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**C0924 – June 24, 2009 – Amos 8:1-14 – Famine Of The Word Of
God**

Tonight we'll start in 2 Kgs chapter 14. We want to recall the economic situation of the northern kingdom when Amos came to minister the word of God to them. The ruler at the time was a man named Jeroboam, we call him Jeroboam II to distinguish him from the earlier Jeroboam I who was the first dynastic ruler of the northern kingdom in 926BC. He was the guy who set up the false worship system involving the golden calf altars at Dan and Bethel. Now it's been 150 years and they've progressed in their religious idolatry and Jeroboam II is at the helm, and here we read of the economic turn that happened during his reign. "He [Jeroboam II] restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet." What this border prophecy did for Israel was it doubled the size of the kingdom, extending it north to Hamath, and to the east into Transjordan covering all this territory and south to the Sea of Arabah which is the Dead Sea. What kind of economic impact do you think tripling the size of your nation might have? They had tremendous economic impact. In the east was the King's Highway, one of the greatest ancient trade routes and it went south all the way to Saudi Arabia and north all the way to Assyria. So they're going to be able to tax those items, they're going to serve as middle men in the great trade operations of the ancient world. And so this brought such economic prosperity that scholars recognize this as the golden era of the northern kingdom. They had it all. And so that sets the economic backdrop of the Book of Amos. You have a lot of rich people in the northern kingdom. Being rich isn't a problem, not a problem at all, as long as the wealth is in its proper place; wealth under the Scriptures, wealth as a tool to further God's program. But when wealth comes out from under that umbrella and becomes the supreme god then we do have a problem, and

one of the problems is I want more. I've got everything but I still want more. Tremendous greed. What these people are doing is trying to satisfy a desire God put in them. It's like God put a great big hole in every person and you can put money in there, sex in there, scholarship in there, alcohol in there, power in there and you can just fill and fill and fill to your heart's delight but you can never fill that hole. It's an infinite abyss in man, there's a longing for something infinite to fill that hole and so people keep filling and filling, thinking if I can just get a little more in there I'll be satisfied. No you won't, that's the message of Ecclesiastes. All those things are finite so no matter how much stuff you add to your life repertoire, no matter how much money, experience, pleasure, you name it, you can never fill an infinite hole. Only God can fill that because only He is infinite. He is what man was made for. But men keep on trying to fill that infinitely spacious void with finite things. It won't work, it never has worked and this is the message to the human race. The creation isn't enough; you must have a relationship with the Creator. That relationship is restored, just like Abraham, by grace through faith. Probably most of the northern kingdom did not have a personal relationship with the Lord by grace through faith even though they were His chosen nation and were under the covenant obligations of the Mosaic Law. And so they were operating purely on the basis of their flesh and trying to fill up that void in their hearts with stuff and more stuff. When you're operating by the flesh that's all that you can do, and great prosperity will only generate more greed and the use of oppressive techniques to satisfy that greed. And so as you read Amos watch for greed among the wealthy and oppression of the lower class. It was all about satisfying the need we all have, or trying to.

So with the northern kingdom in a state of economic prosperity tonight we see a radical turn of events. A kingdom at the pinnacle of prosperity is brought to its knees overnight. Many people think that can't happen - that the decay in a society or nation will happen gradually. In one sense they're correct, something underlies the material prosperity and that's the spiritual status. And that has declined gradually but the material prosperity can often be destroyed in a single day. It has happened before and it will happen again in the end times Tribulation. And so we're going to watch as this nation who had great economic prosperity, wonderful agricultural and a refined educational system becomes a vestige of history.

Tonight we start chapter 8. The vision of the basket of summer fruit. This is the fourth of five visions. Remember, the book can be divided into 8, 3 and 5. Eight oracles of doom, three covenant lawsuits and five visions. Chapters 1-2 cover the eight oracles of doom, chapters 3, 4 and 5, three covenant lawsuits. Chapters 7, 8 and 9, five visions. That gives you a working outline. When we started chapter 7 we started the first of five visions: the vision of the locust swarm, second, the vision of the fire which burned up the subterranean waters and third, the vision of the plumb line. Israel was found not to be plumb, not righteous and therefore her judgment was certain. The fourth vision teaches that not only is her judgment certain but it's near. So vision three, the plumb line, judgment is certain, vision four, the basket of summer fruit, her judgment is near. The judgment of course is disciplinary, they were God's chosen people by the Abrahamic Covenant but they consistently and insistently violated the Mosaic Covenant, and are therefore subject to disciplinary judgment. Having gone through the first four degrees of that discipline prophetically forecast in Lev 26 and Deut 28 we now come to the fifth degree of discipline which is military defeat and exile from the land.

So let's look at vv 1-3, the vision of the basket of summer fruit. **Thus the Lord GOD showed me, the Lord God** and so throughout the vision, adoni YHWH, the Hebrew name of God emphasizing that He is the sovereign God, and so God sovereignly **showed** Amos by way of a vision in his head the things that follow. **and behold, there was a basket of summer fruit**, this could be translated "ripe fruit." It's a wonderful sight, everyone likes to see a basket of ripe, summer fruit, unless you're a carnivore I guess. Maybe you've seen one on your own table or you've seen a still painting by an artist. In any case, it's a lovely sight. But what's the significance? If you see a basket of fresh fruit what does that mean about the trees? What's on the branches? Nothing is on the branches, the harvest is over and the trees are no longer producing fruit, here is the fruit on the table in a basket. And how long is the fruit going to last in that basket? How long before it starts to rot? Not long - days, maybe a week. Isn't that the point about Israel? That her end is near?

Verse 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."** Israel is like perishable produce, she's come to her end. And the prophet Amos strikes you with this idea in the original language. See what the Lord does in v 2, he asks Amos a

question, **What do you see, Amos?** And if you were **Amos** how are you going to answer that question? I've always loved the way people answer the Lord's questions; they're always abrupt, they say nothing more than the most obvious thing. You don't see people having a big conversation with God, well, what do you mean God or any of that, when God asks a question the people answer very abruptly and so Amos says, "**A basket of summer fruit.**" A basket of *qayits* "Ripe fruit" *qayits*, was "summer fruit" or "end-of-the-year fruit"—the last fruit of the season, fully ripened, with a very short shelf life. And then **the Lord said to Amos, "The end has come for My people Israel."** The *gets* has come. The ripe time, *gets* was the "end time or the "cutting time"—the "reaping time" of death.¹ You want to talk about bringing a message home. We could translate this: so what do you see Amos, "I see a basket of ripe fruit." "Oh really, well the time is ripe for my people Israel and I'm going to cut them off." See the play on words? My people are like a basket of ripe fruit, they've got a short shelf life. Sometimes you see an item in the grocery store and they have a shelf-life on them and when that time is expired that's it, they clean it out. That's the nation Israel; they've been sitting on the shelf past the expiration date. And though they may look beautiful on the outside with all their fancy dress and fancy homes, on the inside they're rotten to the core. That's the significance of the basket of summer fruit; that basket is the nation Israel. And God had given these people all the opportunities in the book and they hadn't paid attention and so it's time to throw the fruit out. God's grace does come to a close and when that happens His judgment is at hand. Now people don't like it that God's grace comes to an end. But what are you going to do, just let evil persist, just let it keep propagating itself? God's already tried to talk to these people, He's sent prophet after prophet. Did they want to negotiate with God? We're at the end of negotiations here. That strategy has been more than exhausted. There's not going to be any more peaceful negotiation. Israel is a rotten apple and there's nothing you can do with a rotten apple but throw it away. It's worthless. And so if the problem of evil is ever going to be resolved then there's got to be a separation of the bad fruit from the good fruit. And that's the way God resolves it.

So the Lord says, v 2, I've had it, that's it, **I will spare them no longer.** Those words, literally "I will pass over them no longer," hitch back to chapter 7, verse 8, just before Amaziah and Amos have their little run in. He said in 7:8, "I will spare them no longer," and so now he's continuing that theme. "I

will pass over them no longer.” I passed over them at the 10th plague of the Exodus, I’ve passed over them for century after century after century and I’m not going to do that anymore. People get the idea because the Lord is so longsuffering and He puts up with us and keeps putting off His judgment that His grace is just going to go on forever. So people start abusing His grace, using grace as a license to sin, oh yeah, we’re the people of God. God loves us and He wouldn’t do anything to hurt me. Don’t confuse grace with license. There is grace but grace doesn’t mean I can get away with it and God will never discipline me. What it means is God gives you the enablement not to sin, to meet His standard of righteousness, because you can’t do that on your own. People who don’t understand grace and think they do are the people who abuse the grace and go on sinning. Oh yeah, I’m saved by the grace of God so I can do anything I want. That’s an abuse of grace, a misunderstanding of grace. Paul said in Rom 6, shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? May it never be! That’s the strongest negative possible in the Greek language. Literally what he says is “are we to continue operating in the sin nature so grace may increase?” If you think so you’ve totally misunderstood grace Paul says. May it never be, or literally, “That doesn’t exist.” You’re making crap up if you think you can abuse grace by going on living your Christian life in the flesh and come out unscathed. You’re going to be disciplined now or later, sometime, now or then.

Their day of grace was at an end. I’m not going to pass them by anymore. I’ve passed by and passed by, grace after grace after grace after grace and they abused it, they didn’t learn from it and therefore that’s it. Grace, grace, grace before judgment, it’s always this way.

So make way, verse 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.”** Just look at the progression of that verse, from singing to wailing to silence. Talk about a turn of events. Wednesday your singing, Thursday you’re wailing, Friday your silent. All your friends and family are celebrating on Wednesday by Friday you’re the only person left alive. You’re surrounded by **corpses**. Some commentators think the **songs of the palace** here were the songs they sang at Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah was in the Fall when this basket of ripe fruit would be on the table and it was the time of year they celebrated the new year. On the civil calendar this was the new civil year and they had a big

festival and they sang new years songs at the festival. And so as the new year turns something else turns, their singing turns into wailing and their bodies turn into corpses. A dramatic turn of events in the life of the nation Israel. This will all happen quote, **in that day**, that is, the day of the Lord from chapter 5:18-20. The day of the Lord was not a pretty day. The day of the Lord was a day of darkness and gloom, a day of destruction from the Lord God. And this day of the Lord is for Israel. It's not coming on her enemies, God is her enemy and He's coming to "end" Israel's nation existence.ⁱⁱ

"Many *will be* the corpses; in every place they will cast them forth in silence." Bodies will be everywhere, 90% casualties in the nation according to chapter 5. So many bodies that plague will start to spread and if there's a kinsman available he'll have to come and cremate the bodies, he'll have to violate Jewish burial customs because if he doesn't get rid of the bodies nobody will be left alive and others will be **cast forth** where they would lie on the ground to be eaten by dogs and birds, or to become fertilizer for the fields.ⁱⁱⁱ

Now look, vv 4-6, here we have the Lord's evaluation. They were rich, they were wealthy, shiny and glossy like a basket of summer fruit, but what did they look like on the inside? Here the hearts of the oppressors laid bare.

Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, ⁵saying, "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, ⁶So 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?"

Now, Amos can't hear what they're saying in v 5, this is what they're saying in their hearts. And the Lord reveals the thoughts of their hearts. He's the heart-knower. He knows your heart, my heart, and everyone's hearts. We can hide that from people and trick them but we can't hide that from God and trick Him. He knows everything, even our most secret thoughts.

So here's the picture, they're sitting there and it's the **new moon** and the **new moon** was a holy day - you couldn't engage in business, the market was closed. It was a solemn day and you were supposed to worship God on that day and so they're at the religious service and they're sitting there saying to themselves, **When will the new moon be over**. My gosh, I can't sit here

anymore. I gotta get out of here. All they can think about is their business. When is this ever going to be over **So that we can go sell grain**, my business is more important than God. I'm not interested in Him. I'm just here to go through the religious motions. Of course I'd never admit that, but God knows. God knows the heart. Same story on **Sabbath**. Another holy day, this one every week, and all they can think is when is this ever going to be over so I can go make a buck. It was all religious ritual, all religious show, their hearts were full of other thoughts, other ideas. Here are some of them in v 5, scheming, and fraudulent ways to make more money. Three ways actually:

First, **make the bushel smaller**. Oooh, let's shave some of the product so our customers think they're getting a full bushel but they're really not. It's false advertisement, it's lying, and it's deceiving to do that. To market a product as being so much quantity but it's actually less. Then, if it wasn't enough to cheat you there when you come to the check out we pull a second scheme, we **make...the shekel bigger**. So now we put our heavy shekel over here in this bowl, the standard is 11.5 gram shekel, they've manipulated it so it's up to 13.0 grams but you don't know that, and we place our bigger standard over here in this bowl and you put your shekels in the other bowls and we rip you off again. So now you're not only purchasing a **smaller bushel** but when you come to pay for it you're paying a higher price, so you pay more and you get less. It went even further in some places as excavations at Tirzah have shown. In some shops in the 8th century there were weights for buying and weights for selling. So if you come in to sell your goods the store owners would put up the lighter shekel so they pay less. They got you both ways. But that's not all, a third scheme they pulled, **to cheat with dishonest scales**. Here they had a number of ways of doing this: they could manipulate the weight of the upper arms, they could manipulate the weight of the bowls, etc...All three of these schemes were faithfully used by the corrupt businessmen. I've actually heard of men standing in front of the church saying there are business ethics and in business ethics you don't have to tell the customer everything about the product. You can, in other words, mislead the customer into thinking he's getting one product when he's actually getting another. Now look, business ethics has everything to do with spirituality. If you're lying and stealing and deceiving that's wrong. There's a way to do business that honors the Lord and there's a way to do it that doesn't and this is an area where the businessman has to trust the Lord. The businessman has been around products and prices long enough to know how

to slip you one. But the godly businessman decides he's not going to do it. As Paul said, do your work as to the lord, not as to men, knowing that you will receive the reward of the inheritance. There's an inheritance stored up for godly businessmen. But if not you will receive the consequences for the wrong you have done (Col 3:24-25).

And to think these were the schemes they were thinking of in the worship services. I have often wondered: people sleep in the service, obviously, and sometimes people apologize to me for that because that's something I can see, although I don't always see them so sometimes they're telling me something they thought I knew but I didn't but it is interesting that they would apologize for something I can see. The real issue is what God sees. People come in here and oh, I'm attending worship service. Yeah, you're body is here, you're taking up a space on the pew, but the question is your mind here, is your mind focusing on God, is your mind focusing on the word of God? Or are you thinking what are we going to do for lunch, what am I going to do this afternoon? If so, the Lord sees all that. He knows exactly what you're thinking. And most importantly He knows you're not interested in Him. They certainly were not.

And why did they ultimately use these three schemes? Verse 6, **So as to buy the helpless for money [silver] And the needy for a pair of sandals,** which means to put the poor completely out of commission. They drive up the prices and down the product and take some here and there and finally the poor are driven to the point they have to sell themselves for almost no silver, almost no money. And now the people are being bought and sold like cattle. The upper class took and took and took till they had taken everything except their own lives and then they took that too. This is the way corrupt rulers always act. We would say in our society that the elite world bankers lie, cheat and steal through various tax programs and the people pay, pay and pay and the more they pay the more freedoms they lose and the more they're enslaved to the elite; eventually becoming nothing more than pawns to propagate their program. The key and why so few people see this is because they deceive you. Deception means you don't know its happening, otherwise you wouldn't be deceived. What they do is they make sure you have all the things you want so you can live a nice lifestyle and that way you won't make any waves and in the meantime they gradually suck the life out of you. It's a gradual process. It doesn't happen overnight, it's gradual. And people go, yeah, yeah, yeah, and

they never do anything about it. They're stuck in the system. They're content because they're still driving an Escalade. They don't care about that. They're out stealing from you, they steal by inheritance taxes, inheritance tax is like 30%, and it's a socialistic policy. Even income tax is stealing, you work and the IRS takes it off the top. You never even see it. This is supposed to buy government services. I haven't found any hard evidence that it currently does. It has no constitutional basis except under the legal philosophy of Oliver Wendell Holmes and company around the late 1800's who re-interpreted the 16th amendment according to the philosophy of pragmatism, a philosophy which can be summed up by way of application in about five letters "FORCE." If you don't pay we'll put you in jail. Fear tactics. It's just pragmatic philosophy. It has nothing to do with the Constitution, it has to do with a re-interpretation of the Constitution under a pragmatic philosophy that was held by none of the signers of the Constitution. In other words, a living document, a document that is merely the expression of a popular idea at the time and must be adapted to changing times. That's how true enslavement of a society occurs and we're going through it right now and have been for over a century.

They had done that in the northern kingdom, they had enslaved the poor under the exact same principles; lying, cheating and stealing. Nothing new under the sun.

The last thing they were thinking in Sunday service, actually Sabbath, but you know what I mean, here's their thoughts: **And that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?"** Another technique. After they sold all the good wheat or almost all of it they would go back to the threshing floor where they separated the wheat from the chaff, they would take some of the chaff, the refuse, and mix it in with the good wheat and sell it as if it were all good. So now we've got a bad product but hey, who cares, we're making good money.

This is the kind of thing that goes on in church after church when people are supposed to be worshipping God. They're not paying attention to the word of God, they're dreaming up a new scheme to get richer and rip people off. You think this isn't happening in church after church in America? You're dreaming; you're living in a dream world. Amos is dangerously perceptive, under the inspiration of God of course. You think this isn't happening with some of the people who may be close friends of yours? What does the word of

God say about the heart of man? The heart is desperately wicked, who can know it? You want to talk about people getting antsy. It's very uncomfortable to think about this, this is your heart, this is my heart. Underneath all the suits and ties, underneath all the beautiful dresses, carrying Bible in hand, this is the gunk underneath. A bunch of rotten apples, rotten to the core.

Now vv 7-11, a very difficult passage describing the judgment. The difficulty here is you have a lot of geophysical and astrophysical phenomena described and the question you have to pose is whether this is describing the judgment by the Assyrian army in 722BC or if it refers to the future Tribulation or whether some refers to 722 in a metaphorical way and some refers to the future Tribulation in a straightforward way. I'm going to take it that v 7-8 are describing the judgment in 722 in a metaphorical way and vv 9-10 is looking to the future Tribulation. Amos kind of uses the judgment coming on that generation as sort of a launching pad to shoot us forward to a future judgment that would come on a future generation of Israel. So, verse 7-8, metaphorical, local, 722BC. Vv 9-10, literal, global, future Tribulation.

Verse 7, **The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob, Jacob**, who was later named Israel, is in view here, no one could deny that they were prideful (cf 6:8). So the Lord swears on their pride, **“Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds.** Now I don't know if you see how terrible that is, but to never forget, to never forgive, that is a terrible thing for the Lord to say that to you. This is a people that are God forsaken. We use that phrase, and its passages like this the phrase comes from. These people are God forsaken. And it is a terrible thing for be the forsaken of God. The doctrine of divine discipline is a biblical doctrine. It's universally taught in the Bible. He is like this. It's hard for us to think He is like this; that He could discipline us like this. The God of love disciplines His chosen people? Yes, the God of love. That's why He disciplines. If He didn't love you He wouldn't discipline you at all, you wouldn't even be His child.

And then verse 8, **“Because of this [because of their deeds] 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.** Now all of that I take as metaphorical except the part where the people mourn. It's a description of judgment. I don't think a literal earthquake came in 722BC, I think the judgment of God came through the

Assyrian armies. They may have caused dome quaking, we're not denying that. **Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile**, that's a comparison, I don't think the northern kingdom filled up with water, but I do think there was chaos and destruction that resulted from the judgment. Often when the Nile overflowed it caused chaos and destruction in Egypt and the Lord likens their judgment to that.

And now I think in verse 9 he launches forward to the future day of the Lord, the tribulation and I think these are real, literal, geophysical and astrophysical details. These kinds of things are going to happen in a literal and a global way, **"It will come about in that day,"** that is "the day of the Lord," **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.** There are several blackouts during the future Tribulation. This astrophysical phenomena is one of them, perhaps the last. Matt 24:29-30 describes the final blackout when the Lord Jesus Christ will return against a pitch black background. The sign of the Son of Man preceding His coming is probably the Shechinah Glory, a bright light against that black background, the same sign that preceded His first coming; the star of Matt 2 is the sign of His second coming, Shechinah Glory and then He will come and if you are not ready, clothed with His salvation then the day of grace is over again and the day of judgment has arrived. Read Rev 19 for yourself. That's not a great and glorious day for the people who have not trusted in Him. It's a bloody day, a terrible day, Verse 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.** The end of it will be the end of all human flesh that has not trusted in Jesus Christ, all! Talk about a bitter day. Talk about a bloody day. Talk about corpses. If you are here today and you have not trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ you need to do so today. Jesus Christ is God the Creator, the second person of the Triune God who created the universe and sustains your every breath, you're every activity and that includes you're rejection of Him. And if you do not place your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross for your sin and rose from the dead on the third day then you too will face eternal retribution.

This day will be horrible. Notice the phrase **mourning for an only son**, that's the death of the firstborn through whom the family name would be perpetuated. It was a time of horror if that son died. That day of the Second Coming is a horrible day, for those who haven't trusted Christ.

Now here we move back to the time of Israel's defeat in 722BC. These verses take you beyond the physical and mental distress of the Assyrian conquest and turn to the spiritual distress in the aftermath. Verse 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.** This is not a famine for physical food but a famine for the word of God. If you don't want the word of God when I make it readily available then don't expect it to be available later. A spiritual famine means spiritual thirst. Man was made for the word of God and when he doesn't get the word of God his soul is famished. But when a people reject the word of God and reject the word of God and reject the word of God then finally God says, fine, you can't have it anymore. I take it away; I cut off all communication with you. You see this over and over in the word of God; we've been seeing it in the Book of Acts when Paul goes to the Jew first. And every time he enters a city he marches into the synagogue and he starts reasoning from the scriptures and this goes on and on until the Jews rise up against Paul and then what does Paul do? Fine, you had your chance, you don't want the word of God, and you only store up wrath for yourselves, now I turn to the Gentiles.

It seems to be an axiom of history that when men have the word of God they despise it, when they don't have it they seek it. It has often troubled me to think that virtually every home in America has a Bible in it but they sit there and sit there and gather dust. That's all they do. Yet if you go back in our American history which stems from the Protestant Reformation, those people in Europe didn't have a Bible in their language. They couldn't read the word of God for themselves. Just think what it must have been like for a William Tyndale to translate the word of God into the English and you could sit there as a father and for the very first time read the words of God aloud to your children. Do you read the word of God aloud to your children today? Those people were hungry for the word of God. Or for Martin Luther, who we know strained to find the exact German word to translate the original intent, and to sit down with your grandchild and for the first time to hear the living

waters of God's voice. We take the word of God for granted. We have the word of God sitting on bookshelves and we don't take it down and open it and read His words as living waters flowing fresh from the mouth of God. That's what nourishes the human soul made in the image of God. Man does not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. What we hold in our hands is a privilege, you have it and I have it by the grace of God. Do we open it, do we read it, do we study it, do we understand it, and are we hungry for it? If not then there will come a day when we will not have it. The copies you have and I have will be destroyed and removed from society under the judging hand of God, and then what will we do? What will we teach our children and grandchildren? What will nourish your and my soul? Will we be like those people of v 12 in the northern kingdom, who after the military disaster **stagger from sea to sea, And from the north even to the east; who go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But do not find it.** There's a lot of seeking going on here, going **to and fro** but if you read carefully v 12 where are they not seeking? What's the one direction missing? The south. What was south? Judah. The Temple in Jerusalem. The word of God. They seek in every place but the one place they might actually find the word of God.

By way of application sometimes you hear people say, "Oh, I'm seeking the word of God, I'm searching for the word of God," and they look everywhere but the one place they know they can go and find it. I have to tell you I have been in numerous conversations like this in our community. Oh yes, we're so hungry for the word of God and yet they're not here. I don't know what every church is teaching. I do know the history of the Christian church in America. I do know the major departures in the denominations, the theological heresies. I do know what some of you have reported about what is being taught in other churches in our community. A couple of you have visited just about every church and you reported unanimously that this is the only place teaching the word of God the way it's supposed to be taught: straightforwardly, consistently and systematically. And that observation leaves you with the same question this text leaves you with - are the people in our community who say, oh yes, I'm seeking the word of God, are they really seeking it if they attend everywhere else but where it's being proclaimed? And many of you have reported to me that they know the word of God is taught here. It's not a mystery. Most Christians claim to seek the truth but they do it in a way that they avoid coming into contact with the

word of God in Holy Scripture. They talk about seeking truth but they don't want the word of God, they want the word of man.

Notice verse 13, as they go to and fro one class is highlighted, **In that day the beautiful virgins And the young men will faint from thirst.** These are the youth, the young people, and the vigorous element of society. And if the strongest element of society searches as long and hard as they can within the land and yet cannot find it, what does that mean for the old and feeble or the young and dependent? Certainly they can't find it either. It's not to be found. The word of God was neglected and now it's not available.

Verse 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.**" Three national shrines, three places full of idolatry. This is the root problem of their lives, the idolatry that reigns in their hearts. As if they're going to go get help from these idols, idols they've fashioned in their own imagination. That's all an idol is, a god made by man that replaces the Creator. It's a substitution of the creation for the Creator. The only comment I have to make about this is about Samaria. **those who swear by the guilt of Samaria.** That word **guilt** in the Hebrew is *asham*, and some translators have recognized that is a deliberate distortion of the name of the goddess worshipped at **Samaria**. Her name was Asherah, and so Amos says, you who swear by the Asherah, swear by your own guilt. That's one of the ways the word of God cleverly mocks unbelief. Unbelief is foolish according to the word of God. It's not wise. It's foolish. And so these people were very involved in various idolatrous cults they have erected to replace the one truth of the God of the Bible. Today we have a number of the cults that have replaced the God of the Bible. We have the Jehovah's Witnesses who deny the true deity of Jesus Christ, they wear out the arguments of John 1:1 in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God," against all of the greatest grammarians who recognize the proper understanding. We have Mormons, Scientologists, Christian Science, Islam, the list goes on and on. Will anyone come to worship the one true God? Or is all that is left vanity. The judgment of God is coming.

¹ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge*

Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:1447.

ⁱⁱ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:1447.

ⁱⁱⁱ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:1447.

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