

Amos 8:1-14 “A Basket of Fruit”

For the Children: Sometimes your parents buy things from the supermarket, and find that they are “off.” Or perhaps you just leave it too long before using the food item. The meat goes bad, the fruit goes squishy, the bread goes mouldy. It’s not very nice when you start eating something, then discover that it’s off! God’s people sometimes go “off” too – spiritually speaking. They stop being interested in the Lord, in the Bible, in worship services. They pay more attention to the things of the world, and to sin. They stop being thankful for God’s blessings, and for the gift of salvation. The Lord does not allow this to go on forever. He will help those who truly love Him to get back on track. But those who refuse to repent, He will give over to their sin. **Questions:** What behaviour showed that many in Israel did not really love the Lord? How were they like a basket of fruit? What were the signs that showed that they were not right with the Lord?

Introduction:

First Point: Bad Fruit

- 1) Rotten at the Core: Israel looked very religious on the outside. They attended all the “services” (v. 5); but things were not right with the heart of the people – like fruit that looked good on the outside, but was rotten at the core.
- 2) A Problem with Business Ethics: One of the evidences of this heart-problem was the manner in which the rich dealt with the poor. At the Sabbaths and festivals, they could hardly wait to get back to business. Instead of using the “rest” to focus on God’s Word, they planned how to further cheat the poor and make more money. This was contrary to God’s covenant-law re the poor, who to be supported rather than cheated.
- 3) Two Applications: Believers today should also maintain business ethics according to God’s Word, especially when dealing with the covenant-poor, for whom the Lord cares. But in addition, we are reminded that during worship services, we should be focused on God’s Word, and responding with praise, thanks, and obedience. Gratitude for Jesus’ saving work should be filling us, not our weekly pursuits in business, recreation etc. – and especially not plans that are sinful.

Second Point: Over-Ripe Fruit

- 1) The End of the Fruit: In another sense, Israel was like fruit that is over-ripe, and ready for the compost heap. The word “fruits” and “end” (v. 2) are similar – a Hebrew pun. Their “end” was approaching because though the Lord had called for repentance (see 5:6), they only hardened their heart. The Lord is merciful, in giving time for repentance. But His mercy should never be presumed upon, or He may give the sinner over to his hard heart. This applies to individuals who turn away after “tasting” the truth. See Heb. 6:4-9. These warnings are given so that the apostate have even less excuse; also that the faithful may be moved to be even more watchful over themselves and their church; and that they may be more assured that even when a part of the visible church deforms, we know the Lord is still in control.
- 2) Early Warning: To help God’s people recognize when a segment of the church – or their own lives – are deforming, warning signs are given. For Israel, there will be evidence near and at the end, connected with the Assyrian invasion. Vss. 7-9 use the language of God’s judgement by the sending of invading forces – quakes and floods and the darkening of the sun. The joy of their hypocritical feasts will be turned to mourning. Their services and feasts will end (v. 10). But there is an earlier and more subtle warning: a “drought” and “famine” (vss. 11-14). Not literally, but a lack of interest in God’s Word, a time in which He effectively withdraws His Word (either by not sending any prophets, or not moving Israel to pay attention to His Word). Lack of interest in God’s Word is a serious, early warning of spiritual collapse, both for individuals, congregations and federations! It goes hand-in-hand with lack of interest in worship services. This is something to consider in self-examination, as we pray that the Lord will maintain in us a lively interest in His Word.

Conclusion:

