

Amos 8

A Basket of Ripe Fruit – Verses 1-3

1 This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. 2 “What do you see, Amos?” he asked. “A basket of ripe fruit,” I answered. Then the Lord said to me, “The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. 3 “In that day,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!”

8:1-3 Amos saw a basket of summer fruit gathered, and ready to be eaten; which signified, that the people were ripe for destruction, 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.

Israel's Doom – Verses 4-14

4 Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, 5 saying, “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?”—skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, 6 buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat. 7 The Lord has sworn by himself the Pride of Jacob: “I will never forget anything they have done. 8 “Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt. 9 “In that day,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. 10 I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day. 11 “The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. 12 People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it. 13 “In that day “the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst. 14 Those who swear by the sin of Samaria—who say, ‘As surely as your god lives, Dan,’ or, ‘As surely as the god[b] of Beersheba lives’—they will fall, never to rise again.”

8:5-6 These merchants were keeping the religious festivals, but not in spirit. They couldn't wait for the holy days and Sabbaths to be over so they could go back to making money. Their real interest was in enriching themselves, even if that meant cheating (shortchanging the quantity while boosting the price, or even selling chaff as wheat). Do you take a day to rest and worship God at least once a week, or is making money more important to you than anything else? When you give time to God, is your heart in your worship? Or is your religion only a front for unethical practices?

8:11-13 The people had no appetite for God's word when prophets like Amos brought it. Because of their apathy, God said he would take away even the opportunity to hear his word. We have God's Word, the Bible. But many still look everywhere for answers to life's problems except in Scripture. You can help them by directing them to the Bible, showing them the parts that speak to their special needs and questions. God's Word is available to us. Let us help people know it before a time comes when they cannot find it.

Amos 9

Israel to Be Destroyed – Verses 1-10

9 I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said: “Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on the heads of all the people; those who are left I will kill with the sword. Not one will get away, none will escape. 2 Though they dig down to the depths below, from there my hand will take them.

Though they climb up to the heavens above, from there I will bring them down. 3 Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them. 4 Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. “I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good.” 5 The Lord, the Lord Almighty—he touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn; the whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt; 6 he builds his lofty palace in the heavens and sets its foundation on the earth; he calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the Lord is his name. 7 “Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites[?]” declares the Lord. “Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir? 8 “Surely the eyes of the Sovereign Lord are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Yet I will not totally destroy the descendants of Jacob,” declares the Lord. 9 “For I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground. 10 All the sinners among my people will die by the sword, all those who say, ‘Disaster will not overtake or meet us.’

9:1 Judgment would begin at the altar, the center of the nation’s life, the place where the people expected protection and blessing. This judgment would cover all 12 tribes. Commentators disagree concerning this altar—some think it was the altar at Bethel; more likely it was the altar at the temple in Jerusalem. God would destroy their base of security in order to bring them to himself. But in 9:11 he promises to restore his renewed people and their broken world.

9:2-4 The “grave” was the place of the dead. Mount Carmel is a tall mountain. Both were symbols of inaccessibility. No one can escape God’s judgment. This was good news for the faithful but bad news for the unfaithful. Whether we go to the mountaintops or the bottom of the sea, God will find us and judge us for our deeds. Amos pictured the judgment of the wicked as a sea serpent, relentlessly pursuing the condemned to the bottom of the sea. For God’s faithful followers, however, the judgment brings a new earth of peace and prosperity. Does God’s judgment sound like good news or bad news to you?

9:7 Cush, south of Egypt, was a remote and exotic land to the Israelites. Caphtor, the island of Crete, was a place where the Philistines lived as they migrated to Palestine. God would judge Israel no differently than he judges foreign nations. He is not the God of Israel only; he is God of the universe, and he controls all nations.

9:8 Amos assured the Israelites that God would not “totally destroy” Israel—in other words, the punishment would not be permanent or total. God wants to redeem, not punish. But when punishment is necessary, he doesn’t withhold it. Like a loving father, God disciplines those he loves in order to correct them. If God disciplines you, accept it as a sign of his love.

9:8-9 Although Assyria would destroy Israel and take the people into exile, some would be preserved. This exile had been predicted hundreds of years earlier (Deuteronomy 28:63-68). Although the nation

would be purified through this invasion and captivity, not one true believer would be eternally lost. Our system of justice is not perfect, but God's is. Sinners will not get away, and the faithful will not be forgotten. True believers will not be lost.

Israel's Restoration – Verses 11-15

11 "In that day "I will restore David's fallen shelter—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be, 12 so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the Lord, who will do these things. 13 "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, 14 and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. "They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God.

9:11-12 In the punishment, the house of David was reduced to a "fallen shelter." God's covenant with David stated that one of David's descendants would always sit on his throne (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The Exile made this promise seem impossible. But "in that day" God would raise up and restore the kingdom to its promised glory. This was a promise to both Israel and Judah, not to be fulfilled by an earthly, political ruler, but by the Messiah, who would renew the spiritual kingdom and rule forever. James quoted these verses (Acts 15:16-17), finding the promise fulfilled in Christ's resurrection and in the presence of both Jews and Gentiles in the church. "Possess the remnant of Edom" envisions the messianic kingdom, which will be universal and include Gentiles. When God brings in the Gentiles, he is restoring the ruins. After the Gentiles are called together, God will renew and restore the fortunes of the new Israel. All the land that was once under David's rule will again be part of God's nation.

9:13-15 The Jews of Amos's day had lost sight of God's care and love for them. The rich were carefree and comfortable, refusing to help others in need. They observed their religious rituals in hopes of appeasing God, but they did not truly love him. Amos announced God's warnings of destruction for their evil ways. We must not assume that it is enough to just go to church and be involved in doing good. God expects our belief in him to penetrate all areas of our conduct and to extend to all people and circumstances. We should let Amos's words inspire us to live faithfully according to God's desires.