

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Orcutt Christian Church

A Grace Driven Church for Grace Needing People!

Burning Question #28

What Is The Restoration Movement? (4)

Colossians 1:15-20

July 30, 2017

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Saturday 7/29 Clean Up: Archie Miller

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Colossians 1:15-20 (NASB)

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Friday, July 28th, was the 100th anniversary of the "Silent Parade."
To protest the violence across the nation against blacks, some
10,000 children, women and men walked silently down New
York's 5th Avenue.

They carried signs which said

"Make America safe for Democracy."

"Thou shalt not kill."

"America has lynched without trial 2,867 Negroes in 31 years and
not a single murderer has suffered."

"200,000 Black men fought for your liberty in the Civil War."

"The first blood for American Independence was shed by a Negro-
Crispus Attucks."

"12,000 of us fought with Jackson at New Orleans."

"Mr. President, make our country safe for democracy."

Google chose the Silent Parade for a Google Doodle to honor

"those whose silence resonates a century later."

The Silent Parade is a reminder of the tragic disunion of our
country.

Even more tragic is the disunion of those who claim allegiance to
the King of Kings.

Someone shared their thoughts about the Restoration Movement in
in poetry:

What We Stand For
For the Christ of Galilee,
For the truth which makes men free.
For the bond of unity
Which makes God's children one.

For the love which shines in deeds.
For the life which this world needs.
For the church whose triumph speeds
The prayer: "Thy will be done."

For the right against the wrong,
For the weak against the strong.

**For the poor who've waited long
For the brighter age to be.**

**For the faith against tradition,
For the truth 'gainst superstition,
For the hope whose glad fruition
Our waiting eyes shall see.**

**For the city God is rearing.
For the New Earth now appearing,
For the heaven above us clearing
And the song of victory.**

One of the leading minister's in the Restoration Movement was Alexander Campbell, who said that while unity had long been his "darling theme," what he saw was the "catholic grounds" for the visible and harmonious union of all believers. By "catholic" he mean the "universal" grounds for harmonious union of all believers in Christ Jesus.

He now had universal "the rule of union," which he would publicly propose:

"Whatever in faith, in piety, and morality is catholic, or universally admitted by all parties, shall be adopted as the basis of union."

The Christian Evangelist a monthly magazine of the Restoration Movement, and was published in St. Louis, Mo. from 1882-1958. Brother B. A. Abbott, Editor The Christian Evangelist, gave a summation of the principles of the Restoration movement:

"1. A universal church. The pioneers said, and their successors today declare, that 'the church of Christ is intentionally and constitutionally one, and all divisions which break this unity are contrary to the will of God.'

"2. They propose **a universal book** as the only rule of faith and practice, the only authoritative and complete repository of all that

is necessary to faith, practice and expectation in this world and in that which is to come. That book is the Bible, the only book which can support claims of universality and of special revelation.

"3. The universal confession of faith, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matt. 16:15-16.)

"4. The universal, Scriptural names,—believer, Christian, disciple, saint, brethren, and the other great words that describe the people of God.

"5. The universally accepted ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, in form, administration and purpose as they were given and practiced by Christ and His apostles.

"6. The universal life, such as that set forth by Christ and His apostles in the New Testament.

"7. The universal aim, which is to establish the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven."

Father John A. Hardon, S.J., in his article for the New Catholic Encyclopedia, on the Restoration Movement, agrees that the Church Universal is essentially invisible, and is not seen in any denomination.

It has long been our belief in the Restoration Movement, that if we can get individuals to **live out** those seven Universals of B.A. Abbott, then all who profess faith in Christ will be united and there will be no need of any denomination.

I don't know who wrote the praise song, *We Are One In The Spirit*, but the words speak volumes

**We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
And we pray that our unity will one day be restored
And they'll know we are Christians by our love,**

The question is, how do we put this into practice?
Well, I think our text today points the way.

The Apostle Paul says in verse 18 **He is the head of the body**

When Paul says "**He**," of whom is he speaking?
He is speaking of our Lord, Christ Jesus.

Now, please keep in mind that this sermon reflects the principles of the Restoration Movement, and you will say to your self, "That's what I believe!"

When you think of the church, what mental picture comes to your mind?

Where is Jesus in that picture?

The way we picture the church and Jesus' role in it will affect the way we relate to the community of faith.

There are many appropriate pictures of the church. Some would envision the church as branches and Jesus as the vine. Others would see the church as a flock and Jesus as a Shepherd. It would certainly be appropriate to see the church as a kingdom and Jesus as the king.

I think the most popular image of the church is to see the church as a body and Jesus as the head.

This was one of the apostle Paul's favorite metaphors.

He uses it in

1 Corinthians 11:3 (NASB)

3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ,

God has

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NASB)

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 5:23 (NASB)

23 Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the

Savior of the body.

What does it mean that **Christ is the head of the church ... his body?**

Pondering this image will give us a richer understanding of the church, it's mission, it's operational principles, and our role within that body.

I. The Church Is a Body

It has sometimes been said that the church is an organism, not an organization.

This is quite true, but it has also been noted that an organism needs organization.

However, we need to recognize that the church is a body.

Sometimes **the little toe** is called the **pinky**.

Did you ever question what it is good for?

Could you get along without it?

According to Dr. Wenjay Sung, attending physician at White Memorial Medical Group, we need that pinky.

We owe our balance to the 26 bones that make up the hindfoot, midfoot and forefoot.

The forefoot contains the toes.

The big toe has two major bones and the rest have three little bones.

The toes connect to the midfoot by five long bones called metatarsals, one for each toe.

The metatarsals are similar to our knuckles.

The hindfoot connects to the midfoot by cuneiform and cuboid bones.

These are connected to the ankle bone, the talus.

Though all the bones in the foot come together to form the structure of the foot, the main bones responsible for our balance are the metatarsals.

Dr. Wenjay Sung, says

"We walk like a tripod fashion, where the big toe knuckle, the fifth toe knuckle and the heel, have a tripod walking ability. If you remove one part of that tripod, you lose balance."

So even though the pinky toe itself has no functional value, removing the metatarsal would make running, walking and skipping nearly impossible.

<http://www.popsci.com/science/article/2013-05/fyi-do-i-really-need-my-pinky-toe>

How can we not think of the human body as a thing of wonder?

Consider all the intricate systems that make the body function in a healthy way.

There is the nervous system, the blood system, the digestive system, the respiratory system, and the lymphatic system.

There are the individual parts of the body.

There are the seven senses.

The physical body is a thing of wonder.

How much we value our physical attributes!

What would a person give in exchange for a missing arm or leg?

The physical body is a thing of wonder.

So, too, is the body of Christ.

We often focus on its imperfections, but it is still a beautiful thing.

We often notice only warts and blemishes, but the church is a thing of beauty.

It is also a unified whole.

Though the body is made of many parts, to fulfill its mission, it must be united.

The body is not just a collection of parts, but a collection of parts that are connected and work in harmony.

Ideally the church should be united not only in its local manifestation but also in its global manifestation.

Jesus did not say to Peter, "On this rock I will build my churches." He said, "On this rock I will build **my church.**" And, the rock of which Christ is referring is the confession: "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**"

Last Lord's Day we went over one of the most remarkable documents on the unity of believers, The Declaration and Address. In the D&A, Thomas says The church is "essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one."

Jesus taught about this unity, labored to create it, and eventually died for it.

It was his dying prayer that the church be united.

Ten hours before His death, our Lord prayed

John 17:20-21 (NASB)

20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

What a disappointment we must be to Jesus in this regard!

His prayer is not for some mystical denominational unity, because there were no denominations.

His prayer is not to suggest that the church needs to be united in some kind of human political entity.

The church may and must exist in local congregations, but there is only one church.

But that one church must be diligent, according to Paul:

Ephesians 4:3-6 (NASB)

3 to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

That one church is united under one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

What is true of the church globally is also true locally.

Being a body means that each member has a different function, but it is still united with other members in such a way that it can be called "one body."

Functionality is a result of that unity.

The body as a whole is much more efficient than a finger or a spleen would be by itself.

The fact is that all the parts of the body not only contribute to the function of the church, but depend on each other for survival.

I saw on the Internet last week an article about a strange sea creature called the **Nanomia Cara**.

The **Nanomia Cara** is a colony of jellyfish, that lives in a huge cluster.

The cluster, or colony, is found around the globe, and can be nearly 20 feet long.

It's a colony, yet made up of individual jellyfish.

In one end of the colony there is a inflatable structure for buoyancy control.

Following the float, a large number of swimming bells form a 2-8 inches long thickening of the colony.

The swimming bells are individual animals that provide propulsion to the colony.

Their pulsating movements are coordinated through a common network of nerves.

Along the thread that binds the colony together there are different kinds of specialized animals.

Some digest food, while others are use stinging tentacles to catch their prey.

They hand the food over to the "stomachs" that swallow and digest the food, and thus provide nutrition for the entire colony.

Some in the colony catch the food, others digest the food for the

rest, others provide propulsion and still others lay eggs.
And, still they are interdependent.
What a remarkable picture of unity!

And now think of the church.

Everyone has something they can do to help the church fulfill its mission.

We are the weaker when anyone in the church does not do his or her part.

We are strongest when we all work together.

What makes this functionality a reality?

In one word, it is fellowship.

Through blood and nerves and sinew, the parts of the body must communicate with each other.

The arms and legs don't fulfill the same function.

In fact our effectiveness actually depends on their not doing the same thing.

But the arms and legs should not conflict with each other in such a way as to hinder the effectiveness of the body as a whole.

Paul says

Romans 12:15-18 (NASB)

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Paul is saying that when one member of the body hurts, the rest of the body hurts with it.

We do everything we can to help the part of the body that is suffering.

One of the most traumatic things that can happen is to amputate a

part of the body.

What happened when a part of the body is lost?

Some people choose to leave the body of Christ which we call the church.

If they do so, the body itself may not die, but that member will.

The separated member is in a more critical state than the rest of the body although the body would be much stronger and efficient with the member intact.

Sometimes a diseased part must be let go, but it is never an easy thing to do and is always a last result and very painful.

We are often amazed at the stories we hear of churches in which the members hurt and hinder each other.

Have you heard of the **Russian slap fight**?

It's a crazy, but ancient contest of beating each other up.

A line is drawn in dirt

Right foot of both contestants is placed on the line

They interlock hands over the line

The first one to slap is decided by the flip of a coin

They begin by slapping each other in the face as hard as possible

The victor of the bout is decided when the other contestant steps over the line, lets go of each others hands, or surrenders.

It's crazy, I know, but some colleges are having slapping contest in the intermission of basketball games.

And YouTube has scores of videos of women engaged in this bizarre contest.

In what is probably a record, two Russian men in 1931 slapped each other continuously for thirty hours

And, while you are cringing over that sport, think about this:

It sure seems that people spend a lot of time being unkind and uncivil to each other.

If it were a sport in the church, people would surely be setting records each day.

Fellowship is what brings vitality to the body of Christ.

When we think of fellowship, some can think only of a fellowship meal.

Perhaps you read the story of a first grade teacher who gave her class a “show and tell” assignment.

Each student was instructed to bring in an object to share with the class that represented his or her religion.

The first student got up in front of the class and said, “My name is Benjamin and I am Jewish, and this is a Star of David.”

The second student got up in front of the class and said, “My name is Mary. I’m a Catholic, and this is a Rosary.”

The third student got in up front of the class and said, “My name is Tommy. I am from the Christian church, and this is a casserole.”

Casseroles, Donuts, and Potlucks are a staples of American church life, but they are just one vehicle of enhancing what real fellowship is all about.

Fellowship goes deeper and involves a genuine sharing.

We have established that the church is the body.

What part does Jesus play in all this?

II. Christ Is the Head of the Body

Remember the movie **The Big Fat Greek Wedding**?

The husband tells his wife he is the head of the house, and she responds:

“Let me tell you something, Toula. The man is the head, but the woman is the neck. And she can turn the head any way she wants.”

But, what can we say about Jesus, the head of the body?

When the body takes its orders from the head, it functions as it was designed.

The members of the rest of the body we call the church find strength in the power of Jesus, the head.

Jesus is truly worthy to be the head of the church.

But why?

A. Think about His creative power

The Apostle John says

John 1:3 (NASB)

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

The Bible teaches that Jesus was an agent of creation.

When we see the beauties of this world, we are noticing his handiwork.

Our minds can barely comprehend the works of His creation.

It is harder still to comprehend the one who made the wonders.

What a world we live in!

The mountains, plains, rivers, and oceans all testify to his creative power.

Add to that the various forms of animal life—the land animals, sea animals, animals of the sky, and above all, mankind.

But look beyond the beauty of this world and ponder that we are just a speck of dirt in this universe.

Who knows what wonders exist in the vastness of space!

The Psalmist says

Psalm 102:25-27 (NASB)

25 "Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 26 "Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. 27 "But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an

end.

B. Think about His sustaining power

Our text says:

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Hold together.

Philo used the word in the sense of “to hold together, cohere, or exist.”

Paul stated that in Christ all things are held together or exist, and repeats it in

Hebrews 1:1-3 (NASB)

¹ God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

The power of Christ is a great power that reaches from eternity into our time, and on into the future till the end of time.

Christ is the Super Glue that hold the universe together.

Christ is not just preeminent in the church or on earth.

He is preeminent in all eternity.

C. Think about His Superlative Power

When we see Jesus, we can also see His superlative power—His divine power.

Jesus is not a mere mortal, nor is He just an exalted human being.

Jesus can truly be said to be divine, because He shares the Father’s divine nature.

What does it mean to be "Christian?"

Well, we know it means to "be in Christ," do we not?

We all seek to imitate him, but we can never be exactly like him.

But, here is a fun exercise for you.

Have your **browser search** on the question "**Did Jesus Christ get His driver's license?**"

And, surprise, surprise, California has issued at least 6 drivers licenses to people named Jesus Christ.

But, West Virginia isn't having any part of this game.

There is a man who applied for a WV driver's license, but they won't give him a driver's license in the name of Jesus Christ.

Authorities there point out that he has a Florida birth certificate in his real name and his name has never been legally changed.

A lawyer for the man says he uses the name as an expression of faith.

And, after over a decade as a psychiatric hospital chaplain, I can testify I've met numerous individuals, both male and female, who told me they were Jesus Christ.

When we became the follower of Christ Jesus we were called "**Christian,**" but He will always stand unique.

Oh, how blessed are the words:

Romans 8:1 (NASB)

¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

If the church is a body and Jesus is the head, how do they relate?

III. The Two Must Be United

The head is the governor.

The brain must tell the rest of the body what to do.

There can only be one head.

My friend, Maxine Mossman was from Nacogdoches Louisiana. Her favorite joke was "What is the most dangerous animal on earth?"

And, her answer was a "tiger-gator."

While they both ate, they couldn't go to the bathroom, which made them vicious.

No body can survive with a conflict of wills.

This does not mean that church people have to always agree on everything.

It does mean that they agree on the most important things and are untied by a principle much stronger than the issues that divide.

Remember the principle I shared last week?

The mandate for a free church made its way into our most meaningful slogan, which well summarizes the integrity of the Restoration Movement:

**In essentials, unity;
In opinions, liberty;
In all things, love.**

John Dickinson was an American patriot, but one of a different sort.

His grandparents, his parents, and he and his siblings were all Quakers.

Dickinson, the son of a land baron whose estate included 12,000 acres in Maryland and Delaware, studied law at the Inns of Court of London as a young man in the 1750s.

Dickinson represented Pennsylvania in the Second Continental Congress.

He believed the colonies should become a sovereign nation, but thought the method should be negotiation rather than armed conflict.

He opposed the Declaration of Independence, and when it was passed, he even refused to sign it.

He nevertheless displayed great courage when he left the

congress and enlisted in the Continental Army even though he believed the armed cause was futile.

It may have been that act that endeared him to the American people.

When the revolution was over he was revered in the political life of both Pennsylvania and Delaware.

He participated in writing both the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States.

Even though he disagreed with the Continental Congress, his love for his country and his sense of honor overruled divisiveness and pettiness.

<http://www.historynet.com/the-patriot-who-refused-to-sign-the-declaration-of-independence.htm>

What would be the result in churches today if church members who don't get their own way could be so dedicated to the church?

It is essential that we should lose our will in his.

Romans 12:3-5 (NLT)

³ Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. ⁴ Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵ so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

Paul is reminding us that we were crucified with Him, we were buried with him and, we rose with him, so everything we do should be governed by him.

If the head is the governor, then we should consider that the head feels what happens in the rest of the body.

When Saul was murdering the converts to be followers of Christ Jesus,

Acts 9:3-6 (NASB)

3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;

4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" **5** And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He *said*, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

What had Paul done to Jesus?
He had persecuted the church.
Jesus felt that pain.

In his parable of the last judgment, Jesus separated the sheep from the goats.

Matthew 25:32-33 (NASB)

32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; **33** and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

Matthew 25:41-46 (NASB)

41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; **42** for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; **43** I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' **44** "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' **45** "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' **46** "These will go away into eternal

punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

He declared that the good deeds done to his disciples were done to Him.

And, sadly, and the deeds not done, were not done for him.

When someone insults the church, they insult Jesus.

Remember when it was common for people would declare, "**Jesus, yes; church, no.**"

Jesus would never endorse that sentiment.

Why?

The church is his body.

How can we despise it?

If we are members of the Lord's body, we ought to love him, honor him and even love one another.

I hope this sermon has caused you to reflect on the Body of Christ, and how you can improve your part in that Body.

Prayer and Invitation

July 30 Lesson 9 Amos

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:1-8

Background Scripture: Amos 7

AMOS 7:10-17

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. **11** For this is what Amos is saying:

**“Jeroboam will die by the sword,
and Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.”**

12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. **13** Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.” **14** Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. **15** But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ **16** Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say,

**“Do not prophesy against Israel,
and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.’**

17 “Therefore this is what the LORD says:

**“Your wife will become a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword.
Your land will be measured and divided up,
and you yourself will die in a pagan country.
And Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.”**

KEY VERSES

Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”—Amos 7:14, 15

Introduction

A. What's My Profession?

A young man in seminary was very talented. So talented that he believed that it was only fair that he offer his services as a minister of the gospel to the highest bidder. He spent time poring over data to discover which denomination offered the highest average salary. He was more than willing to tailor his doctrine to the beliefs of those willing to pay him for it!

In contrast, we all know individuals who serve faithfully in full-time ministry as a vocation. There is certainly nothing wrong with a preacher's being paid a living wage as compensation for his work (1 Corinthians 9:7-14). There need be no conflict between earning a living and being an obedient servant of God. Although we would hope that the attitude of the man above is rare, those who choose vocational ministry struggle with a difficult question: *Is there a difference between a professing and a professional follower of Christ?*

During his task of proclaiming judgment, the prophet Amos was confronted by a man who was paid for being a priest but who did not profess God's truth faithfully. Their conflict is insightful.

B. Lesson Background: Israel in General

Amos was one of the many prophets whom God raised up during the period of the divided monarchy (931-722 BC) in Old Testament history. His ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah as king of Judah and Jeroboam as king of Israel (Amos 1:1). Commentators generally refer to this Jeroboam as Jeroboam II to distinguish him from the Jeroboam who was the first king of northern Israel after the nation divided.

Both Uzziah and Jeroboam II experienced lengthy reigns: Uzziah (also known as Azariah) from 792 to 740 BC and Jeroboam from 793 to 753 BC (dates are approximate). Spiritually, however, the kings were quite different. The Scriptures record that Uzziah "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 26:4; an exception being the incident noted in 26:16-21). Jeroboam, by contrast, "did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kings 14:24).

In fact, no kings of the northern nation of Israel were considered good or godly. This is an important reason the northern kingdom

fell under God's judgment much sooner than did the southern kingdom of Judah. Prophets like Amos came on the scene to sound the alarm and warn of coming judgment. Many Bible students date the start of his ministry around 755 BC, toward the conclusions of the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam.

Amos himself seemed an unlikely candidate for the prophetic task. He was a simple shepherd and fruit farmer from a village in Judah (Amos 7:14, part of today's text), but God sent him to shepherd his wayward people of northern Israel. In the warnings prior to today's text, Amos prophesied God's condemnation of various locations around Israel, including the southern kingdom of Judah (1:3-2:5). That was followed by a long, scathing indictment of Israel. Injustice was rampant there, and God intended to correct that problem (4:1; 5:7, 10-12; etc.).

C. Lesson Background: Bethel in Particular

A major factor in the spiritual decline of northern Israel was the idolatry encouraged by Jeroboam I when he set up golden calves to be worshipped in the towns of Bethel and Dan. He did so to keep his residents of the northern kingdom from traveling to Jerusalem, worshipping at the temple, and reaffirming their allegiance to the house of David (1 Kings 12:26-30).

How to Say It

Ahab Ay-hab.

Amaziah Am-uh-zye-uh.

Azariah Az-uh-rye-uh.

Amos Ay-mus.

Assyrians Uh-sear-e-unz.

Bethel *Beth*-ul.

Elijah Ee-lye-juh.

Elisha Ee-lye-shuh.

Ezekiel Ee-zeek-ee-ul or Ee-zeek-yul.

Jeroboam Jair-uh-boe-um.

Mosaic Mo-zay-ik.

Rehoboam Ree-huh-boe-um.

Samaria Suh-mare-ee-uh.

Uzziah Uh-zye-uh.

Zion Zi-un.

Bethel was still quite active as a pagan shrine in Amos's day, nearly 200 years later (Amos 3:14; 7:13). The spiritual danger posed by that center of idolatry, only 11 miles due north of Jerusalem, was immense. The danger was underlined by the fact of Bethel's association by reputation with Gilgal, another center of idolatry (4:4; 5:5). The prophet Hosea mocks Bethel (which means "house of God") by referring to it as *Beth Aven* (which means "house of wickedness"), associating it with Gilgal in the process (Hosea 4:15).

Bethel is mentioned by name seven times in the book of Amos. The text of today's lesson features the last two of those seven.

I. Professional Priest

(Amos 7:10-13)

A. Report to the King (vv. 10, 11)

10a. Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel.

Amaziah the priest is no servant of God and neither is *Jeroboam king of Israel*. The vested interest those two men share is the town of *Bethel*, described by Amaziah as "the king's sanctuary" and "the temple of the kingdom," the town where Amos is preaching (Amos 7:13, below; also see the Lesson Background). Should that which Amos prophesies about the town and its altars come to pass, both king and priest will be out of a job (Amos 3:14; 5:5, 6; compare John 11:48).

So Amaziah sends word to Jeroboam of a conspiracy against him, a conspiracy fomented by Amos. It is noteworthy that Amaziah sends this report only after Amos prophesies against Jeroboam by name in Amos 7:9.

10b. "The land cannot bear all his words.

This part of the report points to the effectiveness of Amos's message. He is not compromising the Lord's righteous standards or watering down his content just to curry favor with leaders such as Jeroboam and Amaziah. He is definitely getting people's attention! But for someone like Amaziah, Amos is nothing but a troublemaker (compare the label attached to the prophet Elijah by wicked King Ahab in 1 Kings 18:17).

11. “For this is what Amos is saying:
**‘Jeroboam will die by the sword,
and Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.’”**

One should note that Amaziah’s quotation of Amos begins with *this is what Amos is saying*. The usual way to preface a prophet’s message is with the phrase “the Lord says” or some variation of it (that is how Amos responds to Amaziah in verses 16 and 17, below). Clearly, Amaziah sees nothing authoritative in Amos’s message; he’s just spouting his own words, not the Lord’s.

Though Amos’s message has little to say about Jeroboam specifically, the prophet *does* have much to say about Israel’s going *into exile, away from their native land* (Amos 3:12; 5:27; 6:7, 8; 7:17; 9:4). Sadly, that’s just what happens. The Assyrians will conquer Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, as the prophecy is fulfilled (2 Kings 17).

What Do You Think?

How do we know when our message should primarily be one of dire warning?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding nations and their policies

Regarding other religions

Regarding individual people

B. Rebuke for the Prophet (vv. 12, 13)

12. Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there.

Amaziah follows his message to the king with a blunt directive to Amos: Go home! He is from *the land of Judah*, and the northern kingdom of Israel has no use for this interloper. If Amos wants to make people’s lives miserable, then let him do it to his own countrymen!

To *earn your bread* in Judah may imply that Amos will be fed or paid better in his homeland than he currently is in the northern kingdom. Perhaps Amaziah believes that prophets are interested in nothing more than earning a livelihood.

Seer was the term commonly used before the designation *prophet*

replaced it (1 Samuel 9:9). The older term reflects how a prophet is empowered by the Lord to “see” what others cannot, whether in a spiritual sense or by means of visions. In Amos’s case, Amaziah seems to use the term *seer* sarcastically; else he would not demand that Amos stop prophesying in northern Israel.

What Do You Think?

How should we react when others try to restrict our message?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

When access to an audience is restricted

When topics on which we may speak are restricted

When threats are expressed or implied

OUTSIDERS

While traveling, my husband and I stopped at a store. Not finding what we wanted, we approached a woman in the parking lot and asked if a Walmart was nearby. She looked at us for a moment before loudly proclaiming, “You don’t know where Walmart is?” She started laughing.

“Hey, Joann! They don’t know where Walmart is!” she called to her companion. The women then got the attention of someone else they knew across the parking lot. “Hey, Charlie!” they hollered. “They don’t know where Walmart is!” All three laughed.

At that point, we began to back away from these strangers who were taking such joy in our lack of knowledge. Finally one woman informed us that Walmart was just around the corner, very easy to find.

Outsiders draw attention, often in a negative way. By definition, outsiders do not share the common, personal history of the insiders—those of the immediate culture. The locals may treat outsiders dismissively simply because of their outsider status. Viewing Amos as a threat, Amaziah had a choice to make: neutralize the threat either by discrediting the message or by discrediting the messenger. Amaziah chose the latter path, his tactic being an attack on Amos’s outsider status. When we hear a person/message we don’t like—whether that message be spiritual or secular in nature—do we do the same? Examples in Numbers 23; Jonah 3; and Mark 9:38-41 caution us in that regard. —L. M. W.

13. “Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.”

Amos’s preaching is especially unwelcome *at Bethel*, which implies his current location. The word translated *sanctuary* can also be found elsewhere (example: Ezekiel 45:3), while the word translated *temple* is commonly rendered *house* when referring to a dwelling place of either God or people (examples: Zechariah 14:20 and 13:6, respectively). Taken together, these may imply that King Jeroboam II has a residence in Bethel in addition to the one he would have in the capital city of Samaria (compare 1 Kings 16:23, 24; 22:37; Amos 3:15). Alternatively, this may be just Amaziah’s way of emphasizing that Bethel is Jeroboam’s turf. Either way, Amos is viewed as having no business whatsoever trespassing on the king’s domain.

But Amos cares nothing about the reactions or feelings of any earthly authority who opposes him. The prophet answers to a far greater king, the one who resides in a heavenly sanctuary. His words and actions will be reflected centuries later by the apostle Peter when he squares off with the religious leadership in Jerusalem: “We must obey God rather than human beings!” (Acts 5:29). Decades earlier, King Jeroboam I had been confronted by an anonymous man of God from Judah who came to Bethel while the king was offering a sacrifice on the altar he had built (1 Kings 13:1-4). Now King Jeroboam II is being challenged by another man of God from Judah.

II. Professing Prophet

(Amos 7:14-17)

A. Source of Authority (vv. 14-16)

14. Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees.

The response by Amos may be understood one of two ways. First, he may simply be stating a fact of heredity: there is nothing about his earthly lineage that suggests he should be a prophet. No one in his family has ever held that responsibility.

The second possibility turns on the meaning of the phrase *son of a prophet*, since it may refer to the group known as “the sons of the prophets.” Its members appear to have been undergoing training of some kind in order to be ready for the Lord’s call to serve him in that way. The prophet Elisha, whose ministry ended about a half century before Amos’s began, had frequent contact with this group (2 Kings 2:1-15; 4:1, 38; 6:1, 2; 9:1).

If the second of the two possibilities is intended by Amos, then he is openly admitting that he has none of the credentials or official training of other prophets. That would help explain at least some of Amaziah’s contempt. Like Peter and John, Amos may be seen as “unschooled” and “ordinary” (Acts 4:13). But also like them, Amos has the one credential that matters most: the Lord’s calling. **15.** “But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

Amos twice highlights the source of his calling and prophetic authority: the Lord. Like Moses and David, who also tended flocks (Exodus 3:1; 1 Samuel 16:11-13), Amos has been called to a ministry of shepherding people (compare Psalms 77:20; 78:70-72; Isaiah 63:11). Amos’s response to Amaziah’s intimidation therefore yields not an inch of ground. The prophet from Judah answers to no earthly priest or king—only to the Lord God who took him from his accustomed life on the farm to be a proclaimer of his Word.

What Do You Think?

What are some deciding factors when considering a change in vocation?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

If changing from secular to ministerial

If changing from ministerial to secular

CREDENTIALS

In the winter of 2015, a 17-year-old boy wandered the halls of a medical center in West Palm Beach, Florida. He wore a white lab coat with the hospital’s logo, carried a stethoscope, and even donned a surgical mask at times. People working in the center assumed he was a doctor. They assumed wrongly; he had no medical credentials.

This type of thing happens more often than one would like to think. A few years earlier, another 17-year-old boy impersonated a doctor at a different medical center in Florida. For five days, he examined patients, provided care, and accessed patient information. Suspicions grew as he repeatedly attempted to gain access to restricted areas. He was caught when staff in the Emergency Department reported him.

Credentials were important in antiquity too. And the only valid “accrediting agency” for prophetic work was God. The credentials for Amos came straight from him. Some who would lead us astray today may appear outwardly well qualified, yet still be “ferocious wolves” on the inside (Matthew 7:15). Amos’s experience in evaluating sycamore-figs may have helped him in examining spiritual fruit. That is a quality we are to have as well. See Matthew 7:16-20. —L. M. W.

**16. “Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say,
‘Do not prophesy against Israel,
and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.’**

Amos continues his rebuttal by quoting Amaziah’s demand back to him. A purpose in doing so is to make certain that Amaziah realizes he has been heard loud and clear. Amos is leaving himself no room to escape persecution by later claiming he misunderstood Amaziah’s directive.

Double meanings in one language are often very difficult to translate smoothly, and that is the case with the demand *stop preaching*. Elsewhere the underlying Hebrew speaks of rain as it drops or pours down (Judges 5:4; Psalm 68:8). The same Hebrew is rendered “prophesy” and “prophet[s]” sarcastically in Micah 2:6, 11, and that may be the intent here as Amaziah speaks mockingly of Amos as one who speaks drivel. By repeating it back to Amaziah, Amos is establishing part of the basis for his prophecy of judgment in the verse to follow.

Of interest is the rare expression *descendants of Isaac* (only here in the Old Testament) with “high places of Isaac” in Amos 7:9, rather than “descendants of Jacob” (21 times) or “people of Israel” (over 100 times). As a bit of conjecture, perhaps Amos is changing the word Amaziah actually utters in order to inject irony: the meaning

of the word *Isaac* is “to laugh” (Genesis 18:11-15; 21:3), and the people of the northern kingdom who are laughing it up at the moment (Amos 6:1, 4-6) will experience the exact opposite soon enough.

What Do You Think?

What are some steps to take when our message is rejected?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

When our motives are misrepresented

When our words are misquoted

When our character is questioned

Other

B. Essence of the Message (v. 17)

17a. “Therefore this is what the LORD says:

**‘Your wife will become a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword.**

The consequences of attempting to silence a prophet of the Lord are severe indeed! Since the word *your* (twice) is singular, this prophecy is aimed at Amaziah’s family. What could be more agonizing to a husband and father than to watch his family members suffer what is prophesied here? Amos has already prophesied that the Lord says, “With my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam” (Amos 7:9). Now the fuller prophecy includes the violent end of Amaziah’s lineage.

17b. “**Your land will be measured and divided up,**

Amaziah will not be able to leave family property to descendants because (1) no descendants will remain to inherit it and (2) no property will remain to bequeath anyway. For Amaziah’s land to *be measured and divided up* means it will be parceled out to others by its conquerors. This will be something of a reversal of the process of land allotment to the Israelites during the time of Joshua (Joshua 14:1-5; 18:1-10). Amaziah claims that “the land cannot bear all” the words of Amos (Amos 7:10). But the truth is that the land is not able to bear the sins of the people of the northern kingdom (compare Leviticus 18:28).

17c. “**and you yourself will die in a pagan country.**

**And Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.”**

We come to the sentence pronounced on Amaziah himself. The Hebrew word rendered *pagan* is translated *unclean* the vast majority of the time. With regard to *country* it refers to places where pagan gods are worshipped. Such places are unclean, profane, polluted, defiled, and impure in contrast with the holiness required by the Mosaic law (compare Ezra 9:11).

That Amaziah will die in such a land can imply that he will be taken captive after witnessing what is to befall his wife, sons, and daughters. To accompany others who are also taken *into exile* also signifies that Amaziah will witness the destruction of “the high places of Isaac ... the sanctuaries of Israel” prophesied in Amos 7:9. What, then, will he think of the gods he worshipped in those places?

The Scriptures provide no record of the fulfillment of this prophecy against Amaziah. Even so, we can be sure it was fulfilled, since it is “the word of the Lord” (Amos 7:16). History records the fate of Israel when it falls to Assyria in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:6). The fact that the line *and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land* repeats word for word (in the original Hebrew) the prophecy in Amos 7:11 means that Amaziah’s attempts to intimidate the Lord’s prophet have utterly failed.

What Do You Think?

What are some ways to respond if a necessarily harsh message is rejected as “unloving”?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Considering the agenda of those voicing objection

Considering validity of the objection

Conclusion

A. True to the Call

Amos was under intense pressure to modify or silence his message rather than risk offending the high officials in the northern kingdom; the pressure the church faces today is similar (compare Matthew 15:12-14; Acts 4:18-21). The pressure may tempt us to ask ourselves, “Who am I to judge another’s conduct?”

Amos shows how to meet such a challenge: it is a matter of *calling*. When Amaziah asked, in effect, “Who do you think you are?” Amos had a ready answer. We must be prepared to do the

same (1 Peter 3:15). Amos knew who he was, and he knew his task. God expects the same of us (Matthew 28:19, 20; 2 Timothy 2:15). A simple review of how God has worked and desires to work in your life may result in your becoming an Amos to the lost of your community.

B. Prayer

Father, grant us the conviction that comes from the study of your Word so that we may profess boldly the grace of your Son by whose blood the coming judgment may be escaped. We pray for this in his name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

True profession overcomes oppression.

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