

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**C0914 – April 8, 2009 – Amos 3:1-8 – Covenant Lawsuit**

If you'd open your Bible to Amos. Last week we saw in chapter 2 the eighth and final oracle of judgment. It is the main one that Amos has been leading up to. It centered on Israel, the northern kingdom. Her king was Jeroboam II, the year is around the 760's BC. You want to keep that period in mind because we're in the period of Kingdom Decline, both kingdoms are increasing in apostasy, the north a bit quicker than the south, and so at this time we see the corruptness of the northern kingdom. If we think of our own country we, of course, see many parallels. They were a very wealthy kingdom, we learned that the northern kingdom was in its hay day. They had enlarged their borders under the prophetic ministry of Jonah and this had brought about an economic boom, but along with the success moral corruption and social decay began to boom. In chapter 2 we saw the corrupt judicial system, the rich and powerful were bribing the judges to rule in their favor, and by so doing they were exploiting the poor. They had become a sexually promiscuous society and had been lured in by all the trappings of religion. The foreign religious shrines of Baal and Astarte had a major place in their society. It's not much different than what we face today, there is economic injustice, corrupt judicial system, the rich exploiting the poor, sexual promiscuity in the area of pornography and fornication is present on every block in America and of course, the trappings of religion; Eastern mysticism, yoga, candles, music, incense, meditation, all lures to the contentless idolatries of religion. So there's a lot that we share in common with the nation Amos ministered to. But one difference is they were in a Covenant with God and we are not.

And so tonight God enters into a Covenant Lawsuit with Israel in chapter 3, vv 1-15. Let's outline the passage and then we'll read it. In 3:1a we have the Introduction of the Plaintiff, who is also the Judge, He is the Lord. In 3:1b

the Introduction of the Defendant, that is Israel. In 3:1c-2a we have the Historical Review, what the Lord had done for Israel. In 3:2b we have the Indictment. In 3:3-8 the Lord's Prosecuting Attorney, Amos, defends himself. This is the major section we'll look at tonight. Amos is using the apologetics of rhetoric to defend his prophetic ministry. In v 9a, the Witnesses are Summoned. In 3:9b-10 there's more of the Indictment and finally in 3:11-15, the Judgment is Announced, which is an enactment of the cursings. So now I'll read and with this outline you can divide it up into the Covenant Lawsuit proceedings.

**<sup>1</sup>Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you,** there the Plaintiff and Judge is introduced, **against you, sons of Israel,** Israel is the Defendant, **against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt:** **<sup>2</sup>"You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth;** there's the Historical Review, He cites the Exodus and the Call of Abraham. **Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."** The Indictment, vv 3-8, Amos is defending his prophetic ministry, his right to serve as the Lord's prosecuting attorney in this case. **<sup>3</sup>Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment? <sup>4</sup>Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something? <sup>5</sup>Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all? <sup>6</sup>If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it? <sup>7</sup>Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets. <sup>8</sup>A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?** The argument of Amos climaxes in v 8. **<sup>9</sup>Proclaim on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt and say, "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and see *the* great tumults within her and *the* oppressions in her midst.** That's the Summoning of the Witnesses. **<sup>10</sup>"But they do not know how to do what is right," declares the LORD, "these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels."** More of the Indictment. And finally the Judgment is Announced, it's an enactment of the cursings of the Mosaic Covenant. **<sup>11</sup>Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "An enemy, even one surrounding the land, Will pull down your strength from you And your citadels will be looted." <sup>12</sup>Thus says the LORD, "Just as the**

**shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away— With *the* corner of a bed and *the* cover of a couch! <sup>13</sup>“Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,” Declares the Lord GOD, the God of hosts. <sup>14</sup>“For on the day that I punish Israel's transgressions, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; The horns of the altar will be cut off And they will fall to the ground. <sup>15</sup>“I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; The houses of ivory will also perish And the great houses will come to an end,” Declares the LORD.**

That gives you the basic structure that dominates Amos' book. The structure of that Covenant Lawsuit harks back to the Mosaic Covenant, what in the Ancient Near East was known as a Suzerainty-Vassal Treaty. So if you're going to understand the Covenant Lawsuit you have to understand the Suzerainty-Vassal Treaty. This was re-discovered in the 1930's by conservative scholars. In the 1800's the liberals had argued that the Torah was just pieced together by various authors, JED and P they called them, Jehovah, Elohim, Deuteronomic and Priestly, and they pieced things together into the first five books we call Torah. This discovery in the 1930's of this very rigid structure was a strong argument against that. We can now see it is a structure paralleled by ancient Hittite treaties. Of course, I think Exodus and Deuteronomy are the original and they were following God's pattern. But in any case, what you have is the prophets coming along and acting as God's prosecuting attorneys. Most people don't understand the OT prophets. Most preachers rarely teach these portions of the Bible and here's why. Here's a student of the Bible and what he had to say about the prophets, “Why should I spend time studying the prophets? I don't think I would ever preach from material that is so obscure.”<sup>i</sup> J. Carl Laney, the professor responds, “Admittedly, the major and minor prophets are difficult books. They contain some of the most challenging interpretive problems in the Bible! They must be approached with a sound understanding of the Mosaic covenant, Israel's history, and the role of the prophet in God's case against Israel.<sup>ii</sup> If you ever want to understand this section of the Bible you've got to understand the Mosaic Covenant. It's essential. That covenant forms the background for God's lawsuit against Israel. And by the way, it's the background for understanding God's discipline of you as a Christian in the NT. Why does the Lord discipline us? What's the theologically correct reason that God disciplines us? Because He loves us. Why does He love us? We'll get to that

theological question later tonight. But He's made us His children and He wants us to grow up spiritually, He wants us to advance to maturity. So He disciplines us in time for that purpose. The background of these disciplinary truths is in the OT Mosaic Covenant made with Israel. Not that we're under that Covenant, but that is the model for discipline. So we want to go back and review the Mosaic Covenant. We said studies have uncovered the fact that it follows the format of a Suzerainty-Vassal Treaty. The same six parts of ancient Suzerainty-Vassal Treaty are found in the Mosaic Covenant and the Covenant Lawsuit we're going to study follows those six parts. So let's look at the parts.

First we have the **Preamble**. I don't like calling it the Preamble because what it is an Introduction of the Great King, the Suzerain. The Suzerain identifies Himself. I am the Lord God. This is the way the Ten Commandments in Exodus begin, this is the way the Book of Deuteronomy begins, and both are Treaty documents. The second part is the **Historical Prologue**. Historical means there's a review of history. The Great King reminded Israel what He had done for them; I brought you up out of Egypt. That, by the way, is why Israel should obey Him. He had done a great thing for Israel and therefore they should repay Him by obeying. The other part of the title, Prologue, simply means these are the first words, so the first words in these treaties are a recitation of history. It's found in both Exodus 20 and Deut 1. Third we have the **Stipulations**. These are the obligations, the laws, the statutes, the commands that the Great King spelled out for the nation Israel. What the nation Israel was to do. Again found in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Fourth, there was a **Public Reading** of the Treaty Document(s) to maintain covenant continuity across the generations. So you would have two copies of the treaty made, one for each part, they were deposited in the national temple where they would be safeguarded and they would be pulled periodically for a public reading. Israel was to have a public reading of the Mosaic Covenant every seven years. Fifth, you have the **Invocation of Witnesses** to the Treaty. For Israel the primary witnesses were the angelic beings, and their job in the OT was to watch Israel's behavior. Israel herself was also a witness as well as the surrounding nations. So you have angels, Israel and other nations as the witnesses. The prophets later in Israel's history would act as God's prosecuting attorneys and would call the witnesses to the stand to testify against Israel. The sixth element is the **Blessings and Cursings Formula**. There were curses for

disobeying, there were blessings for obeying. So, six parts of the Mosaic Covenant and now when we come to the court proceedings which we call the Covenant Lawsuit, there are corresponding parts.

| <u>Mosaic Covenant</u>   | <u>Covenant Lawsuit</u>              |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Introduction of Suzerain | Introduction of Plaintiff/Judge      |
| Historical Prologue      | Historical Review                    |
| Stipulations             | Indictments                          |
| Invocation of Witnesses  | Call to Witnesses                    |
| Blessings and Cursings   | Pronouncement of Judgment (cursings) |

Let's start now with the Covenant Lawsuit proceedings and we'll detail it out. Verse 1, **Hear this** word, alright, this phrase is a formal introduction of a Covenant Lawsuit (cf Isa 1:2, 10; Hos 4:1; Jer 2:4). Turn also to chapter 4, verse 1, where it's repeated, "hear this word you cows of Bashan" and chapter 5, verse 1, "hear this word which I take up for you as a dirge." Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are all Covenant Lawsuits; they make up the second section of Amos. Section one includes the eight oracles of judgment in chapters 1-2; section two includes three covenant lawsuits in chapters 3-5, then in section three, chapters 7-9, Amos has five visions. That will help you read through the Book of Amos, which I hope you are reading. The word of God is meant to be read over and over and over. I'm trying to teach you how to read this literature as its authors intended. In other words, when I say that, I'm simply saying that I want you to understand this Book as God intended it to be understood. If you don't do that then you don't have the mind of God at this point. How important is it to understand things as God intended them to be understood? I'd say that's a pretty high priority in the word of God. It's why He spoke His mind to us in the first place. This is where we commune with Him. So we want to get to the authorial intent and because He is the ultimate author it's His mind we're trying to conform to in our understanding. So if you break Amos up this way you'll start to see how God thinks, you start to understand His character, especially His justice and righteousness, but also His love. Discipline comes out of God's love. So you have three divisions in Amos, chapters 1-2 contain eight oracles of judgment, chapters 3-5 contain three covenant lawsuits and chapters 7-9 contain five visions. 8, 3 and 5. So here in chapter 3 with the words **Hear this word** we introduce section two, the first of three Covenant Lawsuits. And with that we know Israel is in a lot of trouble with God. The trouble is that she's become complacent in her relationship with God. We all do this when we enjoy prosperity, we enjoy success, we enjoy a big bank account, when we experience that we tend to get

complacent. And Israel's had a long period of complacency to the point that God has to shake her from complacency. Just because you have a successful past does not mean you will have future success. God will often rock the boat.

**Hear this word which the Lord has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt:** He's coming against the entire **family**, both southern and northern kingdoms are included here because they were all brought up from the land of Egypt. But I'd say the primary application is to the northern kingdom. Amos is stressing that they were a part of the **entire family which He brought up from** Egypt. But there's a secondary application to the southern kingdom. They are all the same family, they are all descended from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the twelve sons of Jacob. And so we've had the Covenant Lawsuit initiated, the Suzerain has been Introduced, He's the Plaintiff and the Judge, the Defendant has been Introduced, the **sons of Israel** and then he begins the Historical Review. Think of what God had done for them, **He brought them up from the land of Egypt.** What other God ever did this for a people in slavery? He brought them out from an oppressive slavery without them ever having to raise a hand. God did it all by His omnipotent sovereign hand. God did it by an act of His sovereign grace. They didn't have to fight the Egyptians; they didn't have to go to combat against Pharaoh. God fought the battle, God did it all. It is the grand picture in the OT of judgment/salvation. God judges His enemies and saves those He has chosen. Salvation is solely a work of God on behalf of man. Salvation is the gift of God. They had forgotten that. The parallel for you and I is obvious. Do you ever have a historical review of your salvation? It's healthy to be reminded of that. We take it for granted. We become complacent about it. We even think on many occasions we deserved it. That's heresy. We don't deserve salvation. God saves as an act of sovereign grace purely because He wants to. And He's saying in the Lawsuit to Israel, I want you to remember how I saved you in the Exodus. Obviously they'd forgotten and they were taking it for granted. The second thing God reminds them of in v 2, **"You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth;** and this really harks back to the Call of Abraham because the word **families** there is first used in Gen 12:3, in you Abraham I will bless all the families of the earth. So the second thing God had done harks back to the Call of Abraham. **You only have I chosen,** a very important phrase, literally, and more correctly, **"You only have I known,"** Hebrew *yada*. **You only Israel, have I known among all**

**the families of the earth.** Now obviously that does not mean God was unaware of the other nations on earth, we just got through going through chapters 1-2 where He pronounced doom on the surrounding nations. *yada* here is not a verb of “cognitive knowledge. Cognitively God knows everything, even things possible but not actual, the what-if’s of history. God is omniscient. This is not a verb of omniscience. This is a verb of covenant love, this is a verb of intimacy, this is a verb of elective love, covenantal love, sovereign love. That He shares with the nation Israel exclusively. You see it used of Abraham in Gen 18:19. God chose Him to be the father of the elect nation, the nation Israel. No other nation shares that relationship to God. **You only have I known** with that intimate love, that covenantal love, that sovereign love. Now a question is asked at this point. Why? Why does God love Israel? Isn’t it unfair for God to love only Israel? Why does God love Israel? Do you know why? Turn to Deut 7. “Why did God love Israel?” We can only answer that question this way; God loved Israel because He loved Israel. That’s right. Theologically that is a right answer. God loved Israel because He loved Israel. Now you want to know why He loved Israel? Because He loved Israel. Love is sovereign. The love is not for what they were in their good works; it is because of what He wanted to do with them. Deut 7, verse 7 “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup>but because the LORD loved you,” why did the Lord set His love on Israel, because the Lord loved Israel, “and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” Sovereign love, love in spite of who we are. Rejoice in it. Don’t get uptight about God’s sovereign elective love. Rejoice in the fact that God loves you despite yourself. It’s sovereign. Think of it this way, men why do you love your wives? If you love them because they keep a good house, they cook good meals, you don’t love them. True love is when I love someone not because of who they are or what they do but because of who I am. When you see a guy and he loves his wife, and you think, how could he love her? She’s a bad cook, she doesn’t take care of herself, she’s lazy, but he still loves her, that’s true love, somewhere or another this guy fell in love with her, not because of who she is but because of who he is. Love is like that, love is sovereign. It’s bestowed freely, it’s unconditional. I choose to love because I want to. Why did God love Israel? Because He chose to love Israel. But before you think that’s unfair, finish the verse. What comes with God’s sovereign, elective love? Discipline, **Therefore**

**I will punish you for all your iniquities.”** Notice the **Therefore**, election is a two-edged sword. Yes, you have the favor of God, yes, you have privileged position, but with that comes the discipline of God, responsibility under God. The saying, “with great privilege comes great responsibility,” is a true saying. They’re proportionate to one another in the plan of God. He who is faithful with little will be given much. With greater and greater privilege comes greater and greater responsibility. Who had the most privileged position of all time? Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Who had the greatest responsibility of all time? Jesus Christ. He had to carry the responsibility of providing salvation for the whole world. We don’t think about it enough, but the pressure was tremendous. He sweat blood because the entire redemptive plan of God was resting on His shoulders. And He did it. He accomplished it in full. With privileged position comes great responsibility. So if you think election is unfair, just remember that judgment starts at the house of God. Peter said that in the NT (1 Pet 4:17).

**You only have I chosen... Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.** That’s why He’s entering into a Covenant Lawsuit against them. He does it because ultimately He loves them. Fathers, why do you discipline your children, if you do, I hope you do, the word of God commands you to. Why do you do that? Why do you spank the bottom of that child where it hurts? Because you love them. It’s the argument of Hebrews 12. God the Father has set His sovereign electing love on us and therefore He disciplines us. He says if any of you is without discipline you’re not a child, you’re not in the family of God. The only comforting thing about discipline for a child, I mean, the child obviously does not enjoy the spanking, but there is one comfort to it and that is this, it assures the child they’re still in the family. You care enough about that child to take the time to disrupt the natural course of his sin nature and correct him. So election into the family means you’re loved and because you’re loved, out of God’s love comes God’s discipline. I’m not one that thinks that you can measure whether you’re really a child or not by how many good works you’ve got. I don’t find that test in the Bible. The only test I find is this, whether you receive God’s discipline or not. If you are without it you are not a child of God. The question that comes out of discipline is why? Why does our heavenly Father discipline us? Why should earthly fathers discipline their children? It is the same answer. Hebrews answers again, it’s to purify us. God disciplines us in order that we can share in His holiness. Nobody likes it at the time, but for those who are



trained in it; it produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness. God's not just a big meanie, fathers who discipline in His manner are not meanies, and they're doing it out of their love because they know the fruits of discipline are the fruits of righteousness. A father who does not discipline his child doesn't want to damage his self-esteem, and doesn't love his child. He's probably in love with himself, and it's usually easy to tell because for the most part he's just trying to get everyone to leave him alone, let him have some peace and quiet. He's a lover of self, he's an apostate. And the tragedy doesn't end with him because now he's got a child who is not under the discipline and if discipline yields righteousness what does no discipline yield?

Unrighteousness, or what the Bible calls *anomia*, the antonym, it means "wickedness, lawlessness," if you don't discipline you will have a licentious child. You're going to have problems if you don't discipline, it's a fact.

So just know that because you are in the family of God it comes with greater responsibility. Judgment begins at the house of God. This is why if you sit there week in and week out and you hear the word of God and you do not respond to the word of God I fear for you. I do not believe that once saved a person can lose his salvation. But I do think it is proper for every believing Christian to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. God tells us this because He wants to disciplinarily purify the people of God. He wants to make us what He desires us to be.

Now, starting in verses 3-8 we get into Amos' apologetic for his role as prosecuting attorney. In other words, he's defending his prophetic office, that indeed he is God's prosecuting attorney in this case. And the first thing I want you to observe from this series of questions is that really this is a defense. Amos is defending himself, we call that apologetics. Why is he doing that? Well, for one he's from the southern kingdom of Judah, he's not from the northern kingdom. So he's from another nation. They don't know Amos. Secondly, we learn in chapter 7 that he wasn't a prophet by vocation, he was sheep breeder, a sheep herder and a fig nipper, so he was not associated with the professional guild of prophets and therefore he defends his rights as a prophet. The second thing we observe is it's a long series, primarily of questions. They're rhetorical questions. This is a device used to make people think and I think rhetorical apologetics is a good way to work with people who are in unbelief. Stop trying to ram, cram and jam something down someone, just ask questions that will lead them to the obvious conclusion. It's

a persuasive method, Paul said I persuade men, and it's persuasive precisely because it makes people think and when people think they can become convinced something is true. So Amos uses rhetorical apologetics. Third, notice in vv 4-8, the rhetorical questions come in pairs that somehow answer to one another.

Verse 4, **Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?  
Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something?**

Verse 5, **Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it?  
Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?**

Verse 6, **If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble?  
If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?**

Verse 8, **A lion has roared! Who will not fear?  
The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?**

Verse 8 is the climax of Amos' argument, everything else is a lead up. If there's any one single image of God in Amos it's the imagery of the lion. Fourth, each question has an obvious answer. They are all very easy questions to answer and therefore the questions of verse 8 are easy to answer. Each follows as night follows day. And finally, notice a fifth thing, each question involves a cause-effect relationship. V 4, **Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?** The answer is no, a lion roars when he does have prey. So the cause is the prey, the effect is the lion roars. All of them start with the effect and move back to the cause except vv 6 and 8. Vv 6 and 8 have the cause first and then the effect. In v 6, **If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble**, cause the **trumpet blow**, effect the **people tremble**. Most of these we don't have much difficulty with.

The pair in verse 4, **Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?** The answer is no. The lion roars when he does have prey. That's what happens in nature. When the lion roars it paralyzes the prey, making it easy

for the lion to catch the prey. What's the underlying truth here? What's the prophet getting at? Because the lion is roaring! God is roaring at Israel's sin. So if Israel's sins did not merit judgment, God's prophet would not be crying out against her. But he is. So the lions **prey** is the equivalent of the nation's sin and the lions **roar** is God's rebuke.

Second question in the prayer, **Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something?** And the answer is? No. The young lion only grows when the old lion has captured something and brought it to the den. That's a fact of nature. So in fact Amos is like the young lion and he's growling because the old lion, God, has captured Israel in her sin.<sup>3</sup>

Verse 5, the second pair, **Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it?** And the answer is? No. A bird only falls into a trap when there is bait, something must lure the bird into the trap. What's the point of this? That God's judgment is not random. Israel has sinned, this is well-known. The paired question, **Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?** The answer is? No. When a trap springs it captures its prey. What's the point? That God will capture Israel in His judgment. She will not escape.

The third pair, verse 6, **If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble?** In this one the cause is first, then the effect. The answer to the question is? Yes. If a trumpet is blown in a city people will tremble. Why? Because it was a warning of enemy attack. The point? Israel will tremble when the Lord attacks. And the pair, **If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?** And the answer is? Yes. If calamity occurs in a city, the Lord has done it. One of the difficulties here is the word **calamity**, sometimes translated "evil." That word *ra-a* can mean "evil." And if that's the case then the verse is saying God is the cause of evil, that is, moral evil. God is the source of moral evil. Moral evil is sourced in God. That is categorically contradictory to passages like Jas 1:13, 17. Everything that God is and everything that God is the cause or source of is good. The context here is not ethical. The sense is that God causes military defeat of a city as a result of sin, and so the translation of *ra-a* here is "calamity" not "evil." The point in this context is that whatever happens in history is not due to chance but to God's plan. God authorizes all that happens in His universe. Nothing happens that God has not permitted to happen for some reason or another.

Chance does not reign but God reigns (also cf Isa 45:6, 7) What is interesting about this statement is that it is a very strong statement that God is sovereign. And by implication it is the fact that God is sovereign that gives Him the right to judge. But the implication that He has the right to judge implies that man is responsible. Therefore God's sovereignty implies human responsibility. If God is not sovereign over all then man is not responsible and God cannot judge man. Very few people understand what I just said, so let me say it again. If God is not sovereign over all then man is not responsible and God cannot judge man. Most people think that if God is sovereign then man doesn't have free will and man is a robot. It's exactly the other way around. If God is not sovereign then man doesn't have free will but is wholly a product of biochemical determinism. It's God's sovereignty which sets up a person to whom man is responsible to.

Verses 7-8 start to climax the argument for Amos' rights as prophet. So far it's been seen from nature's cause-effect relationships. In the realm of nature, there is a cause for every effect, so in supernatural sphere there is a cause for every effect. Amos must prophesy because a lion has roared. He is compelled to prophesy as people are compelled to tremble when a trumpet is blown in the city. That's the argument that is being made.

**Verse 7, Surely the Lord God does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel**

**To His servants the prophets.** Here's how the prophet gets his information. If the Lord God is going to judge He reveals **His secret counsel To His...prophets.** He reveals it in His **secret counsel.** The word there is *sod*, it means they are privy to a 'confidential speech,' they were taken into 'a circle of trusted friends.' It's almost as if the prophets are taken up into heaven into a secret meeting of God the Trinity where they are privy to the intelligent discourse among the members of the Trinity (cf Jer 23:22). This is a very visual scene. The prophet, he's saying, gets to attend inter-Trinitarian discourse. They get to listen in on inter-Trinitarian dialogue. It casts a whole new light on someone who claims to be a prophet today. This is not light stuff, this is heavy material. Amos says I was in the secret counsel room, I got the inside scoop here.

By the way, this is not saying that God doesn't do anything without telling the prophets, it's just saying that he doesn't do anything by way of a Covenant Lawsuit without telling the prophets. And the point is that God always warns Israel before He judges them.

God gives grace before judgment. Grace before judgment. Always, it's standard operating procedure in the Godhead.

Verse 8, **A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?** That's synonymous parallelism. The **lion** who has **roared** is the **Lord God** who **has spoken**. When the lion roars, everyone fears. I think of Dan's wife, the missionary, I think her name was Tina and she told the story of going out hunting with Dan in Africa and she was worried about running into a lion, and they did, and she scrambled up a tree. That's the course of nature, when a lion roars you get afraid. Now, when the Lord God has spoken in his secret counsels to the prophet, **Who can but prophesy?** See there's no choice Amos says, I have to prophesy because the Lord God has spoken. The cause is **The Lord God has spoken**, the effect is Amos must prophesy. And that's the evidence he puts forth for his prophetic ministry

Alright, we have one more thing to wrap up, and that's verse 3, maybe you observed verse 3 doesn't have a mate, it's the only question left without a finishing pair. **Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?** The answer is? No. Two men do not walk together in a vast desert unless they've made an appointment. People who walk together in a desert share the same mindset. What's the point? The point is, "How can God walk with Israel when Israel is walking in sin?" He cannot. They're out of step with one another? They're out of fellowship. Why is there not a mate with this question? Commentators have suggested that if there were one it would read something like this, "Will you stay married if the bill of divorce has already been written?" The fact that this statement or something like it is not there implies that Israel is still in a period of grace before judgment.

Alright, so we've seen the first of three Covenant Lawsuits initiated. The Plaintiff/Judge and Defendant have been introduced, the Historical Review has been announced, the Indictment has begun and the Prosecuting Attorney, Amos, has defended his right to prophesy against them in the case.

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<sup>i</sup> Dallas Theological Seminary, *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 138* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1981; 2002), 138:313.

<sup>ii</sup> Dallas Theological Seminary, *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 138* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1981; 2002), 138:313.

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