The Book of Amos

Zanesville, OH | Sunday AM Bible Study

**Chapter 8**

* **8:1-14– Vision of Summer Fruit and Subsequent Judgment**
* This fourth vision is almost identical in structure and theme to the third vision found in 7:7-9. In v. 1, the text commences much like the rest of visions have by emphasizing God’s demonstration of some object or scene (7:1, 4, 7). Amos beholds in this particular vision a basket of summer fruit (2 Sam. 16:1; Isa. 16:9; 28:4; Jer. 40:10).
* The significance of the object and the timing related to its season is of utmost importance as it pertains to the context of the chapter. The summer fruit (figs and certain grapes) are harvested at the end of the summer in the months of August and September on our calendar. The time for the fruits to grow and ripen was over and the harvest was to take place. It was the end.
* And thus in v. 2, Amos answers God question by identifying the object as the basket of summer fruit. As the end for the fruits to grow and ripen has come, so has the end for the Israelites come (Jer. 8:20). God uses a very clever agricultural scenario to paint a disastrous one for His people. As in visions 1&2, God spares the people, but in visions 3&4 He will no longer spare them.
* The remainder of the chapter is now devoted to the description of the horror that shall overtake the people. In v. 3, when the day of doom comes their songs of joy and celebration will be turned into weeping and mourning (Amos 5:16). So many corpses will be scattered and a proper burial for each one will not take place (Jer. 9:21-22). In silence they will cast them forth (Amos 6:10). Sin has so quickly turned their elaborate feasting and indulgent lifestyles into a mass carnage.
* In v. 4 the message resorts back to earlier themes expressed in the book. Amos’ audience are a people who oppress the poor and the needy and disdain the humble (Amos 2:6-7; Amos 5:10-12).
* In vv. 5-6, Amos describes the extent to which they go to accomplish the actions of v. 4. In v. 5, Amos uses their own words to denounce their actions. He cites two important religious observances: The New Moon and The Sabbath.
* The New Moon was a festival celebrating the lunar month where the light of the moon returned. It is often paired with the Sabbath (Isa. 1:13-14; 2:11) because of some of its similarities. On this holiday like the Sabbath, trade and handicraft work ceased (Amos 8:5), the temple was open for worship (Isa. 66:3; Ezek. 46:3) and certain sacrifices were offered (Num. 28:11-15). State banquets seem to have taken place during this particular holiday as well (1 Sam. 20:5-24).
* The Sabbath was a very prominent religious observance commanded by God to be kept weekly and certain practices were to be done such as ceasing from work (Ex. 20:10; Jer. 17:21-27; Neh. 13:15-22).
* Amos’ use of these religious observances is not for good reasons. They ritualistically observe them (going through the motions) but their hearts cannot wait to get back to doing evil and wickedness. They want to sell grain (make as much money) and cheat people in trade.
* The bushel or the ephah was their unit of dry measure and the shekel was the basic unit of weight. They made the ephah smaller and the shekel large, so they could make more money while giving less to the people. They long to do evil (Prov. 4:16). The text goes on to state in v. 5 that they cheat with dishonest (rigged) scales. They always got more, and their customers got less. Honest scales were a requirement by God (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-15; Ezek. 45:10-11; Prov. 16:11).
* In v. 6, they do these things in order to purchase the helpless for themselves and the needy for a pair of sandals (Amos 2:6-7). They sell the refuse (lowest quality) of the wheat. In all aspects of their trade and business they act wickedly and are dishonest.
* According to these deeds, the LORD answers justly. In v. 7, He takes yet another oath (4:2; 6:8) that He will not forget their deeds (Compare with Hos. 8:13; 9:9 | Contrast w/ Jer. 31:34). The meaning of the LORD swearing by the pride of Jacob (6:8) maybe an ironic way of God saying the people should have prided themselves in knowing God and not indulging themselves in sin (1 Sam. 15:29).
* Because of the oath Jehovah has taken and due to their evil deeds, an earthquake will arise and there will be an upheaval in v. 8. Earthquakes are often paralleled with God’s anger (Psa. 18:7; Isa. 5:25; Jer. 4:24-26; Hab. 3:5-8). Whether this is the earthquake referenced in Amos 1:1 and Zech. 14:5, it is not known for certain.
* The point God is stressing is that there will be dire consequences and such a devastation everyone will be mourning. This imagery is further paralleled by the use of the annual increase and decrease of the waters of the Nile. The idea is that their world will be upheaved (turned upside down; Jer. 46:8).
* *“As the Nile rose, and its currents met and drove one against the other, covered and drowned the whole land like one vast sea, and then sank again, so the earth should rise, lift up itself, and heave and quake, shaking off the burden of man’s oppressions, and sink again”* (Barnes).
* In v. 9, on that chose day of judgment God will darken the earth and the sun will come down before noon. This language is common throughout the OT when speaking of God’s judgment (Isa. 13:10; Jer. 15:9; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Mic. 3:6; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12; 8:12). All these passages speak of the cosmos in an apocalyptic fashion to paint a dire image of destruction and disaster for the enemies of God.
* According to Assyrian eponym lists there was an eclipse on Feb. 9, 784 BC and another one of June 15, 763 BC. Whether these events were the fulfillment of the words of God here, we can’t know for sure.
* In v. 10, times of festivals and celebrations will be turned into scenes of mourning and lamentation (Amos 5:1; 16-17). The national disaster and calamity is well underway with the use of sackcloth and the shaving of heads (Isa. 15:2-3; 22:12-14; Jer. 48:37; Ezek. 7:18; 27:30-31).
* The pain will be so unbearable, the text states God will make it like mourning for an only son (Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12:10). The pain never really ends, and the end of such days is bitter. Sin leaves no joy and no comfort in the end once it has ravaged through the souls of mankind. The irony is that God mourns for His people (His children) because they have chosen sin over Him.
* In v. 11, an entirely different form of judgment that we have not seen before is pronounced. In the days when God’s fierce wrath shall come upon the land, a famine will also take place. This is a famine not of food or water but of the word of the LORD (1 Sam. 28:26; Jer. 18:18; Lam. 2:9; Ezek. 7:26). Note that the word famine is used both of food and God’s word. The idea is that God’s word needs to be our spiritual food (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4).
* In times of suffering and devastation people often long for God and His mercy but during these occasions God won’t be found. They have refused to listen to anything He has said even until now and consequently, He will be shut off from them when they desire Him the most (Amos 6:10). God is not to be taken for granted (Gal. 6:7).
* In v. 12, the saddened picture of a people who struggle without deity is painted. They will stagger (4:8) looking for God and His message. They will long with the last drop of life they have to find some sort of revelation from Jehovah, but they will not find it. The time for that is gone (harvest of summer fruit) and now is the time of judgment and condemnation.
* In v. 13, the strongest, brightest and most beautiful of the people (the future) will faint and be overwhelmed by God’s judgment (Lam. 1:18; 2:21; Hos. 2:3). They will thirst but not find anything to drink.
* In v. 14, the emphasis is placed upon the sin of idolatry. They swear by the sin of Samaria or guilt of Samaria is a reference to Bethel (Deut. 9:21; 1 Kings 12:28-32; Hos. 8:5-6; 10:5; 13:2; 13:16; Amos 7:13). They swear by the idols of Bethel, Dan, and Beersheba. These oaths and their locations may be a merism to speak of God’s all-encompassing judgment. From north to south their idols and treasured places of worship will be destroyed and will not rise again.
* These false gods and idols will not last but the LORD lives forever and none can destroy Him. God demonstrates time and time again He is the true and living God deserving of our undivided devotion of love in word and in deed.