

Amos Chapter 8

Verses 1-3: The Hebrew word for “end” (gets), sounds like the word for “summer fruit (qayits), which was harvested at the end of Israel’s agricultural season. This wordplay indicates that Israel’s end is near.

Amos 8:1 "Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit."

In this fourth vision, as fruit was fully ripened by the summer’s sun, so Israel was ripe for judgment. The vision of the “summer fruit” shows that Israel is ripe for judgment, which will come very soon.

This basket of summer fruit is speaking of the fact that the people are ripe and ready to be condemned of God. Again, this is like a vision that God has given Amos. Their sins are like this ripe fruit.

Amos 8:2 "And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more."

Amos saw a basket of summer fruit gathered, and ready to be eaten; which signified, that the people were ripe for destruction and that the year of God's patience was drawing towards a conclusion. Such summer fruits will not keep till winter, but must be used at once. Yet these judgments shall not draw from them any acknowledgement, either of God's righteousness or their own unrighteousness.

Sinners put off repentance from day to day, because they think the Lord thus delays his judgments.

"I will not again pass by them any more": Pass by their offences, and forgive their sins; or pass by their persons, without taking notice of them, so as to afflict and punish them for their iniquities. Or, "pass through them and more"; God is now making an utter end of them (see Amos 7:8).

There is a time when God will not go any further and that is what He is saying to Amos here, and to Noah in the next Scripture.

Genesis 6:13 "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

Notice God still calls them His people. His indignation is full.

Amos 8:3 "And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: [there shall be] many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast [them] forth with silence."

The songs of the temple shall be howlings - Literally, "shall howl." It shall be as when mirthful music is suddenly broken in upon, and, through the sudden agony of the singer, ends in a shriek or yell of misery. When sounds of joy are turned into wailing, all must be complete sorrow. They are not hushed only, but are turned into their opposite.

Since Amos is speaking to and of Israel; "the temple" is doubtless here the great idol-temple at Beth-el. And "the songs" were the choral music, with which they counterfeited the temple-music, as arranged by David. Praising (they could not make up their minds which), Nature or "the God of nature," but in truth, worshipping the creature.

“There shall be many dead bodies”: So there were when Shallum slew Zachariah, so there were when Menachem slew Shallum, when he came with his army against Samaria, when he ripped up the women with child in Tiphshah (2 Kings 15:16). Or when other usurpers pressed, through blood and treason to the crown. Beside the howlings when Pul, Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser cruelly wasted all.

“In every place”: In cities, towns, and country, in palaces and temples too. In all which the bloody effects of enemies’ swords, the wastes of famine and pestilence, should be seen.

“Shall cast them forth with silence”: Either shall secretly bury some, or to rid themselves of that trouble, shall cast them out wherever they can, with silence, that none may observe them. So great calamitous mortality, that the living suffice not to bury the dead. Or so great cruelty by the enemy used against them, that they dare not bury them, or if they do, it must be undiscerned (see Amos 6:10).

In this time of the end for the house of Israel, there will be great sorrow and crying, dead bodies will be everywhere. We studied earlier how the near kinsman burned the bodies, because there were too many to bury. There will be no more singing and laughter in the temple. There will be a silence that accompanies death. God will not hear their cries anymore.

Verses 4-12: Israel’s wealthy eagerly awaited the end of “feasts” and the “Sabbath” so they could continue exploiting the poor. But in the Day of Judgment, not only would those celebrations be turned into “mourning” but there would be a “famine” of “the words of the Lord”, His truth would no longer be revealed through His prophets. Today, the Bible is available nearly everywhere, but deaf ears can still produce spiritual drought.

Amos 8:4 "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,"

Like a man that pants after a drink of water when thirsty; and when he has got it, greedily swallows it down at one gulp. So, these rich men swallowed up the poor, their labors, gains, and profits and persons too. They got all into their own hands, and made them bondsmen and slaves to them (see Amos 2:7).

These are called upon to hear this dreadful calamity threatened, and to consider what then would become of them and their ill-gotten riches. And suggesting that their oppression of the needy was one cause of this destruction of the land.

“Even to make the poor of the land to fail”: Or "cease", to die for want of the necessities of life, being obliged to such hard labor. So unmercifully used, their faces ground and pinched with necessity. And so sadly paid for their work, that they could not live by it.

This is just one of the sins they committed, that brought them to this judgment. This sin was a direct disobedience of God's Word, which taught to help the poor.

Amos 8:5 "Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?"

“New moon”: Based on a lunar calendar, Israel would celebrate the day with a festival. Like the Sabbath, no work was to be done (1 Sam. 20:5-6; 2 Kings 4:23; Ezek. 46:3). The merchants’ eagerness for the day to end revealed their appetite for greed.

“Ephah small ... shekel great”: By dishonest weighing, the merchant decreased the actual amount received and increased the cost of the merchandise (see note on Prov. 11:1 for other passages on dishonest measures).

They ritualistically kept the Sabbath and the new moon, but their hearts were not in it. They were wishing for them to be over so they could get back to the things of commerce they were really interested in. To keep the Sabbath, or new moon out of being bound, was unacceptable of God. He wanted them to love these times. He wanted them to keep these days for love of Him, not for obligation. They even had dishonest weights which were strictly forbidden.

Amos 8:6 "That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; [yea], and sell the refuse of the wheat?"

“Refuse of the wheat”: This denotes the chaff, which was mixed into the good wheat to cheat the buyer.

They had no regard for others at all. They only liked the wealth they acquired from others. They took advantage of the poor, and bought them for silver and a pair of shoes. They sold the extra wheat, instead of feeding the hungry.

Amos 8:7 "The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works."

“Excellency of Jacob”: As surely as the nation was filled with excellency “pride”, so the Lord would not forget her works (6:8).

Such total disregard for the covenant God had made with Jacob will ruin the structure of their relationship with God. God had never overlooked any of their work.

Amos 8:8 "Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as [by] the flood of Egypt."

“Cast out and drowned, as by the fold of Egypt”: Like the Nile, which annually provided water and rich soil deposits for farmers by greatly overflowing its banks, so judgment would overflow the land.

God had promised to bless them, if they kept His commandments. He also told them He would curse them, if they did not keep His commandments. The whole land should tremble in fear of the curse of God. They know they have not kept God's commandments. There will be an earthquake when the Lord comes against them in judgment, and the land will truly tremble. The whole land will be covered with the judgment, as the sea rises in a flood.

Amos 8:9 "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:"

“The sun to go down at noon”: Probably referring to the total eclipse of the sun ca. 763 B.C. as a picture of God’s coming judgment.

This speaks of the time when the sun will not give its light. This also speaks of a time of great calamity coming upon the people. It is a time when they will no longer have the Light of God. This very thing happened at the crucifixion of Jesus. It was dark for three hours in the middle of the day. This removing of the light here, is a judgment against these people.

Amos 8:10 "And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only [son], and the end thereof as a bitter day."

God commanded the Jews to celebrate their festivals with joy and gladness. But this it would be impossible for them to do under such melancholy circumstances and manifestations of the divine displeasure.

“And I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins”: Of high and low, rich and poor; even those that used to be covered with silk and rich embroideries. Sackcloth was a coarse cloth put on in times of mourning for the dead, or on account of public calamities. “Sackcloth” (see note on Joel 1:8).

“And baldness upon every head”: The hair being either shaved off or pulled off; both which were sometimes done, as a token of mourning.

“And I will make it as the mourning of an only son”: As when parents mourn for an only son. Which is generally carried to the greatest height, and continued longest, as well as is most

sincere and passionate. The case being exceeding cutting and afflictive, as this is represented to be.

“And the end thereof as a bitter day”: A day of bitter calamity, and of bitter wailing and mourning, in the bitterness of their spirits. Though the beginning of the day was bright and clear, a fine sunshine, yet the end of it dark and bitter, distressing and sorrowful. It being the end of the people of Israel (as in Amos 8:2).

A "lamentation" is like the mourning that goes on at a funeral. This will be the death of Israel. This will be the saddest day of their lives, because they have no God to call upon. He has removed Himself from them. "Sackcloth and baldness" had to do with great mourning. Baldness on a woman indicated she was a harlot. The whole country, who had been the wife of God, are now harlots. They had committed spiritual adultery by worshipping false gods. The bitterness of this Day of Judgment will live on.

Verses 11-12: During prosperity, the nation rejected the prophets (7:10-17); in captivity no word from the Lord could be found (1 Sam. 28:6).

Amos 8:11 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:"

This is spoken of events which were yet at some distance.

“That I will send a famine in the land”: Which, in a literal sense, is one of God's arrows he has in his quiver, and sends out when he pleases. Or one of his sore judgments, which he sometimes orders to come upon a people for their sins: which here is meant.

“Not a famine of bread; or through want of that, which is very dreadful. As was the famine of Samaria, when an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and a certain measure of dove's dung for five pieces of silver (2 Kings 6:25).

Or as were the famines of Jerusalem, when taken both by the Chaldeans and Romans, when women boiled and ate their own children (Lam. 4:8).

“Nor a thirst for water”: Which is more distressing and tormenting than hunger. And to be slain with thirst is to be destroyed in the most afflictive manner (Hosea 2:3).

“But of hearing the words of the Lord”: The word of prophecy, and the preaching of the word, or explaining the Scriptures. Of this blessing the ten tribes were deprived at their captivity, and have been ever since. And the Jews, upon their rejection of Christ, have had the kingdom of God, the Gospel of the kingdom, the word and ordinances of God, taken from them and remain so to this day.

There will be no more prophets bringing them Words from God. They would long to hear from God, but He will not send them His Word. In our nation today, there is a famine of the True Word of God. The Word that we get is watered down and compromised, to the extent that it is hardly recognizable. As many prophecies, this is for their day and our day as well. There must be people of God who are willing to speak the Word of God at any cost, if our land is to be saved.

Amos 8:12 "And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find [it]."

“They shall wander”: Literally, "reel." The word is used of the reeling of drunkards, of the swaying to and fro of trees in the wind. Or the quivering of the lips of one agitated, and then of the unsteady seeking of persons bewildered, looking for what they know not where to find.

“They shall wander from sea to sea; search all places for a prophet or a preacher from the Syrian or Midland Sea to that of Tiberias, to the Dead Sea, and to the Red Sea.

“From the north even to the east”: That mountainous tract whither persecuted Elijah fled, and perhaps other prophets in like circumstances retired. Proverbially, they shall search all corners for a prophet.

“They shall run to and fro”: Throughout the whole land and all over it.

“To seek the word of the Lord”: Not the written word, but the interpretation of it. Doctrine from before the Lord, as the Targum; and the preaching of the word or ministers to instruct them in it. Or the word of prophecy and prophets to tell them when it would be better times, and how long their present distress should last.

“And shall not find it”: There should be no ministry, no preaching and no prophesying; as never since among the ten tribes. So, it has been the case of the Jews and the two tribes, upon the rejection of the Messiah; the Gospel was taken from them. No tidings could they hear of the Messiah, though they ran to and fro to find him, it being told them Lo, here, and Lo, there (see John 7:34).

The following Scripture reminds me of this.

2 Timothy 3:7 "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

This is spoken of as the last days. The only truth is found in God's Word and is understood by the Holy Spirit of God teaching us the meaning of that Word. Jesus Christ is the Word of God. He cautioned us not to go looking for Him as He will appear in the eastern sky. Read His Word (Bible), every day, and pray the Holy Spirit will reveal its meaning to you. Hide His Word away in your heart, then nothing can take it away from you.

Amos 8:13 "In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst."

In this hopelessness as to all relief, those too shall fail and sink under their sufferings, in which life is freshest and strongest and hope most buoyant. Hope mitigates any sufferings. When hope is gone, the powers of life, which it sustains, give way.

"They shall faint for thirst," literally, "shall be mantled over, covered", as one fainting seems to feel as if a veil came over his brow and eyes. "Thirst," as it is an intense suffering than bodily hunger, includes sufferings of body and mind. If even over those, whose life was firmest, a veil came and they fainted for thirst, what of the rest?

This is a physical and a spiritual thirst.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Look with me, at what Jesus said about this.

John 4:14 "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Amos 8:14 "They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again."

"Samaria ... Dan": Jeroboam I built altars at both locations in an effort to keep Israel from going to Jerusalem to worship (1 Kings 12:26-29).

"Beer-sheba" (see note on 5:5).

This is speaking of those false gods they worshipped. Those who persist in following false gods will die in their sins. This is primarily speaking of that golden calf at Samaria they worshipped. There was another false god erected at Dan, and it is included in this damnation. The road from Dan to Beersheba was a 140 miles long. It seemed the way to this false god was evil. God has judged them guilty, and will not allow them to rise again.

Amos Chapter 8 Questions

1. What did the Lord show Amos in verse 1?
2. What is this speaking of?
3. The songs of the temple shall be _____.
4. Why had the near kinsman burned the bodies, instead of burying them?
5. What was their sin in verse 4?

6. The _____ kept the new moon and the Sabbath.
7. Why were they wishing for them to be over?
8. God wanted them to keep these days for love of Him, not from _____.
9. They even had _____ weights.
10. They bought the poor for _____.
11. What did they do with the extra wheat?
12. The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of _____.
13. What was meant by the land trembling?
14. What is compared to the sea that rises over the land?
15. The sun will go down at _____.
16. What two things is this speaking of?
17. I will turn your feasts into _____.
18. What is a "lamentation"?
19. "Sackcloth and baldness" symbolize what?
20. Baldness on a woman indicated what?
21. How had they committed spiritual adultery?
22. What was the famine in verse 11?
23. There is a famine of the _____ of God in our land today.
24. What must happen, if our land is to be saved?
25. Where is the only Truth found?
26. How can you avoid having the Word of God taken away from you?
27. What type of thirst is verse 13 speaking of?
28. What is verse 14 primarily speaking of?
29. Where was another false god erected?
30. How long was the road from Dan to Beersheba?