

• *Old testament prophecy sees God's future plans in one sweep*

Old Testament prophecy is often 'panoramic'. What I mean by that is that it sees a full outline of God's future plans in one sweep, without making differentiation into distinct epochs of time. Or a Christian might say 'Old Testament prophecy often deals with the first coming and the second coming of Jesus, all in one breath'. So it is in Amos 9:11-15. It takes in what we now know to be the coming of Jesus to Israel, the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Gentiles and – as we now see – the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness makes its home. The vision takes in everything in one sweep; the fulfilment unfolds in stages.

• *Fulfilment in stages*

¹³“*The days are coming*”– oracle of Yahweh –
“*when the ploughman will overtake the reaper,
and the one who treads on the grapes
will overtake the one who sows the seed.
The mountains shall drip with sweet wine,
all the hills shall flow with it.*”

The new heavens and a new earth

It is a picture of material paradise. The ultimate blessing that God will bring upon His 'Israel' – the entire people of God – is one of earthly glory, paradise restored, new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Amos pictures that new world as one in which there is so much agricultural prosperity that the people reaping the crops are gathering vast quantities of produce, and when the next season starts, they have not finished gathering in the vast quantities from the previous harvest. The people crushing the grapes to make wine are still at work when the time for sowing the seed comes round again. The mountains and hills are 'dripping' with prosperity and abundance.

• *Agricultural prosperity and abundance*

• *On earth*

It is a beautiful picture. How literal it is we do not know. We shall find out when we get to the new heavens and new earth. When will it happen? It is not given to us to know the 'times and the seasons'. It is certain that our final reward will be an earthly one. The Christian's final 'heaven' will not be a matter of floating around in space like a ghost or a bodiless angel. The new Jerusalem comes down upon the earth. We shall have glorified bodies and live in a glorified physical world. Is this picture fulfilled then, or might some of this picture be fulfilled even before Jesus comes? One thing is sure: if it comes within the gospel age it will be the result of preaching the gospel. God's 'restorations' do not come in any other way than by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

• *Glorified bodies in a glorified physical world*

• *Through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*

¹⁴“*I shall restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.
They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
they will lay out gardens and eat their fruit.
¹⁵I shall plant them in their own land,
and they shall never again be uprooted
out of the land I have given them.*”
Oracle of Yahweh, your God.

• *'National Israel' will join physical Israel*

We have seen the biblical idea of 'Israel'. The church today, God's 'Israel', consists of remnant-Israel plus saved Gentiles. One day 'national' Israel will join God's 'spiritual' Israel.

God will restore the fortunes of His people 'Israel'. At the time Amos wrote, 'Israel' was about to be almost annihilated. It would never be the same again. The northern territory would be full of pagans and Samaritans. But that did not mean God had given up on His 'Israel'. No;

some northerners would join Judah. One day the Son of David would be sent to die on a cross. The Holy Spirit would be poured out. God would restore the fortunes of His people 'Israel'.

What sort of 'Israel' is in mind here? '*I shall plant them in their own land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them*'. This will certainly happen in the world to come, the new heavens and new earth which comes down out of heaven.

• *National Israel today and its return to some of its ancient territory*

• *A foreshadowing of something much bigger that God is planning*

• *A picture of heaven on earth*

... a garden

...a city

...a marriage festival

...a home

...Righteousness, peace, joy, worship, restful activity, love

...a reconstructed world from the ashes of the old

• *Certain and maybe sooner than we think*

Today, as I write, the earthly nation of Israel is back in some of its ancient territory. Is this the fulfilment of Amos's prophecy? Well, the return of the nation of Israel to its ancient territory – an event that came about through various political episodes beginning in 1917 – is certainly interesting. But it needs to be said that those events are only a vague foreshadowing of something much bigger that God is planning. The people of Israel are not saved yet, in any vast numbers. They are as paganised as they were in the days of Amos. A much greater blessing is in store for the whole world, much greater than any political scheme that arose in 1917. Amos's prediction has to do with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than the schemes of secularised politicians.

The day when God's total Israel are settled in 'their own land' 'never again ... uprooted' will come in a much richer and fuller way. God has promised us 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness has its dwelling-place'. Those who live for God will enjoy a new home altogether. It will quite literally be 'heaven on earth'. Heaven will become earthly; the new Jerusalem will come down on to the earth. In the Bible, sometimes our future home is pictured as a garden, sometimes it is pictured as a city, sometimes it is pictured as a marriage-festival, sometimes it is pictured as home. We shall dwell with God. The new world will be the home of righteousness, a place of peace, joy, worship, fellowship, and of restful activity. It will be a place of love, a reconstructed world. Noisily and dramatically the world in its present form will cease to be. It does not mean that all material existence is brought to an end. The saved will live in a renovated planet. But the world in its old sin-dominated form is brought to an end. The new heavens and new earth of 2 Peter 3:13 is a world newly created from the ashes of the old world.

The 'Israel' north of Judah would soon after Amos's time be utterly destroyed, but there is a day coming when God's enlarged Israel will be settled in their own land, never to be uprooted. Heaven on earth will soon come to the whole of God's people. It is an '*oracle of Yahweh, your God*'; it will certainly happen, maybe sooner than we think.



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