

# CHAPTER 8

Sinful times are here attended with sorrowful times, so necessary is the connexion between them; it is threatened here again and again that the laughter shall be turned into mourning.

**I.** By the vision of “basket of summer-fruit” is signified the hastening on of the ruin threatened (v. 1-3) and that shall change their note.

**II.** Oppressors are here called to an account for their abusing the poor; and their destruction is foretold, which will set them a mourning (v. 4-10).

**III.** A famine of the word of God is here made the punishment of a people that go a whoring after other gods (v. 11-14); yet for this, which is the most mournful judgment of all, they are not here brought in mourning.

## AMOS 8:1-3

### THE VISION OF SUMMER FRUIT

The great reason why sinners defer their repentance *de die in diem* — *from day to day*, is because they think God thus defers his judgments, and there is no song wherewith they so effectually sing themselves asleep as that, *My Lord delays his coming*; and therefore God, by his prophets, frequently represents to Israel the day of his wrath not only as just and certain, but as very near and hastening on apace; so he does in these verses.

**I.** The approach of the threatened ruin is represented by a *basket of summer-fruit* which Amos saw in vision; for the Lord *showed it* to him (v. 1) and obliged him to take notice of it (v. 2): *Amos, what seest thou?* Note, It concerns us to enquire whether we do indeed see that which God has been pleased to show us, and hear what he has been pleased to say to us; for many a thing God speaks, God shows *once, yea twice*, and men *perceive it not*. Are we in the midst of the visions of the Almighty? Let us consider what we see. He saw a *basket of summer-fruit* gathered and ready to be eaten, which signified,

1. That they were ripe for destruction, rotten ripe, and it was time for God to put in the sickle of his judgments and to cut them off; nay, the thing was in effect done already, and they lay ready to be eaten up.

2. That the year of God's patience was drawing towards a conclusion; it was autumn with them, and their year would quickly have its period in a dismal winter.

3. Those we call *summer-fruits* that will not keep till winter, but must be used immediately, an emblem of this people, that had nothing solid or consistent in them.

**II.** The intent and meaning of this vision is no more than this: It signifies that *the end has come upon my people Israel*. The word that signifies *the end* is *ketz*, which is of near affinity with *kitz*, the word used for *summer-fruit*. God has long spared them, and borne with them, but now his patience is tired out; they are indeed *his people Israel*, but their end, that *latter end* they have been so often reminded of, but have so long forgotten, has now come. Note, If sinners do not make an end of sin, God will make an end of them, yea though they be *his people Israel*. What was said <sup><3108></sup>Amos 7:8 is here repeated as God's determined resolution, *I will not again pass by them any more*; they shall not be connived at as they have been, nor the judgment coming turned away.

**III.** The consequence of this shall be a universal desolation (v. 3): When *the end* shall come sorrow and death shall ride in triumph; they are accustomed to go together, and shall at length go away together, when in heaven *there shall be no more death, nor sorrow*, <sup><6214></sup>Revelation 21:4. But here in a sinful world, in a sinful nation,

1. Sorrow reigns, reigns to such a degree that *the songs of the temple shall be howlings* — the songs of God's temple at Jerusalem, or rather of their idol-temples, where they used, when, in honour of the golden calves, they had *eaten and drunk, to rise up to play*. They were perhaps wanton profane songs; and it is certain that sooner or later those will be turned into howlings. Or, if they had a sound and show of piety and religion, yet, not coming from the heart, nor being sung to the glory of God, he valued them not, but would justly turn them into howlings. Note, Mourning will follow sinful mirth, yea, and sacred mirth too, if it be not sincere. And, when God's judgments are abroad, they will soon turn the greatest joy into the greatest heaviness, the temple-songs, which used to sound so

pleasantly, not only into sighs and groans, but into loud howlings, which sound dismally. They shall come to the temple, and, finding that in ruins, there they shall howl most bitterly.

**2.** Death reigns, reigns to such a degree that there shall be *dead bodies, many dead bodies in every place* (~~EBB~~ Psalm 110:6), slain by sword or pestilence, so many that the survivors shall not bury them with the usual pomp and solemnity of funerals; they shall not so much as have the bell tolled, but they shall *cast them forth with silence*, shall bury them in the dead of the night, and charge all about them to be silent and to take notice of it, either because they have not wherewithal to bear the charges of a funeral, or because, the killing disease being infectious, none will come near them, or for fear the enemy should be provoked, if they should be known to lament their slain. Or they shall charge themselves and one another silently to submit to the hand of God in these desolating judgments, and not to repine and quarrel with him. Or it may be taken not for a patient, but a sullen silence; their hearts shall be hardened, and all these judgments shall not extort from them one word of acknowledgment either of God's righteousness or their own unrighteousness.

## ~~EBB~~ AMOS 8:4-10

### THE SIN AND DOOM OF OPPRESSORS

God is here contending with proud oppressors, and showing them,

**I.** The heinousness of the sin they were guilty of; in short, they had the character of the unjust judge (~~EBB~~ Luke 18:2) that neither *feared God* nor *regarded man*.

**1.** Observe them in their devotions, and you will say, "They had no reverence for God." Bad as they are, they do indeed keep up a show and form of godliness; they observe the *sabbath* and the *new moon*; they put some difference between those days and other days, but they were soon weary of them, and had no affection at all to them, for their hearts were wholly set upon the world and the things of it. It is a sad character which this gives of them, that they said, *When will the sabbath be gone, that we may sell corn?* Yet is still the character of many that are called Christians.

(1.) They were weary of sabbath days. “When will they be *gone*?” They were weary of the restraints of the sabbaths and the new-moons, and wished them over because they might *do no servile work therein*. They were weary of the work or business of the sabbaths and new-moons, snuffed at it (<sup>301B</sup>Malachi 1:13), and were, as *Doeg, detained before the Lord* (<sup>492T</sup>1 Samuel 21:7); they would rather have been any where else than about God's altars. Note, Sabbath days and sabbath work are a burden to carnal hearts, that are always afraid of doing too much for God and eternity. Can we spend our time better than in communication with God? And how much time do we spend pleasantly with the world? Will not the sabbath be gone before we have done the work of it and reaped the gains of it? Why then should we be in such haste to part with it?

(2.) They were fond of market-days: they longed to be *selling corn and setting forth wheat*. When they were employed in religious services they were thinking of their marketings; their hearts *went after their covetousness* (<sup>263B</sup>Ezekiel 33:31), and thus made my Father's house a house of merchandise, nay, a den of thieves. They were weary of holy duties because their worldly business stood still the while; in this they were as in their element, but in God's sanctuary as a fish upon dry ground. Note, Those are strangers to God, and enemies to themselves, that love market days better than sabbath days, that would rather be selling corn than worshipping God.

2. Observe them in their conversations, and you will see they have no regard to man; and this commonly follows upon the former; those that have lost the savour of piety will not long retain the sense of common honesty. They neither *do justly* nor *love mercy*.

(1.) They cheat those they deal with. When they *sell their corn* they impose upon the buyer, both in giving out the goods and in receiving the money for them. They measure him the corn by their own measure, and pretend to give him what he agreed for, but they *make the ephah small*. The measure is scanty, and not statute-measure, and so they wrong him that way. When they receive his money they must weigh fit in their own scales, by their own weights, and the *shekel* they weigh by is above standard: *They make the shekel great*, so that the money, being found too light, must have more added to it; and so they cheat that way too, and this under colour and pretence of exactness in doing justice. By such wicked practices as these men show such a greediness of the world, such a love of


themselves, such a contempt of mankind in general, of the particular persons they deal with, and of the sacred laws of justice, as prove them to have in their hearts neither the fear nor the love of that God who has so plainly said that *false weights and balances are an abomination to him*. Another instance of their fraudulent dealing is that they *sell the refuse of the wheat*, and, taking advantage of their neighbour's ignorance or necessity, make them take it at the same price at which they sell the *finest of the wheat*.

**(2.)** They are barbarous and unmerciful to the poor: *They swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land to fail*.

**[1.]** They valued themselves so much on their wealth that they looked upon all that were poor with the highest contempt imaginable; they hated them, could not endure them, but abandoned them, and therefore did what they could to make them cease, not by relieving them to make them cease to be poor, but by banishing and destroying them to make them cease to be, or at least to be in their land. But he who thus *reproaches the poor despises his Maker*, in whose hands *rich and poor meet together*.

**[2.]** They were so eager to increase their wealth, and make it more, that they robbed the poor to enrich themselves; and they fastened upon the poor, to *make a prey* of them, because they were not able to obtain any redress nor to resist or revenge the violence of their oppressors. Those riches that are got by the ruin of the poor will bring ruin on those that get them. They swallowed up the poor by making them hard bargains, and cheating them in those bargains; for *therefore they falsify the balances by deceit*, not only that they *may enrich themselves*, may have money at command, and so may have every thing else (as they think) at command too, but that they may impoverish those about them, and bring them so low that they may force them to become slaves to them, and so, having drained them of every thing else, they may have their labour for nothing, or next to nothing. Thus *they buy the poor for silver*; they bring them and their *children into bondage*, because they have not wherewithal to pay for the corn they have bought; see ~~KIND~~ Nehemiah 5:2-5. And there were so many that they were reduced to this extremity that the price was very low; and the oppressors had beaten it down so that you might buy a poor man to be your slave *for a pair of shoes*. Property was first invaded and then liberty; it is the method of oppressors first to make men beggars and then to make them their vassals. Thus is the dignity of the human nature lost in

the misery of those that are trampled on and the tenderness of it in the sin of those that trample on them.

**II.** The grievousness of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them for this sin. When the poor are injured they will *cry unto God*, and he will hear their cry, and reckon with those that are injurious to them, for, they being his receivers, he takes the wrongs done to them as done to himself,  Exodus 22:23, 24.

**1.** God will remember their sin against them: *He has sworn by the excellency of Jacob* (v. 7), by himself, for he can swear by no greater; and who but he is the glory and magnificence of Jacob? He has sworn by those tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them, which they had profaned and abused, and had done what they could to make them detestable to him; for he is said (ch 6:8) to *abhor the excellency of Jacob*. He swears *in his wrath*, swears by his own name, that name which was so well known and was so great in Israel. He swears, *Surely I will never forget any of their works*, but upon all occasions they shall be remembered against them, for more is implied than is expressed. *I will never forget them* is as much as to say, *I will never forgive them*; and then it proclaims the case of these unjust unmerciful men to be miserable indeed, eternally miserable; woe, and a thousand woes, to that man that is cut off by an oath of God from all benefit by pardoning mercy; and those have reason to fear judgment without mercy that have *shown no mercy*.

**2.** He will bring utter ruin and confusion upon them. It is here described largely, and in a great variety of emphatic expressions, that, if possible, they might be frightened into a sincere repentance and reformation.

**(1.)** There shall be a universal terror and consternation: *Shall not the land tremble for this* (v. 8), *this land*, out of which you thought to drive the poor? *Shall not every one mourn that dwells therein*? Certainly he shall. Note, Those that will not tremble and mourn as they ought for national sins shall be made to tremble and mourn for national judgments; those that look without concern upon the sins of the oppressors, which should make them tremble, and upon the miseries of the oppressed, which should them mourn, God will find out a way to make them tremble at the fury of those that oppress them and mourn for their own losses and sufferings by it.

**(2.)** There shall be a universal deluge and desolation. When God comes forth against them the waters of trouble and calamity shall *rise up wholly*

as a flood, that swells, when it is dammed up, and soon overflows its banks. Every thing shall make against them. That with which they thought to check the progress of God's judgments shall but make them rise the higher. Judgments shall force their way as the *breaking forth of waters*. The whole land *shall be cast out, and drowned*, and laid under water, as the land of Egypt is every year by the overflowing of its river Nile. Or the expressions may allude to some former judgments of God. Their ruin *shall rise up wholly as a flood*, as Noah's flood, which overwhelmed the whole world, so shall this the whole land; and the land shall be *cast out, and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt*, as Pharaoh and his Egyptians were buried in the Red Sea, which was to them the *flood of Egypt*, both which judgments, as this which is here threatened, were the punishment of violence and oppression, which the Lord is the avenger of.

**3.** It shall surprise them, and come upon them when they little think of it (v. 9): "*I will cause the sun to go down at noon*, when it is in its full strength and lustre, at their noon, when they promise themselves a long afternoon, and think they have at least half a day good before them. The *earth shall be darkened in the clear day*, when every thing looks pleasant and hopeful." Thus uncertain are all our creature-comforts and enjoyments, even life itself; the highest degree of health and prosperity often proves the next degree to sickness and adversity; Job's sun *went down at noon*; many are taken away in the midst of their days, and their sun goes down at noon. In the midst of life we are in death. Thus *terrible* are the judgments of God to those that sleep in security; they are to them as the sun's *going down at noon*; the less they are expected the more confounding they are. When they *cry Peace and safety* then *sudden destruction* comes, comes as a snare, <sup>425</sup>Luke 21:35.

**4.** It shall change their note, and mar all their mirth (v. 10): *I will turn your feasts into mourning*, as (v. 3) the *songs of the temple into howlings*. Note, The end of the sinner's mirth and jollity is heaviness. As *to the upright there arises light in the darkness*, which gives them *the oil of joy for mourning*, so on the wicked their falls darkness in the midst of light, which turns their *laughter into mourning*, their *joy into heaviness*. So great, so general, shall the desolation be, that *sackcloth shall be brought upon all loins, and baldness upon every head*, instead of the *well-set hair* and the rich garments they used to wear. The mourning at that day shall be as *mourning for an only son*, which denotes the most bitter and lasting lamentation. But are there are no hopes that when things are at the worst

they will mend, and that at evening time it will yet be light? No, even *the end thereof shall be as a bitter day*, a day of bitter mourning; that state of impenitent sinners grows worse and worse, and the last of all will be the worst of all. *This shall you have at my hand, you shall lie down in sorrow.*

## AMOS 8:11-14

### SPIRITUAL FAMINE THREATENED

In these verses is threatened,

**I.** A general judgment of spiritual famine coming upon the whole land, a *famine of the word of God*, the failing of oracles and the scarcity of good preaching. This is spoken of as a thing at some distance: *The days come*, they will come hereafter, when another kind of darkness shall come upon that land of light. When Amos prophesied, and for a considerable time after, they had great plenty of prophets, abundant opportunities of *hearing the word of God*, in season and out of season; they had precept upon precept and line upon line; prophecy was their daily bread; and it is probable that they surfeited upon it, as Israel on the manna, and therefore God threatens that hereafter he will deprive them of this privilege. Probably in the land of Israel there were not so many prophets, about the time that their destruction came upon them, as there were in the land of Judah; and when the ten tribes went into captivity they *saw not their signs*, there were *no more any prophets*, none to *show them how long*, <sup>1749</sup> Psalm 74:9. The Jewish church, after Malachi, had no prophets for many ages; and some think this threatening looks further yet, to the blindness which has in part happened to Israel in the days of the Messiah, and the veil that is on the heart of the unbelieving Jews. They reject the gospel, and the ministers of it that God sends to them, and covet to have prophets of their own, as their fathers had, but they shall have none, *the kingdom of God being taken from them and given to another people*. Observe here,

**1.** What the judgment itself is that is threatened. It is a famine, a scarcity, not of bread and water (which are the necessary support of the body, and the want of which is very grievous), but a much sorer judgment than that, even a *famine of hearing the words of the Lord*. There shall be no congregations for ministers to preach to, nor any ministers to preach, nor any instructions and abilities given to those that do set up for preachers, to



fit them for their work. The *word of the Lord* shall be *precious* and scarce; there shall be no *vision*, <sup><OR></sup>1 Samuel 3:1. They shall have the written word, Bibles to read, but no ministers to explain and apply it to them, the water in the well, but nothing to draw with. It is a gracious promise (<sup><OR></sup>Isaiah 30:20) that though they have a scarcity of bread they shall have plenty of the means of grace. God will *give them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction*, but their eyes shall see their teachers; and it was a common saying among the Puritans that brown bread and the gospel are good fare. But it is here a threatening that on the contrary they should have plenty enough of bread and water, and yet their teachers should be removed. Now,

**(1.)** This was the departure of a great part of their glory from their land. This made their nation great and high, that *to them were committed the oracles of God*; but, when these were taken from them, their beauty was stained and their honour laid in the dust.

**(2.)** This was a token of God's highest displeasure against them. Surely he was angry indeed with them when he would no more speak to them as he had done, and had abandoned them to ruin when he would no more afford them the means of bringing them to repentance.

**(3.)** This made all the other calamities that were upon them truly melancholy, that they had no prophets to instruct and comfort them from the word of God, nor to give them any hopeful prospect. We should say at any time, and shall say in a time of trouble, that a famine of the word of God is the sorest famine, the heaviest judgment.

**2.** What will be the effect of this (v. 12): *They shall wander from sea to sea*, from the sea of Tiberias to the Great Sea, from one border of the country to another, to see if God will send them prophets, either by sea or land, from other countries; since they have none among themselves, they shall go from the *north to the east*; when they are disappointed in one place they shall try another, and shall *run to and fro*, as men at a loss, and in a hot pursuit to *seek the word of the Lord*, to enquire if there be any prophets, any prophecy, any message from God, but they *shall not find it*.

**(1.)** Though to many this is no affliction at all, yet some will be very sensible of it as a great grievance, and will gladly travel far to hear a good sermon; but they shall sensibly feel the loss of those mercies which others have foolishly sinned away.

(2.) Even those that slighted prophets when they had them shall wish for them as Saul did for Samuel, when they are deprived of them. Many never know the worth of mercies till they feel the want of them. Or it may be meant thus, Though they should thus wander from sea to sea, in quest of the word of God, yet shall they not find it. Note, The means of grace are moveable things; and the candlestick, when we think it stands most firmly, may be removed out of its place (<sup>Rev</sup> Revelation 2:5); and those that now slight the *days of the son of man* may wish in vain to see them. And *in the day* of this famine *the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst* (v. 13); those who, one would think, could well enough have borne the toil, shall sink under it. The *Jewish churches*, and the *masters of their synagogues*, some take to be meant by the *virgins* and the *young men*; these shall lose the word of the Lord, and the benefit of divine revelation, and shall faint away for want of it, shall lose all their strength and beauty. Those that trust in their own merit and righteousness, and think they have no need of Christ, others take to be meant by the *fair virgins* and the *choice young men*; they shall *faint for thirst*, when those that *hunger and thirst after the righteousness* of Christ shall be abundantly satisfied and filled.

II. The particular destruction of those that were ringleaders in idolatry, v. 14. Observe,

1. The sin they are charged with: They *swear by the sin of Samaria*, that is, by the god of Samaria, the idol that was worshipped at Bethel, not far off from Samaria. Thus did they glory in their shame, and swear by them as their god which was their iniquity, thinking that could help them which would certainly ruin them, and giving the highest honour to that which they should have looked upon with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. They say, *Thy god, O Dan! liveth*; that was the other golden calf, a dumb deal idol, and yet caressed and complimented as if it had been the living and true God. They say, *The manner, or way, of Beer-sheba liveth*; they swore by the *religion* of Beer-sheba, the way and manner of worship used there, which they looked upon as sacred, and therefore swore by and appealed to as a judge of controversy. Thus the papists swear by the mass, as the *manner of Beer-sheba*.

2. The destruction they are threatened with. Those who thus give that honour to idols which is due to God alone will find that the God they affront is thereby made their enemy, so that *they shall fall*, and the gods

they serve cannot stand their friends, so that they shall *never rise again*. They will find that God is jealous and will resent the indignity done him, and that he will be victorious and it is to no purpose to contend with him.