

THE BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT

TEXT: AMOS 8

Introduction:

In Amos 7 there are three visions:

- a. The locust plague (7:1, 2). Amos interceded and the Lord repented (7:2b, 3).
- b. Famine and fire (7:4). Again, Amos interceded and the Lord repented (7:5, 6).
- c. The plumbline (7:7-9). Here, Amos did not intercede, and the Lord did not repent. This means God's judgment was certain (cf. 8:2 with 7:8) – "I will not again pass by them any more."

I. THE BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT RESENTS A HARVEST

1. "A basket of summer fruit represents a harvest. It tells us that the tree is no longer producing" (J. Vernon McGee). So although a basket of summer fruit is delightful and delicious, it also speaks of the end of the harvest ("The end is come upon my people of Israel..." – 8:2).
2. "It also tells us of rapid spoilage and quick deterioration" (McGee).
3. The basket of summer fruit is a dramatic and a figurative illustration of God's judgment. Israel was ripe for judgment. "I will not again pass by them any more" (8:2)
4. In two of the previous visions (7:1-6), Amos prayed for the survival of Israel and God changed His mind and withheld His hand. But after the vision of the plumbline, Amos did not intercede (7:7-9).
5. The statement, "I will not again pass by them any more" (7:8; 8:2) indicates that the harvest is past. The northern kingdom of Israel has come to the end of the line. Judgment will certainly come, and the basket of summer fruit symbolizes that.
6. The summer fruit was probably sycamore fruit (cf. 7:14). The gathering of the fruit marked the end of the harvest. Harvest in the Bible has two aspects:
 - a. Soulwinning. Our Lord said in Matthew 9:37, 38, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."
 - b. Judgment (cf. Rev. 14:14—20). In the context of Amos 8, it is God's judgment upon Israel – "Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more" (8:2; cf. 7:8).

7. Their insincere singing in the temple will turn into horrible “howlings” and wailing because “there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence” (8:3; cf. 8:10; 6:10).
8. Their grief and their agony will be so great that they will be unable to speak.

II. REASONS FOR GOD’S JUDGMENT

1. They had oppressed the poor (8:4; cf. 2:6, 7).
2. They were hypocrites (8:5, 6). All they really cared about was how to make more money, and how to swindle people – and all the while they were observing their feast days and sabbaths (8:5; cf. 5:21-27).
3. The new moon was a holy day on which business and trade were not to be transacted.
4. The sabbath was supposed to be a day of rest. But they could not wait for it to end so they could get back to making money.
5. God gave us the sabbath for our benefit and for our enjoyment. “And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).
6. They were dishonest and deceitful (8:5b, 6).
7. They sold the poor and needy into slavery (8:6). This was prohibited under the law of Moses (Lev. 25:39).
8. God had sworn (8:7; cf. 4:2; 6:8).
9. So great would be the impact of the LORD’s judgment, that the land would “tremble” (8:8).
10. Israel’s judgment (the invasion by Assyria) was but a foreshadowing of the future “day of the LORD” (8:9, 10).
11. In Bible prophecy, many future judgments are foreshadowed in historical events (cf. 5:16-20).

III. THERE WOULD BE A FAMINE OF THE WORD OF GOD (8:11-14).

1. God sent Israel many prophets but the prophets were mistreated by the stiffnecked Israelites (cf. Heb. 11:36-38).
2. Stephen said, “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:52).
3. The people demanded that the prophets stop preaching (Amos 2:12; 7:12, 13).
4. Now the Lord was declaring to them that, since Israel despised His Word (5:10), they would no longer hear it. “Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God” (Micah 3:7).

5. Our Lord said, “Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come” (John 7:34). “Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 8:21).
6. Amos is referring to the Jews. They have replaced the Word of God with the Talmud and their traditions. But we can apply this prophecy to the Gentile world as well.
7. This spiritual famine has ruined Europe, and it is starting to dry up North America too – removing the Ten Commandments from the courthouses and other public buildings, removing the Nativity Scene from city square, eliminating prayer in public schools, eliminating “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, etc.
8. Even most church members know very little about the Word of God.
9. Amos 8:12 says the distraught people will wander from sea to sea in every direction seeking the Word of God but will not find it.
10. The fair virgins and young men will faint for thirst (8:13).
11. Because of their idolatry God had given up on them (8:14). They had forsaken God, and now God would forsake them.
12. The sin of Samaria and the god of Dan refer to the idols set up by King Jeroboam I (I Kings 12:28-30; Hosea 10:5).

CONCLUSION:

1. The doom upon the Northern kingdom of Samaria was certain: “They shall fall, and never rise again” (8:14; cf. 5:2).
2. This judgment was fulfilled when the Assyrians invaded Israel approximately 40 years later.
3. Samaria has never rose again and never will.
4. However, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom will be reunited some day (cf. Ezek. 37:15-23).

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