

Amos

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Amos 8:1-14

Vss. 1-3

- It seems unlikely that Amos would leave Bethel simply because the king's priest barked at him. So he gives his audience a new vision, but not the one they might expect, even from him.
- Here again it is God who initiates the conversation. He shows Amos a basket of Summer fruit, the kind of basket of fruit one might see at the Feast of the Tabernacles marking the end of the harvest and the start of the Jewish New Year.
- The harvest is in. Everyone's spirits are high. There are ceremonial rites performed to assure the coming year's fertility and blessings. The priest would come forward with pronouncements of God's blessings. The Lord has blessed the people with a bountiful harvest and soon the Fall rains would begin that would lead to the next harvest. All is well...until it's not. Amos does not come with a sermon of assurance and blessing but of death and destruction. And he does so with a wry bit of play on words. The Hebrew word for "summer fruit" is very close to the word for "end", the two words even rhyme. So it is not the fruit, the harvest, that has come for Israel, but it is the end that has come.

Vss. 4-6

- "Now hear this!" The covenant with God and the Law of Moses says that in Israel the strong are to help the weak, but here the Law and the covenant are disregarded. The strong take every advantage of the weak that they can and hope to disregard the law even further by opening the wheat market on the sabbath and then cheating people on the sabbath. They want the new moon rituals to pass because no business is to be conducted then. "So let's open the shops where our measurements and our scales cheat and our prices are outrageous. Having to be in the Temple is time wasted. Let's get back to the business of making money!" For it was making money that was more important than anything else, including God. The one who will rob God of His place will not think twice of robbing people.
- In Deut. 25:13-16 and Leviticus 19:35-36, God's people are forbidden to even carry two sizes of weights in the bags. The use of unjust weights was an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 20:10). A shekel carried a certain weight of silver or gold. Israel's merchants were using smaller shekels to buy

grain and required larger, standard sized shekels when selling. Archeologists have found such shekels at digs in Samaria and Tirzah. And they would create false bottoms in bushel baskets so that the actual amount was smaller (Luke 6:38). And if you can't pay your bills, you could be sold into slavery or perhaps as today in many third world countries children were sold to buy food for the rest of the family.

Vss. 7-10

- The Lord says He will never forget the deeds of these people. It's not unlike in the New Testament where Teachers and Preachers are held to a higher standard. Here in Amos we are reminded that all of God's people are held to a higher standard and that in either Testament those who are so held are likewise judged by a higher standard.
- The judgement to come will be like an earthquake, sudden and devastating. It will be like the Nile floods that come in the Fall. There is nothing you can do to stop its devastating rise. It will be like an eclipse, frightening, evil, unexpected, and causing uncertainty. It is a power beyond human control. Darkness will cover the land.
- So at your fall festival there will be sorrow and not joy, songs of hope will become songs of grief, and while shaving the head was a common sign of grief among Israel's pagan neighbors, it was prohibited in the Law (Deut. 14:1) so they are disregarding God's Law even here. But understand that this grief will be the worse and most bitter grief of all.

Vss. 11-14

- Here is a terrifying thing. A famine is coming. Not like the famine from Ch. 4 that came to demonstrate the power of God in order that the people might repent and turn back to God. No, this famine was a famine of Hope, a famine where the Word of God was taken away from Israel. People have shown the ability to bear up under the most horrific of circumstances if they have even the slightest shred of Hope, but now there is no Hope for the Word has been taken away (Deut. 8:3).
- In that day the young and the strong will faint because there is no Hope. They will search from one end of the earth to another to find and hear the Word of God and the Hope the Word brings, but they will not find it. They will look to the false pagan gods of their neighbors, but they will find no Hope there. Without Hope there is only death.