now sycamore is easy in Hebrew because our word sycamore derives Through a long chain of events from this. This is shikmim shiq Apostrophe m. I am shikmim sycamore sycamore but he is a boker and he is a bolus Boles Boker and boles both those words occur in 714 He is a boker a herdsman will say and he is a boker shikmim I'm sorry a bolus shikmim So he does something with sycamores Well The consensus of opinion is that these are sycamore figs and he is a guy who tends this fruit these sycamore figs and The idea of balas here.

That's a real interesting word you talk about going down a rabbit trail the the root of this Boles balas is Really pretty pretty interesting for example Balaam's name Seems to derive from this the B-L-A part a balam balas bala it's a primitive root that has the idea of Devouring or destroying or swallowing up engulfing grabbing hold of It's been translated to pinch or to pierce has the idea of taking a thing and getting some kind of a grip on it possibly to the point of piercing or Gripping it to the point where you can't see it anymore. It is swallowed up And so in the hit by ale which is the reflexive Stem in Hebrew, it means something sort of implodes and goes away. It's destroyed it Just like it It is swallowed up into nothingness.

It swallows itself. Basically. It's like the snake eating its own tail thing and it just pops out of existence Is the the mental picture and so it's translated It only occurs once or twice In in

anything like this form and it's translated to devour or swallow or a thing swallowed so This has been variously construed to be he's a a fig picker He's a a a fig piercer there is a little known fact that I Discovered this past week in researching this and it may explain something I saw across the alley our neighbors across the alley had a fig tree They planted next to their driveway But they were very disappointed because it popped out with just dozens and dozens and dozens of these little green figs But then they they never went anywhere.

They never got big enough to eat. They didn't ripen. They just kind of sat there's little green Nobules and then they just kind of all started drying up and falling off Then they said well, you know, we went to all the trouble to grow this fig tree We've got the nice big fig leaves, but when I go to it for fruit, I am disappointed it's it's not fit to eat and Much as Jesus did in Crucifixion week they chopped the tree down.

They the tree is no more They couldn't weather it with a word. So they just buzzed it down and it's it's gone However, I was researching and I was actually talking to the lady About this when I discovered it There is a species or two or three there are some species of fig where the only way the fruit will ripen is if you slit the fruit case and some kind of way it lets the thing expand and ripen and Without this help, maybe it was done in nature by a bird or by a fig picker like Amos Maybe it was his job to go and ensure that this fruit would come to maturity that it would ripen properly and and in several places they they argue that this Ballas root has an idea of piercing the figs so that they'll ripen but remember now He's in Toccoa. He's in this area.

And so he's doing three different things regardless of the specific meaning of these Virtual ha pox legomena here. We know three things about Amos. He deals with sheep.

He deals with cattle and he deals with Figs fruit tree tree fruit of the fig type here's what I would suggest to you and If you remember our study, I think it was a year ago Christmas about the tower outside of Bethlehem where the sacrificial sheep were Prepared and then taken the short distance to Jerusalem and to the temple precincts Very likely they Not only did this with sheep, but also with cattle Because they've got to make the same journey to the same place for the same purpose And experience the same fate and that this was a staging area just outside Bethlehem And this is where the shepherds who were watching flocks by night Were located when the angel came and announced and then with him as the heavenly host Praising God saying glory to God in the highest on earth. Peace toward men of goodwill. You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in the manger and these professional sheep raisers were the ones who went and were the first Witnesses outside his own family to the Christ child Amos It's not outside the realm he seems to fit the description of this profession a Little bit further down the road back where they are pastured where they are grazing where they are being grown and and Animal husbandry is taking place So that they will then go to Jew to Bethlehem so that they will then go to Jerusalem this practice went on for centuries and Given the description of Misha as someone who is Raising these sheep for purposes beyond just the commercial and the the table This would fit very well and these unique names That Amos identifies himself with the reason they are not prevalent and and Found often in Scripture is

this was a specialized Function this was a very limited Profession and these men knew a lot about Ensuring the quality of the sacrificial animal You could imagine that if they had to Pen them up.

They would be careful to use materials that would not scar a sheep or An ox a calf if it gets a blemish it can't be used for the purpose So they have special handling methods they have they have areas where they know there are not a lot of rocks They're not going to have broken legs. They're not going to have the damage falls They they have this whole area between Bethlehem and Tekoa to Raise these special animals that are Qualified for sacrifice that we have even in the modern day some equivalents where where animals will be raised with under special conditions for a certain purpose with that in mind Let's for the sake of argument Assume that that we're right about this and when Amos says I was one of these guys What do you think the message is going to be? Concerning itself with in this prophetic book We have seen that there is a responsibility to your fellow man to the surrounding people the nations there's a responsibility to God in the covenant sense and the relationship sense in the returning and reflecting of divine love sense Here what we find oddly enough having Looked at Amos's identity is the book of Amos concerns itself with Righteousness and the responsibility for obedience Doing what is acceptable and pleasing in the sight of the Lord in the New Testament We have Romans 12 1 and 2 present your bodies a living sacrifice. Holy Don't be conformed to the world be transformed be set apart These animals were set apart they were husbanded and cared for and and brought to the point of use Separately from all of the other flocks and herds in Israel.

They they were sanctified as it were from from birth from the outset They were set apart much as God had set apart Israel to be his unique place of presence place of glory place of testimony place of calling and Amos appears to be in this business. So he's not some rough-hewn Shepherd with leathery skin out there in the Sun with any old Bunch of sheep and he's not any old cowboy Out there, you know under the stars he is Involved it would appear in this special region between Tekoa and Bethlehem where these animals are raised for sacrifice and his third identifier is One who ensures that the sycamore trees bear their figgy fruits Successfully he is Involved in ensuring that these Sycamore figs bear their fruit as they should it isn't a great leap of imagination to imagine the Lord Jesus Thinking of Amos as he approaches the fig tree and finds that its fruit is not ready It was a unique tree as it says it wasn't the season for figs But he's disappointed nonetheless why because this tree was different than the other trees It doesn't matter what's in season for the rest of the fig trees the Lord Jesus Expected there to be fruit on this tree, and it wasn't there and he said if you're not bearing fruit now then Don't bear fruit ever and As they go by the next day. They see that that tree has withered in place in the space of one day Representing the nation and its failure to bear that unique fruit in that unique season that God had assigned to Israel They're not subject to the seasons of the rest of the nations.

They are God's unique fruit tree they are God's unique flock and heard they are God's unique place of Service and worship and the reflection of righteousness It's supposed to happen in

Israel and Amos is closely connected with all of these so now if you survey What the book is about? Just take a look at at your headings in the book of Amos And you can see that even in broad strokes It comports with this idea Look for example at chapter 2 God's wrath against Moab Judah and Israel Moab you would expect These are the offspring of lots incestuous union with his daughter But then in verse 4 for three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not turn away its punishment because they have despised the law of the Lord This is a this is a different aspect of relationship with God, isn't it? It's not the Gomer Hosea picture. It's not You're such a disappointment when it comes to fellowship and when it comes to communion and when it comes to unity of purpose and of outlook and of expectation this is Obligation this is obedience Obviously there is overlap but the emphasis here is your Observances your expressed righteousness is utterly lacking They have to part they have despised the law of the Lord have not kept his commandments Their lies lead them astray lies which their fathers followed I will send a fire upon Judah and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. You can only imagine how it must have Pained the Lord God to say this Knowing what Jerusalem is and what it means the capital city of David the place of the temple the place of the Residence the Ark of the Covenant and the Shekinah and and so many things and to say that he's going to destroy it with fire Could not have been an easy thing Thus says the Lord for three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not turn away its punishment They sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor and pervert the way of the humble And it goes on to talk about these defiling sinful acts that are their preoccupation instead of pursuing righteousness instead of being obedient instead of fulfilling their their covenant obligations in terms of ritual and in terms of model behavior before one another and the nations You look at chapter 3 verse 2 you only have I known of all the families of the earth therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities I Know you we are in covenant relationship, and you have a responsibility and you have a knowledge for righteousness you've ignored that and Judgment is coming and verse 9 proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod and in the palaces in the land of Egypt and say Assemble on the mountains of Samaria See great tumults in our midst and the oppressed within her for they do not know to do right Hosea relationship evils Amos procedural behavioral obedience evils You do not do right says the Lord you store up violence and robbery in their palaces and Then he pronounces judgment to follow in chapter 4 hear the word you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria who Oppressed the poor crushed the needy who say to your husbands bring wine Let us drink the Lord God is sworn by his holiness behold the days will come upon you And he will take you away with fish hooks and your posterity with fish hooks You will go out through broken walls each one straight ahead You will be cast into harm on says the Lord come to Bethel and transgress at Gilgal multiply transgressions Bring your sacrifices every morning your tithes every three days who is Amos? Where does he come from down in Judah the place where these holy and sanctified and carefully husband and and and prepared sacrifices are made? to Pronounce in the north the heinous pollution of the sacrificial system and the idolatry and the perverse Calf worship that they have up there in Dan and Bethel and at Gilgal offers sacrifice of Thanksgiving with leaven Proclaiming announced the freewill offerings for this you love you children of Israel says the Lord leavened offerings.

I Gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities and lack of bread in all your places yet You have not returned to me says the Lord. I disciplined you with famine You know your teeth are clean because you're not eating anything. I withheld rain from you that didn't work either Two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied yet You have not returned to me says the Lord verse 8 Verse 10 I sent among you a plague after the manor of Egypt your young men I killed with the sword along with your captive horses.

I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils This is the dead the defeated and the slain in the camps yet You have not returned to me God says look at all the different things. I have tried to wake you up So We've got a little bit more that we'll talk about in Amos But this is enough to to help us put it in the context of the first two Not only as we examine ourselves Can we look at our? behavior In the realm of our dealings with others and our life before others our Responsibility to be a light to speak the truth To be ready always to give an answer when asked for a reason for the hope that is in us Which means our hope needs to be evident enough that somebody would ask Not only do we have a primary responsibility for our personal individual relationship with God Seeking his face fellowship Conversation in both directions prayer and Reflection and meditation on his word letting the truth sink into our hearts under the ministry of God's Holy Spirit that relationship aspect pictured with Hosea and Gomer but also we have from Amos now a responsibility for our actions our behavior our religious life if you will our worship life our Practice how do we proceed? What do we do? are we Sensitive to the guiding ministry and the the loving discipline that God brings into our lives to guide us into the right way he uses increasing levels of Force if you will on the northern kingdom to turn them back in the way and yet Each one of these paragraphs ends Yet you have not returned to me says the Lord in verse 6 you have not returned to me says the Lord in verse 8 You have not returned to me in verse 9. You have not returned to me in verse 10 You have not returned to me in verse 11 Therefore thus will I do to you Israel verse 12 because I will do this to you prepare to meet your God Oh Israel because your practice Is deficient to say the least How is it you meet God? Prepare to meet your maker. That's usually Synonymous with the sin unto death Count the warnings here There is a time of mercy.

There is a time of call and challenge and there's a time when God says that's it the door to the ark shuts the Death Presence begins to pass through the land of Egypt and the firstborn begin to fall and die and there is no turning it back Behold he who forms mountains and creates the wind verse 13 of Amos 4 Who declares to man what his thought is and makes the morning darkness who treads the high places of the earth? The Lord God of hosts is his name And You're trifling With the Creator God the God of the armies The Lord of hosts the Lord of the angels the Lord Who has created the entire human race Well, we have a few more Chapters here to quickly survey and we'll do that next time But we begin to see this pattern and we'll find that when we look at Micah and when we look at Isaiah the Magnum Opus these are similarly going to take a Specific aspect of our lives in relationship to God and in relationship to one another and presented in very graphic powerful and final terms Remember now these are the final Words of God before the nation goes out. This is the last message People put a lot of stock in someone's

last words. What was the last thing they said? well These are God's last words before Israel dies and they are Cogent they are concise.

They are emphatic They go to the heart and the essential and they have been preserved for us because they are still at the heart and they still reflect the essentials for you and for me and as we Strive to avoid complacency as we strive to avoid Self-satisfaction as we strive to avoid self-deception. These are the areas we can examine. These are the questions we can ask These are the issues and the the facets of our Lives that we can bring before God in prayer Lord show me my Secret faults try me and see if there be any wicked way in me Not just in general But in my relationship with you in my relationship with others in my walk and my daily practice Are there things that I have rationalized that I and everybody around me thinks are fine that aren't Holy Spirit is present with convicting and revealing power It is up to us to avail ourselves of that provision to actively seek out that insight and that wisdom So that we do not go down this road and the time remaining to the Northern Kingdom is now measured in Decades you can count on the fingers of one hand There's very little time remaining and for us some of us have about that many decades at most left in our lives And it is incumbent on us to redeem the time the days left to themselves are evil Let's close here in a word of prayer father.

Thank you for the wonderful way that you communicate to us in terms that we can understand that are memorable that Make an impact on us that God the Holy Spirit can recall to us and refresh and use as a means of Convicting us and guiding us and schooling us in righteousness. We pray that as we reflect on these truths that we will See their meaning and purpose in our own lives and having done so that we can make those decisions and affect those changes that will Move us closer to the goal of Christ likeness of being a mature man of Being a blessing to one another to the world and most of all Pleasing in your sight. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen