

Let The Verdict Be Read!  
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Amos 8 & 9

Opening discussion: What if God's Word was removed from our lives? Think about the benefits we get from God's word through the Bible and guidance through His Spirit. Now, here's the question: If you're Bible were taken away, and if God went totally silent with no guidance through His Holy Spirit, what would you miss?

- Last week we said that the book of Amos ends with God giving Amos five visions. We covered three of them last week in chapter 7. Today, the final two in chapters 8 and 9.
- I would sum up today's lesson from those last two visions in four points:
  1. Time was short
  2. Judgment was sure
  3. People were smug
  4. Still, there was hope for some
- To apply the four points to today, we only have to change from past to present tense.
  1. Time IS short
  2. Judgment IS sure
  3. People ARE smug
  4. Still, there IS hope for some...those who turn from sin and to faith in Christ and surrender DAILY to His Lordship.

Let's look at the TWO VISIONS and the FOUR POINTS and ask ourselves: What does each say to those who DON'T KNOW CHRIST and to those of us who ARE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST?

- Turn to Chapter 8 and verse 1 to see the NEXT vision God showed Amos:  
8 This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, a basket of summer fruit. 2 And he said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit."
- God shows Amos a basket of fruit. That not only seems harmless, that seems pleasant! I don't know about you but I enjoy having a basket of fresh fruit on the counter.
- Sometimes you reach for the fruit that looks so good and what has happened?
- In the last part of verse 2, what did God say the vision meant?

Then the Lord said to me, "The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them.

- Question: What had happened between God and the Israelites and how was a basket of fruit a good illustration?
- How does that apply today to those who DON'T believe in Christ as Savior and Lord?

- How does the illustration apply to those of us who ARE believers?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary tells us:

*The meaning of the Lord's reply lay in the similar sound and significance of the words "ripe fruit" (v. 1) and "time is ripe" (v. 2). "Ripe fruit" (qāyīṣ) was "summer fruit" or "end-of-the-year fruit"—the last fruit of the season, fully ripened, with a short edible life. "Ripe time" (qēṣ) was "end time" or "cutting time"—the "reaping time" of death. Israel was ripe for a dreadful harvest; her end had come. There would be no stay of execution, no last-minute reprieve. The Lord would spare them no longer.*

- Point #1 - Time is SHORT. Point #2 - Judgment is SURE.
- From verses 3 through the end of chapter 8 God gives Amos a view of the SURE JUDGMENT that was coming for those in Israel who would NOT REPENT of their sins against God and man.
- Verse 3: What will happen to their hypocritical worship services?
- Also, when they would turn to God for comfort what would they hear?
- Verse 8: God says his judgment will be like an earthquake. When He refers to the rising of the Nile, He refers to a phenomenon they would have all known, each year the Nile would swell to flood stage then recede. Basically, their lives would be turned upside down like the quaking of the earth or the flooding of the Nile.
- Verse 9: What will God's judgment be like?
- Verse 10: What will God's judgment be like?
- Verse 11 is particularly interesting. What will God SEND on the land?
- Verses 12 and 13: How will the people react to this "famine" of God's Word?
- Question: How is God's Word like a good meal?

In writing about the Psalms, David Jeremiah pointed out:

*The Psalmist says the Bible will refresh your inner life, like food does your body. The one thing the Bible will deal with is your soul. It will deal with the real you, not the external facade you walk around in, but the real you. It will get down deep into where you live and help you understand who you are. This Book will refresh you and restore you. Sometimes there is a little bit of tearing down first, isn't there? Sometimes the Bible has to tear out all that is bad so it can begin to build up that which is good. But I promise this Book will restore your soul. — Jeremiah, D. (1994). Ten burning questions from psalms: Study guide (46). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.*

- Question: What opportunities do people today have to hear from God? Given the abundance of opportunities to be exposed to God's Word, why are some Christians undernourished in it?

Back to the time of Amos, The Life Application Study Bible:

*The people had no appetite for God's word when prophets like Amos brought it. Because of their apathy, God said he would take away even the opportunity to hear his word. We have God's Word, the Bible. But many still look everywhere for answers to life's problems except in Scripture. You can help them by directing them to the Bible,*

*showing them the parts that speak to their special needs and questions. God's Word is available to us. Let us help people know it before a time comes when they cannot find it.*

- Time was SHORT; Judgment was SURE; and the people were SMUG.
- Chapter 8 also reminds us WHY the people of Israel's Northern Kingdom were subject to God's judgment. Look back at verses 4-6.
- Verse 4: How was the ESTABLISHMENT of Israel sinning against God and man?
- Verses 5 & 6 are interesting. The SMUG people of Israel were...

5 saying, "When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain?  
And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small  
and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances,  
6 that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals  
and sell the chaff of the wheat?"

- Question: What were these SMUG, CROOKED business types saying in those verses? Instead of a relationship with Christ, why do some business types join the church?
- In verse 7 God gives a JOLTING INDICTMENT of these SMUG, sinful people:

7 The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

- Question: Why would it be SHOCKING to hear God say he would NEVER FORGET their SINFUL deeds? What does scripture say about God's MEMORY about our sins?

Isaiah 43:25 (ESV) 25 "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Psalms 103:12 (ESV) 12 ...as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Micah 7:19 (ESV) 19 He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

- In Amos 8:7 God just said he will NEVER forget their deeds. What's the difference? [1 John 1:9]
- We need to press on to chapter 9. God shows Amos a final vision.
- In the first eight verses of chapter 9 God continues to spell out the judgment that is coming to the Israelites. I wish we had time to unpack it all. Verses 9 & 10 sum it up:

9 "For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth.

God is going to SIFT and SEPARATE the WHEAT from the CHAF. What kind of people will receive this TERRIBLE JUDGMENT? Verse 10:

10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.'

- Question: Why would the people have said that? What was giving them a false sense of security? How could that be a danger for people today?
- Time was SHORT; Judgment was SURE; and the people were SMUG. Thank God that is not the end of the story.
- Though verse 10 is stated NEGATIVELY, what does it reveal about the HOPE the Israelites had. What does it reveal about the HOPE we have in Christ today?
- God had made a covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 12:2 (ESV) And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

- God would honor that covenant by preserving a REMNANT of Israel. Verses 14-15

14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

15 I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them," says the Lord your God.

God could not IGNORE the sin of His people. However, when the judgment was complete, he would save a remnant of those who did not live a life of sin.

So, What's the TAKEAWAY?

- How do we apply each of these points to US today?
- Time IS short - How does that apply to both UNBELIEVERS and BELIEVERS?
- Judgment IS sure - How should we respond THIS WEEK to that reality?
- Part of God's judgment on Israel was a FAMINE of HIS WORD. How can we avoid a FAMINE of the word of God?
- People ARE smug - How can we avoid becoming SMUG in our RELIGION?
- Still, there IS hope for some...those who turn from sin and to faith in Christ and surrender DAILY to His Lordship. - What do we need to do about that this week?