

The Lion Has Roared

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[0 : 0 0] the lesson today is taken from the book of amos chapter 3 on pages 918 in the pew bibles hear this word people of israel the word the lord has spoken against you against the whole family i brought up out of egypt you only have i chosen of all the families of the earth therefore i will punish you for all your sins do two walked together unless they have agreed to do so does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey does it growl in its den when it has caught nothing does a bird swoop down to a trap on the ground when no bait is there does a trap spring up from the ground if it has not caught anything when a trumpet sounds in a city do not the people tremble when disaster comes to a city has not the lord caused it surely the sovereign lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets the lion has roared who will not fear the sovereign lord has spoken who can but prophesy proclaimed the fortresses of ashad and to the fortresses of egypt assemble yourselves on the mountains of samaria see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people they do not know how to do right declares the lord who store up in their fortresses what they have plundered and looted therefore this is what the sovereign lord says an enemy will overrun your land pull down your strongholds and plunder your fortresses this is what the lord says as a shepherd rescues from the lion's mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear so will the israelites living in samaria be rescued with only the head of a bed and a piece of fabric from a couch hear this and testify against the descendants of jacob declares the lord the lord god almighty on the day i punish israel for her sins i will destroy the altars of bethel the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground i will tear down the winter house along with the summer house the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished declares the lord this is the word of the lord thanks be to god well thanks be to god and uh james has already mentioned that the book of amos opens with the roar of uh the lord from zion if you're here last week you uh will recall that james asked us uh whether we had heard the roar of a lion in real life that's what i thought uh this evening since um the roar of a lion also features pretty prominently in our passage uh that it might be worth us all hearing uh the roar of a lion just in case uh you haven't heard one in real life and for the benefit of anyone uh last week was feeling deprived so uh the budget at saint silas couldn't stretch to a circus line done the next best thing and courtesy of mgm studios we have that famous lion roar that you'll recognize so the the roar of a lion courtesy of hollywood's now this i understand was originally recorded in the 1950s and when i mentioned that i was going to be uh using the recording this evening uh one of the staff team who shall remain anonymous uh informed me somewhat uh implausibly that after the

recording of this lion roar uh the lion went on to maul uh the recording technician when that turned out to be an urban myth but let no one be fooled by our passage or lulled into a false sense of complacency the lion of judah has roared loud bellowing guttural fearsome and majestic the lion has roared the lord has spoken and amos the sheep farmer from tekoah can't help but prophesy because the lord has spoken amos whose name means the one who is burdened the burdened one is burdened with this heavy message of judgment against the people of israel and you can just imagine how popular that was how unpopular amos was for him to deliver this message as this shepherd from rural backwaters of judah went up to the capital city of the northern kingdom to samaria with this message of god's judgment turning up to give this message to these people in the city with fancy houses uh and comfortable lifestyle not easy for him and there's no doubt that for us it's a sobering message too so let us join together in prayer again and ask god for his help with this passage father we give thanks to you for this gracious gracious gracious message of warning that your servant amos faithfully proclaimed and delivered to apostate israel i pray that you would attune our ears to hear you well this evening and do bind our wandering hearts to you in jesus name we pray amen well do keep your bibles open at amos chapter 3 pages 918 and 19 in the church bibles and we've got three headings uh this evening and they're uh in the leaflet they should be on the screen just now uh and the first of these is if the lion roars and we're going to be looking at verses one to eight firstly and seeing in those verses the simple principle of cause and effect at play my grandpa was a keen sportsman and had been the captain of the school cricket team um they'd been away at a an away match at a another school and on the way back uh they'd stopped at the pub uh for refreshments and don't ask me uh why there wasn't a teacher uh accompanying them on this trip but i guess they'd probably do things differently uh back a hundred years ago or so hundred uh 1920s i guess it was anyway they'd been uh spotted at the pub and this was reported back to the school and my grandfather was called into the headmaster's study middleton the headmaster awards i'm minded to give you six of the best and uh for those of you for whom six of the best is foreign language it basically meant uh corporal punishment handing out your your wrists and taking six uh thrashings from uh along cane stick and the problem was that the headmaster wanted to give him uh the six of the best but he

couldn't because the school rules uh wouldn't allow it my grandpa as well as being the school cricket captain was also a school monitor which i think basically means a prefect and because he was a school monitor he couldn't receive uh six of the best so the headmaster uh did what he thought was needed and took away his monitor badge and then proceeded to give him six of the best and then uh my grandpa thinking that was the end of the matter started to head towards the door and at which point he was called back middleton where do you think you're going and he wasn't dismissed because you are a prefect because you were a prefect you should have known better therefore i'm going to give you another six of the best and so uh that uh punishment was uh further meted out and following that my grandpa was given uh back his monitor badge and from what i can understand uh was dismissed and remained uh good friends on good terms with the headmaster after that so i wonder is there something similar to that going on in our passage in chapter three should have israel known better we kind of expect god's judgment to befall israel's pagan neighbors don't we but it's a bit of a shock to the system when we consider who this message of judgment in our chapter is directed at surely israel god's people should have known better well just look uh again with me at the first couple of verses and this is judgment against god's covenant family those he rescued from egyptian slavery those he chose from all the families of the earth in other words the people of israel are elected adopted redeemed but certainly not exempt from god's judgment so certainly their privileged position suggests that they should have known better but it cuts deeper than that because they had agreed in verse three to walk together in covenant with the lord with all that entails in terms of keeping their covenant commitments and obligations so when they broke the covenant it was more akin to the treachery of an adulterous spouse so it might have been a bit of a shock to the system but it certainly shouldn't have been a surprise so consider the series of rhetorical questions that follow and these rhetorical questions are signs drawn from nature familiar no doubt to amos's shepherding experience but they operate basically on the principle of cause and effect that is every cause has an effect and every cause has an effect and every cause has an effect and every cause becomes the cause of something else so when a lion is about to pounce on its prey that's the cause verse four this produces the effect of letting out an almighty roar and this in turn leads to the lion satisfying his hunger which in turn causes the lion to growl in satisfaction and so it is with the bird and the trap a logic of cause and effect becomes cause and effect at play and as we move down through the questions we become aware we're going to see that amos is drawing his readers into a rhetorical trap so that they cannot escape

the snare of his logic the snare of his logic the roar of the lion is like a trumpet blast or air raid siren which warns a city and we see don't we in verse six that the lord god is the ultimate cause and disaster comes to a city has not the lord caused it so god's word is the warning and god is the lion the roar is amos's message of judgment that precedes god's punitive action and this is no political bluffing game that god's playing the covenant terms and conditions were keep clear it should be no surprise his plan of judgment has been revealed through the prophets plain and simple and only a stubborn and stiff-necked people will fail to heed these signs of the times judgment is coming their way it is imminent and it is inevitable inevitable that is unless the cause has its desired effect unless the roar of warning causes them to turn and repent causes them to fear the lord and turn away from the apostasy and return to the lord wholeheartedly for the gracious god who elects redeems and blesses is also the sovereign lord who punishes evil nations is also the same holy god who is and remains resolutely righteously wrathfully opposed to sin these rational arguments in verses one to eight concerning cause and effect remind us that privilege carries responsibility that that election may bring god's blessing on those who fear him or judgment on those who fail will to walk with god in faith the lion has wards who will not fear well that leads us on to our second heading this evening as we turn our attention to verses nine to fifteen and here we will see a damning indictment of israel's apostasy we've seen that judgment is coming in verses one to eight and it's that principle of cause and effect again israel will be punished as a direct result of her sins in fact so savage will be the mauling of israel that all that remains of her the only remnant that's left will be akin to a shepherd's verse 12 rescuing from the jaws of a lion only to pathetic legs or the piece of an ear the question we want to ask is how did it come to this how did it get this bad as we turn to these verses we're going to find that amos gives us he gives us some of the underlying reasons for why israel is facing god's wrath in other words having already established the principle these verses are an application of cause and effect that amos uh uses uh uses to great effect to get right to the heart of the matter so as amos uh presents his case against israel we see that the nation's transgressions the decadent luxury of the elite the inequality corruption and violence grievous though they may be

in and of themselves are merely here the presenting symptoms of a deep-seated rot that goes right to the core of the nation they're symptomatic of a far deeper problem and it really is a damning indictment on israel on israel's apostasy what happens to god's people when they turn away from walking rightly with god's we only need to look at the double witness amos calls in verse 9 to get a flavor of just how bad things have become look at who he calls the philistines represented by the city of ashdod that we heard about last week and the egyptians from whom of all people god had rescued his people from slavery and oppression a motley bunch of witnesses they are so i guess when you find uh yourself uh find your humanitarian records being called into question by the local despots and uh tyrannical neighbors it's probably time that you take a good long uh look at yourself and that's exactly uh what the lord through amos purposes he holds up a mirror to them look at the unrest look at the oppression look at the social unraveling look at the plundering and looting the few are living like kings in ivory towers and no doubt there would have been private jets and mega yachts had they had them in those days or the many are hopelessly destitute this combination of prosperity with social inequity emboldens the elite in their corruption remember that principle every cause has an effect and every effect becomes uh the cause of something else uh the cause of something else now look at verse 10 the cause of their moral dereliction is their spiritual blindness it has the effect of corrupting their very conscience so skewed has their thinking become but they do not even know how to do right anymore declares the lord they've lost their moral compass their world view is warped and it's sobering isn't it just how quickly that this can overtake uh society can overtake the collective conscience of a society so spiritual blindness spiritual blindness leads to moral disintegration but what first caused the spiritual blindness and again it would be good for us to take notes of this here and again it's a sequence of cause and effect a perilous downward spiral spiritual blindness is caused by apostasy is caused by theological and religious compromise turning away from god's word and doing things our own way so where do i see that well there's a clue in where god's judgment is aimed it's not by accident that uh it's a two-pronged attack in verses 11 and 14 respectively judgment is aimed at their social security tearing down their strongholds and on their religious security destroying the

[20 : 18] sacrificial horns of the altar at bethel neither the horns of the altar nor the great luxurious homes will protect them from god's judgment we need to be careful where we put our trust now bethel which can be translated as the house of god bethel was an epicenter of worship for the northern kingdom of israel after the kingdoms got separated israel in the north and judah in the south and bethel the house of god was a subtly dangerous mixture of true and false worship set up by king jeroboam to rival the jerusalem temple of judah you can read about that in first kings 12 and 13 but ignoring god's revelation jeroboam invented his own golden calf worshiping system the so-called house of god became infiltrated by the influence of the surrounding culture a catalyst for apostasy and it's a similar kind of thing that paul warns timothy about in the new testament uh letter that we just started uh reading and studying this morning when he says that the time will come the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine instead to suit their own desires they will turn their itching ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths we were hearing about that this morning if you were here how unless we're careful to guard the true gospel how subtly a church can tend over time towards unbelief and apostasy and once the church has decided to abandon god's word and follow society's leads as people gain financial security social status political independence and greater pleasure our needs if we're not careful our need for dependence on god religion evaporates religion can become hollow a dead acceptance of tradition and false religion produces false society sets off on a foolish and dangerous trajectory a very dangerous trajectory indeed a destructive spiral and false religion ends in total collapse of shrine and society alike and it's a bit like a collapsing house of cards in verses 14 to 15 and here's that cause and effect again the collapse of the house of god causes the collapse of the houses of men the collapse of the winter house the summer house the ivory houses and the mansion houses and so the house of jacob will come crashing down like the foolish man's house built on sand in jesus's parable that's exactly what did happen and you don't need to look it up now but we can read in 2 kings 17 that the lord warned israel through all his prophets they wouldn't listen they rejected his covenant and followed worthless idols and they themselves became worthless they imitated the nations around them although the lord had ordered them do not do as they do and jeroboam enticed israel away from following the lord and the israelites persisted in all the sins of jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the lord removed them from his presence as he had warned through all his servants the prophets so the people of israel were taken from their

homeland into exile in assyria and so amos chapter 3 i'm sure you'll agree by now is bleak it's a message that went unheeded by israel and a sobering warning to us against the consequences of unabated apostasy i do want us to be clear do know again that apostasy is deliberately turning away from the lord from walking with god it's not you missing your quiet time with god and not turning up to church for a few sundays in a row although these may be cause for concern if it's part of a wider unhealthy pattern but apostasy is me when i left home aged 18 and walked away from the church i'd been brought up in and uh uh embarked on a perilously uh dangerous journey living my life as if god did not exist i praise god that in his grace he can lift out of the pit even a sinner like myself but what are we to do uh with a passage like this what are we to do with a passage like this if we are faithful christians if we are putting our trust in jesus and this leads on to our final section are there any amoses in the house i'll turn again briefly to me uh to verse 8 with me the lion has roared who will not fear the sovereign lord has spoken who can but prophesy amos was driven by divine necessity he could not help but share this message firstly he feared god he feared god in the right kind of fear secondly the fear of the lord impelled him to prophesy to share the message of judgment that he'd been given so there's that cause and effect again the fear of god causes amos to share the message he's been entrusted with fear of god led amos to listen and to share god's difficult message with the upper state nation of israel and clearly there's a cost involved in that it wasn't any more popular for amos to go there than it is for us to share the message of the gospel in the context of the gospel in the context of our own apostate nation amos's fear of god caused him to share the message of judgment he'd been entrusted with i want us to consider this does our fear of god does our right way of relating to god and thinking about god does our fear of god cause us to share the message we've been entrusted with to those that we're called to around us the gospel message of salvation from god's judgment are there any amoses in this house this evening who amongst us uh will triumphantly point to christ the one who saves us from the claws of the lion

that should be us all if we are christians here this evening and if on reflection we are not sharing the message of our hope in jesus and what does that tell us about the way we're thinking about god you see the the principle of cause and effect can work both ways the way we think about god does not cause us to share the gospel then that suggests that there might be something wrong about how we're thinking about god so let's conclude by thinking about how we're to fear god in the right way how we're to think about god rightly remembering that ours is the same god that amos worshipped the roaring lion when the last um last week or so my daughter and i have come to the end of the chronicles of narnia by cs lewis and i figure it's probably a rite of passage for christian parents but there's a memorable section near the beginning of the lion the witch in the wardrobe and the children are hearing about aslan the christ figure in cs lewis's uh children's stories and they find out for the first time that aslan is actually a lion the lion and uh and one of them uh i think susan um hadn't realized that uh he was a lion and of course he'd never met a talking lion uh before and so she asks about whether he's safe to which mr and mrs beaver are astonished safe said mr beaver you hear what mrs beaver tells you who said anything about safe of course he isn't safe but he is good he's the king i tell you that's not a bad picture we're given ours is a holy god a majestic and sovereign god resolutely opposed to sin who must punish the sins of israel but he is also a good father a gracious benevolent father who from the midst amidst the ravaged remnant from amongst the descendants of the house of jacob brought forth the lion of the tribe of judah who amazingly astonishingly incredibly is also the lamb of god who was slain the one who was burdened with the burden we cannot bear for the sins not just of israel but for all those who would place their trust in him christ jesus is the true israel the faithful israel who succeeded where old covenant israel failed and took the punishment of god's wrath whose body was broken for us enduring the ultimate exile of death in our place and yet the very jaws of death he was raised the jaws of death could not hold him the tomb was empty not even a couple of leg bones or a piece of an ear for on the third day christ was marvelously raised from the grave his resurrection body fit uh for eternity and the good news of the gospel tells us that we can be the true israel of god as well if we are in christ we share by adoption the privileges and relationship and security and assurance that christ himself enjoys as god's true son and though as christians we may be exiles in our worlds

our heavenly citizenship is secure in christ the lion has roared well flee from god's wrath by running into his arms take refuge under the blood of the cross and if you don't yet have a personal relationship with jesus and let me commend that to you as a fellow sinner that i am a sinner saved not by my own merits but by grace alone by faith in the lord jesus christ amen and may god bless that word let's join together in prayer father we give thanks to you for the words you have given us this evening we pray that you would keep our hearts from apostasy by thinking rightly about who you are and what you have done help us to be like amos who fearing you listened to you and took the message he was entrusted with to the people you called him to lord god we pray for opportunities to share that message of the hope we have in the lord jesus christ in his name we pray amen