

How to keep you straight when your surroundings are moving AMOS chapter 7:1-9

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Geostationary satellite can keep the same position at all times in respect to a location on earth. This type of satellite actually moving about 6840 miles per hour. Since it is moving so fast, how can it remains pointing at the same location on earth. It is based on God's creation of natural law on gravity, centrifugal force and rotation that it is this way when an object is at about 22,236 miles high. It only takes the satellite a small amount of effort like thruster operation and momentum control to keep itself from drifting away. Similar type of situation can be related to a plumb-line, as mentioned in Amos, over 2700 years ago. The earth is moving about 1040 miles per hour but the plumb line is straight because God's creation of natural law of gravity and rotation. It only takes a small effort for a human to hang the plumb-line on a firm structure and keep it away from wind to see the plumb-line is straight. We will see later how these conditions relate to the situation of Amos and apply to our lives today.

Book of Amos is a minor prophet book in Old Testament. Amos was a shepherd in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He prophesized "two years before the earthquake" that is about 760BC (Amos 1:1, Zech. 14:5). Although Amos is from Judah, his prophecies are mainly against the people of the northern kingdom of Israel and the surrounding nations. Most of his prophecies are directed to God's chosen people where they were unjust and had no mercy on his own people and people in nearby nations. God needs them to be accountable to their actions.

1) The two events that show God's mercy

a. Two times God has relented

Today we study the first half of chapter 7. Verses 1 to 3 is about God was ready to punish His people with swarms of locusts. Amos entreated to God not to do that, and God relented. Verses 4 to 6 is about God was calling for judgement on His people with fire. The fire could devour the fields. Amos entreated to God again, and God relented.

b. God is merciful in the past, present and forever

God can relent his punishment as shown in Gen. 18:16-33, Joel 2:12-14 and Jonah 3:6-9. God has mercy for His people. He can lessen or withdraw punishments. He would like us to repent from sins so that the punishment

can be withdrawn. God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). His mercy for people is always there (Lam. 3:22-23).

2) God's position on justice is firm at the same time He is merciful

God revealed a vision to Amos with a plumb-line from verses 7 to 9.

a. Plumb-line refers to righteousness in God's standard

A plumb-line is a weight suspended from a string used as a vertical reference line to ensure a structure is centered. People knew its purpose and thus used it at that time. It can be used to build structure like a tool for building a straight wall. It can also be a tool to determine a structure that is not straight, and needs to tear the structure down. The plumb-line can show the Israelites they were not righteous and off from obeying God's commands (Amos chapter 2). God is firm on His position on righteousness, and requires His people to follow His commands like be impartial and treat others fairly.

As we can see in the New Testament that Jesus came because people have sinned and fall short the glory of God. However, God is righteous and at the same time merciful, and thus Jesus came to die for the penalty of our sins. God is consistent on His characters (righteous and merciful) at all time.

b. Plumb-line and our actions

Plumb-line reflects the righteousness of God. Why the Israelites were not able to keep God's commands on righteousness and to treat others fairly? Bias and treating people unfairly are happening in those days as well as today in every society. There was an event in USA (May 2020) of a police officer that he hurt a black person (George Floyd) and let him die. Protests have occurred in over 100 US cities for bias and unfair treatment of black people. Why people in the past as well as today, including most of us, not able to be righteous and keep God's command? It is because there are so many ungodly voices and influences around us, and we can lose sight of God's standard. These spiritual distractions are similar to physical movements in physical matters like a plumb-line and geostationary satellite. The distractions and movements can be great if you are away from God's intended design and purpose. However, God's natural law already done the work for stability for plumb-line and geostationary satellite. One just need a small amount of effort to keep it straight like avoiding wind for a plumb-line. Similarly, in the

spiritual reign one needs to focus on God and His standard. God already done the work; Bible has stated God's commands and it has shown you ways to be holy and righteous (II Tim. 3:16). All we need is to lean on God's guidance and He will keep you in place (straight as in line with God's plumb-line). Your little effort is to avoid the worldly distraction by following God /abide in Him (Psalms 37:5-6, John 15:4).

In conclusion, Micah 6:8 is a good summary for our application of this study. (He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To **act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.** *Micah 6:8*)

We need to constantly seek and follow God so that we will not go away from His standard due to the changing and distracting environments around us.

Appendix

Geostationary satellite (source: Reformation.org); ancient plumb line

