

The Visions of Amos the Herdsman
Lesson 4
Amos 8:1 – 9:15

Basket of Fruit

Amos 8:¹ Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, *there was* a basket of summer fruit. ² He said, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the Lord said to me, "The end has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer. ³ "The songs of the palace will turn to wailing in that day," declares the Lord GOD. "Many *will be* the corpses; in every place they will cast them forth in silence."

As the heat of the summer begins to fade in the fall, the fruit ripens just before the winter arrives. No more fruit will be available until the spring crop ripens. The vision of the basket of fruit symbolizes the end of the growing season and the dying back of the trees in the cold of winter. For the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the years of growth were over and the Lord would no longer bless her. Her demise would be gruesome as 90 % of her population would die before the takeover of the kingdom was completed by Assyria in 722 BC.

Attitude of Israel

Amos 8:⁴ Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, ⁵ saying, "When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open the wheat *market*, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales, ⁶ so as to buy the helpless for money and the needy for a pair of sandals, and *that* we may sell the refuse of the wheat?"

The leadership as well as the merchants and tradesmen of the Northern Kingdom were so far away from the Lord that they loathed the required days of worship. Once every 29.53 days, the new moon arrives. At dawn, following the night of the full moon, all of Israel was required to present an offering to the Lord. Moses' law tells of the proceedings of that day.

Numbers 28:11-15 ¹¹ 'Then at the beginning of each of your months you shall present a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls and one ram, seven male lambs one year old without defect; ¹² and three-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, for each bull; and two-tenths of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, for the one ram; ¹³ and a tenth of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering for each lamb, for a burnt offering of a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. ¹⁴ 'Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull and a third of a hin for the ram and a fourth of a hin for a lamb; this is the burnt offering of each month throughout the months of the year. ¹⁵ 'And one male goat for a sin offering to the LORD; it shall be offered with its drink offering in addition to the continual burnt offering.

The new moon offering was burdensome to the people because it shut down their places of commerce for the day. The requirements of the regular Sabbath day were the same as those recorded in Leviticus.

Leviticus 23:1-3 ¹ The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD'S appointed times which you shall proclaim as

holy convocations—My appointed times are these: ³For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings.

Israel's merchants as well as her leadership had no integrity or ethics. The business practices in the market place were corrupt and full of greed. In essence, they were thieves and the Lord had had enough of their thievery.

Darkness at Noon

Amos 8:⁷ The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob, "Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds. ⁸"Because of this will not the land quake and everyone who dwells in it mourn? Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile, and it will be tossed about and subside like the Nile of Egypt. ⁹"It will come about in that day," declares the Lord GOD, "That I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight. ¹⁰"Then I will turn your festivals into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sackcloth on everyone's loins and baldness on every head. And I will make it like a *time of mourning* for an only son, and the end of it will be like a bitter day.

For the people who were dwelling in Bethel, the pride of Jacob, the destruction would begin at noon and darkness would cover the land of the Northern King.²⁴ As the slaughter progressed on that day, the mourning of the people would overflow the land. The vision uses the metaphor of the waters of the Nile rising up to takeover the surrounding lands. Each year, the Nile generally rises 21 feet and floods the surrounding area, depositing its mud and mire wherever it spreads. So too, the mourning of the people would rise and spread when the Assyrians attacked the land. All the daily routines would be brought to an end as the people who survived would enter into their time of mourning shown by wearing of sackcloth. When an only son died another show of mourning occurred when the father shaved his head. All of the Northern Kingdom would experience the Lord's wrath when He sent Assyria to bring the kingdom to an end.

Not to Rise Again

Amos 8:¹¹ "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. ¹²"People will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it. ¹³"In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint from thirst. ¹⁴"As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,' and, 'As the way of Beersheba lives,' They will fall and not rise again."

Many types of famines exist besides those of food and water. Marriages can go through a time of famine when communication fails for days upon days. Businesses can go through times of famine when external circumstances such as road construction prevent the customer entering the doors of the establishment. Churches can go through times of spiritual famine when the leadership and the people forget that the main purpose of the church is to share the Gospel with those who do not know the Lord as their Savior. The famine planned for the Northern Kingdom was not one of starvation; the Lord had promised

²⁴ The events of the day of destruction for Bethel are similar to those of the day of destruction at Armageddon whereas both begin at noon.

Amos that would not starvation occurred in Chapter 7.²⁵ Rather, the famine would be the absence of the words of the Lord. From the onset of Amos' proclamation of the coming famine until the completed destruction of the Northern Kingdom in about 56 years, the word of the Lord would not pierce the hearts of the people to bring repentance. Why? Israel's god was not the true God. They had resorted to the calf worship in Bethel and Dan as their main form of worship. The capital of Israel was Samaria and her god was the calf and all who swore in their worship of the calf at Bethel or Dan would fall and never rise again. Israel fell at the hands of the Assyrians and only 10% of the people would go into exile. We cannot determine how many people that 10% represented, but it was very small in comparison to the number of Jews taken into exile from the Southern Kingdom in 606 BC. The Southern Kingdom would return to her land in 536 BC, but the Northern Kingdom would never have a formal return. When she was exiled in 722 BC, she was dead for all practical purposes, never to rise again. The northern remnant that was taken into exile would return to help rebuild the Southern Kingdom in 536 BC, but it had no authority to retake and reestablish the northern territory.

Smiting of the Capitals

Amos 9:¹ I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said, "Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake, and break them on the heads of them all! Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword; they will not have a fugitive who will flee, or a refugee who will escape. ² "Though they dig into Sheol, from there will My hand take them; and though they ascend to heaven, from there will I bring them down. ³ "Though they hide on the summit of Carmel, I will search them out and take them from there; and though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, from there I will command the serpent and it will bite them. ⁴ "And though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword that it slay them, and I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good." ⁵ The Lord GOD of hosts, the One who touches the land so that it melts, and all those who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises up like the Nile and subsides like the Nile of Egypt; ⁶ The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens and has founded His vaulted dome over the earth, He who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth, the Lord is His name.

Amos' fifth and final vision points to a different struggle of God's chosen people and the promise that He will one day plant them on the Promised Land and no one will ever uproot them again. In the first part of this vision, the Lord calls for the smiting of the capitals, breaking down the columns that hold up the houses. Amos sees the thresholds of the doorways shaken and the people slain by the sword with not one fugitive escaping from the Lord. The vision is a picture of God's wrath on those who oppose Him. If they have dug deep into the ground to hide from His presence, He will reach into the bunkers and pull them out with His hand. If they have escaped into the space of the heavens to flee from His presence, He will bring them down. If they have hidden in the caves on the top of Mt. Carmel, He will find them. If they have hidden at the bottom of the sea, a serpent will bite them. If they are in the hands of God's people, the Lord will command that they be slain by the sword. The Lord will fight against all who are evil. He is the God of all creations and the Lord is His name.

²⁵ The famine described in the book of Joel is a prophecy to be fulfilled during the time of the seven years of tribulation before the Battle of Armageddon. It was not a prophecy for the fall of the Northern Kingdom as some theologians have applied it. The Lord's promise found in Amos 7 clarifies the intent of the Lord's prophecy through Joel.

Eyes of the Lord

Amos 9:⁷ "Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?" declares the Lord. "Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?"⁸ "Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," Declares the Lord.⁹ "For behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Israel among all nations as *grain* is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground."¹⁰ "All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, 'The calamity will not overtake or confront us.'

The 12 tribes of Israel had experienced many privileges in the past and the vision warned them not to rely on their past blessings as a kingdom. The Ethiopians, Philistines, and Arameans were also blessed by the Lord but they were not His chosen people. Amos saw the Northern Kingdom totally destroyed never to be rebuilt, but he also saw a remnant of the northern 10 tribes surviving and being scattered among the nations. Not one of the tribes would be without representation in the scattering, but it would account for only 10% of the original kingdom at the time of the capture and defeat in 722 BC. Amos also saw the rebellious people of the Lord in stark disbelief that the Lord would actually allow the calamity to come upon them.

In that Day

Amos 9:¹¹ "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old;¹² that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name," Declares the Lord who does this.¹³ "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When the mountains will drip sweet wine and all the hills will be dissolved."¹⁴ "Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*; they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit."¹⁵ "I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them," Says the Lord your God.

Verse 11 sheds light on the timing of this fifth vision. It mentions the resurrection of the fallen booth of David and the restoration of its walls and ruins. The resurrection of David is mentioned in other passages and refers to the time of the Messiah's reign for 1,000 years on earth.²⁶ At that time, the Jews will overtake the Edomite land and dwell in his houses.²⁷ From there and throughout the rest of the Promised Land, Israel will live as the premiere nation of the world while the Lord reigns from His Great White Throne in Jerusalem. In that day, the land will bless the Israelites beyond imagination. The great harvest will barely be gathered and in the barns by the time that the plowmen must turn the soil to plant again. With no more war, Israel will spend her time worshiping the Lord and gathering the fruit of the land never to be disturbed by a single enemy; it is the promise of the Lord.

²⁶ Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:24; Ezekiel 37:24

²⁷ Amos 1:11-12