

Amos 7:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit:

Analysis

Amos's response to Amaziah the priest of Bethel reveals crucial truths about prophetic calling and divine sovereignty. The phrase "I was no prophet" (lo-navi anokhi) uses the perfect tense, indicating past state—Amos wasn't professionally trained or part of the prophetic guild. "Neither was I a prophet's son" (ben-navi) means he wasn't descended from prophetic lineages or educated in prophetic schools like those at Ramah or Jericho. This statement isn't false modesty but factual autobiography establishing that his prophetic ministry didn't originate from human appointment, training, or succession.

"But I was an herdman" (boqer) indicates Amos raised cattle—not merely a shepherd of sheep but a cattle rancher, suggesting he wasn't poor but a man of some means. "And a gatherer of sycomore fruit" (boles shiqmim) describes seasonal work harvesting and puncturing sycamore figs to accelerate ripening—common agricultural labor in Tekoa's region. These details emphasize Amos's ordinary, non-religious occupation. He had no credentials, no theological degree, no prophetic pedigree—yet God called him.

The implicit continuation (verse 15) makes the point explicit: "And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." Amos's authority didn't derive from human institutions, training, or lineage but from direct divine commission. This establishes a crucial biblical principle: God's calling supersedes human credentials, professional status, or

institutional approval. When God calls, He equips; when He commissions, He authenticates through His Spirit, not human validation.

This passage addresses Amaziah's attempt to silence Amos by appealing to human authority structures. Amaziah, the official priest at the royal sanctuary of Bethel, commanded Amos to flee to Judah and prophesy there—essentially saying "you have no jurisdiction here." Amos's response demolishes such reasoning: his authority comes from Yahweh, not from Jeroboam's court or Israel's religious establishment. God can call anyone—herdsman, fisherman, tax collector—and when He does, no human authority can legitimately silence them.

Historical Context

Amos prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), a time of economic expansion but moral decay and social injustice. Though from Tekoa in Judah (about 10 miles south of Jerusalem), God sent him north to prophesy at Bethel, the royal sanctuary where Jeroboam I had established golden calf worship (1 Kings 12:28-29). Bethel had become Israel's primary religious center, rivaling Jerusalem.

When Amos pronounced judgment at Bethel, Amaziah the priest reported him to King Jeroboam as a conspirator and then attempted to expel him (Amos 7:10-13). Amaziah's strategy was to discredit Amos by questioning his credentials and jurisdiction—essentially calling him an unauthorized foreign agitator. In that culture, prophets were often professionals attached to royal courts or religious institutions, earning their living through prophetic activity. Amaziah assumed Amos fit this pattern.

Amos's autobiographical response shattered these assumptions. He wasn't a professional prophet seeking patronage but a successful rancher whom God sovereignly called and sent. This gave him independence from human approval or financial support—he could speak truth without fear of losing his livelihood. His message of coming judgment proved accurate when Assyria destroyed Israel in 722 BC, vindicating his divine calling despite Amaziah's opposition.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Amos's example challenge modern assumptions that ministry requires specific credentials, training, or institutional approval?
2. What does it mean to be called by God rather than merely choosing a religious profession or career?
3. How should Christians discern between authentic divine calling and self-appointed ministry?
4. In what ways do church structures and institutions sometimes resist or silence prophetic voices God has raised up?
5. What does Amos's independence from human approval teach about the relationship between prophetic ministry and financial support?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעַן	עָמוֹס	וַיֹּאמֶר	אֶל	אֲמַצְיָה הַ	לֵא	נָבִיא
Then answered	Amos	and said	H413	to Amaziah	H3808	I was no prophet
H6030	H5986	H559		H558		H5030
אֲנִי כִי	וְלֹא	בֶן	נָבִיא	אֲנִי כִי	כִי	בֹקֵר
H595	H3808	son	I was no prophet	H595	H3588	but I was an herdsman
		H1121	H5030			H951
אֲנִי כִי	וּבֹלֵי	שִׁקְמִים:				
H595	and a gatherer	of sycomore fruit				
	H1103	H8256				

Additional Cross-References

Amos 1:1 (Parallel theme): The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Zechariah 13:5 (Prophecy): But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

2 Kings 2:5 (Prophecy): And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

2 Kings 4:38 (Prophecy): And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

2 Kings 2:3 (Prophecy): And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

2 Chronicles 19:2 (Parallel theme): And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.