

## “Are you Plumb or Not”

### Text: Amos 7:7-9

Amos was a shepherd from a rural area in Judah whom God called to preach at Israel’s royal sanctuary at Bethel. His prophesying took place in about 750 B.C. during the reign of Jeroboam II and lasted only a few days. His message was against the wealthy. The poor was being exploited and cheated, and the judicial system was corrupt. There was religious arrogance, as well, and even the attempt to corrupt some of the religious leaders. Amos’s warning to the worshippers at Bethel was that, because of their sins, destruction was coming upon them from both Egypt and Assyria. The priest at Bethel made it clear to Amos that he was not welcome and that he should go home to his own country. Amos refused to back down, explaining that he was not a professional prophet, but he was there solely because God had sent him.

A Plumb Line (Hebrew derivation – “anak”, a line, to one end of which is attached a weight. Its use by masons was early known to the Egyptians, and is ascribed to their King Menes about 2900 B.C.). It was used to measure the straightness of a constructed wall, its perpendicular accuracy if you will. The instrument was accurate as it always pointed straight down, drawn by the earth’s center of gravity. In our text God uses this tool metaphorically, to measure his judgment of Israel’s waywardness, and his displeasure with them. God took this graphic illustration to ask a question, what do you see Amos? I’m holding this tool in the midst of my people and the wall, the building, is revealing crookedness, my people are not “straight”.

Many years ago I taught a class on this text, and I wanted to illustrate clearly the spiritual masonry that God was exercising here. I had not encountered the use of such a tool, but had observed over the years, craftsmen measuring a wall, or a building, and routinely saying to their working partner: “is it plumb?” meaning is it level, or is it straight. So being the handy man that I was, I searched through my fully outfitted work shop in my basement looking for a plum line? Certainly I must have one in my collection of tools from my Dad or my father in law. My younger days as a weekend mechanic should have blessed me with such an instrument. When I found it, I marveled at it, and reflected on its history, and it’s illustration in this text. So when teaching the class, I conducted a demonstration. I tacked the plumb line to the portable lectern, and moved the lectern from left to right, tilting it in at every angle, and miraculously, the plum line remained true; pointing straight down! Only when I placed the lectern leveled and centered on the table, was there true parity between the plum line and the lectern.

I find application of this principal of spiritual physics relevant to the Lenten Season. This is a time of fasting, prayer and spiritual introspection; where we hold the plum line of God’s Word, his expectations, against ourselves. QUESTION: Do you use God’s Word as a standard, a plum line to direct the choices you make, the work of your hands, and your pursuit of happiness? If not, DO IT NOW!!!

Yours in Christ

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