

**Fruit Inspector 101
Crooked Merchants and Political Elites
Buying, Selling and Ripping People Off Since 750 BC
Amos 8**

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As we enter Amos 8, a warning. We are going to be talking about fruit, over ripe fruit, rotten fruit, shrinkflation, social justice, and what God thinks about how it was all handled in Israel in the 8th century BC. Oh, and in our culture today.

Once again, Amos has a word for us today.

Did you know that as New Testament believers, one of things we are called to be, based on what we see in the scriptures, is to be fruit inspectors? No, we are not being encouraged to learn about produce or agribusiness, but it is about a different kind of fruit. Fruit is being used as a metaphor.

Jesus tells us more in Matthew towards the end of His sermon on the mount. As He comes towards the end of His message, He warns His disciples about people who have the right look about them, but what they say and teach is false. They produce bad fruit.

Matthew 7:15–20

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit,

nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.**" (ESV)

False prophets are a big problem at the time Amos is delivering his message to Israel. Amaziah twisted Amos' message to the King to give it a false appearance.

Amaziah wanted Amos to go bad and become a bad fruit purveyor.

For those who are not believers, like Amaziah, a good prophet or teacher is one who affirms their lifestyle, their sin, and makes no call for repentance. Jesus though made it crystal clear, the one who is producing bad fruit, someone teaching contrary to the word, encouraging the worship of things rather than the Lord, proclaiming a false message and affirming sinful lifestyles; they are producing bad fruit.

Only those prophets whose lives reveal the righteousness of the kingdom of God are to be credited. The constant refrain of the NT is that bad teaching is reflected in bad living; it is by their fruits that you will recognize them. (France 2007, 291)

Paul will later take that message and expand on it to give us a template of what to look for. He compares wrong living with right living, which is living a Spirit led life.

Galatians 5:19–24

"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (ESV)

For us as believers, we cannot remain neutral about this. There are only two ways to live. We are either serving the flesh and indulging in self-will, or we are following the Spirit. There is no middle ground. The people of Israel though thought there was a middle ground. They were God's people, and they were, but they thought the Torah was negotiable. Besides, "we now live in more modern times here in the 8th century BC. YAHWEH will wink at our sins because, after all, we still do the rituals and feasts." Sorta.

YAHWEH shows Amos what this serving the flesh attitude looks like.

The key concept to remember is the quality of the life is equal to the quality of the fruit. This is another way to look at the concept of sowing and reaping.

Amos 8:1–3

"This is what the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, there was a basket of summer fruit. And He said, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me, "The end has come for My people Israel. I will not spare them any longer. The songs of the palace will turn to wailing on that day," declares the Lord GOD. "The corpses will be many; in every place they will throw them out. Hush!" (NASB 2020)

This is the fourth vision of Amos. It begins like the others, with YAHWEH showing something to Amos. A basket of summer fruit.

Amos knows fruit. He is a farmer/rancher, and the Lord is communicating to Amos in a language that Amos would understand. We need to remember this, there is no need for us to have "special" knowledge or learn something new just so the Lord can talk to us, He talks to us based on what we know and where we are, just like Amos.

If anyone tells you, they have “the” pipeline to the Lord or they are the only ones seeing this...run (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Jesus did this all the time. He didn’t talk above His disciples, He talked to them. How did He call the professional fishermen to follow Him?

Matthew 4:18–19

“And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”” (NKJV)

He talked blue collar fisherman to them. They understood what He was saying.

My great-granddad was a janitor, he was busy doing Bible studies at his home for high school students. Why? Jesus talked janitor to him.

My granddad was a plumber, did you know Jesus talks plumber?

I’m an executive manager / insurance nerd heavy on the quantitative side, Jesus speaks quant.

Jesus also speaks bureaucrat. There was a professional bureaucrat, a tax collector. This is a man used to people lying to him and wanting things from him. He was well educated. The religious establishment hated him and would not talk to him unless they had to. He was direct and to the point. Jesus also approached him and did so in a manner he would understand. Direct and to the point.

Luke 5:27–32

“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, “Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”” (NKJV)

The good news for us, and Amos is evidence of that, the Lord knows all about us and He knows what buttons to push and just how to talk to each of us. His word is living and powerful, and as we read it, He still is talking to us today and in a way each of us can understand. He does not talk over us.

The Lord begins the vision by speaking in Amos’ language, fruit. Amos would not only know what kind of fruit it is, but the time of year based on what he sees. Summer fruit. Most likely figs, grapes, and pomegranates. He also knows what summer fruit is prone to...rotting.

The summer fruit was harvested in August and September. The Gezer Calendar (tenth century BC) calls the eighth and final month of the agricultural season “the month of summer fruit” (yrh qš). This phase of the agricultural cycle contrasts with the late spring planting of the first vision (7:1), when the destruction by the locusts threatened starvation. This harvest, after the hot summer months with the autumn rains in the offing, was a time of celebration of divine provision and of hope for good things in the coming months. (Carroll R. 2020, 437)

Amos correctly identifies the fruit to YAHWEH, it is summer fruit. Summer fruit, because of the time of the year in which it picked, is ripe, sometimes over ripe bordering on going bad. In other words, it has a tendency to spoil rather quickly.

The significance of this fruit though is as a comparative to the nation of Israel. Summer fruit needs to be dealt with quickly, there is no such thing as refrigeration in the northern kingdom, so when it is ready to

eat, you eat it, or it rots. Oh, and one more thing, this fruit signifies it is the end of the season and the end of fruit for the year.

Fruit does not develop overnight. First you have to plant the seed in order to grow the type of fruit you want. Then there is the tending to the tree or vine to encourage growth and fruit bearing. This means fertilizing as necessary and trimming or cutting off those branches which do not produce well in order to enable the tree or the vine to produce more fruit.

The problem for Israel though, they took all of the time that could have been used to prepare for good fruit, and instead used it to produce bad fruit. It took time and care to do this. It did not happen overnight.

Amos 8:2

“And He said, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me, “The end has come for My people Israel. I will not spare them any longer.” (NASB 2020)

When ripe fruit is picked, it is separated from the source of life and is in the process of dying, it will rot unless dealt with. “So the point of the vision was to declare that Israel’s rebellion had ripened. The harvest of their disobedience was the judgment of Yahweh. When qēṣ is used for people it means the end of life. A fig removed from the tree was dead and would eventually spoil. Israel’s refusal to return to the Lord now had brought her to the point of no return. Yahweh’s word of judgment is pronounced with finality, “I will not pass by them anymore.”” (Ogilvie 1990, 357)

In Hebrew, there is a word play taking place here. The word fruit is qayitz in Hebrew and that is what Amos saw. The word qetz, is the word for end and that is what God saw for Israel. He sees a change taking place soon for the music at Bethel.

Amos 8:3

“The songs of the palace will turn to wailing on that day,” declares the Lord GOD. “The corpses will be many; in every place they will throw them out. Hush!” (NASB 2020)

There won’t be any music, but there will be howling and wailing. The majority of Israel has deliberately and intentionally separated themselves from the source of life, they have walked away from YAHWEH. The improvisational music of before now changes, it is the loud cries associated with death. An invasion is coming.

Amos graphically depicts the effect of the invading forces. There would be ‘many, many bodies—flung everywhere!’ There would be cries of pain, howls of agony followed by ‘Silence!’ (v. 3) but this silence would not speak about the end of their suffering; it would demonstrate the awful horror of God’s judgement against sinners. (Bentley 2006, 99-100)

The fruit is over ripe for harvest and will wind up languishing in the roads and streets of Israel, separated from YAHWEH, the source of life.

Just in case we’ve forgotten how ripe Israel is, Amos is going to review the case for us. The nation is predominately rotten to the core.

Ripe is not the word, over ripe would be a better comment. There is no longer any room for improvement, just movement downhill.

Israel is so unprepared for what is coming because they have ignored all the warnings, that wailing over what they see as a sudden change is all that is left.

Their religion had utterly failed to alert them to a God of judgment and therefore the fact would spring upon them all unready, when their expectancies were all geared to diametrically opposite outcomes. (Motyer 1984, 178)

Amos 8:4–6

“Hear this, you who trample the needy, to put an end to the humble of the land, saying, “When will the new moon be over, So that we may sell grain; And the Sabbath, so that we may open the wheat market, To make the ephah smaller and the shekel bigger, And to cheat with dishonest scales, So as to buy the helpless for money, And the needy for a pair of sandals, And that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?”” (NASB 2020)

The goal of the merchants, the ruling elite of Israel, was profit; and it did not matter who was stepped on or abused in the process.

When I was an undergraduate, the business school conducted a survey of current undergraduate business students. The question: would you continue to sell a product, one that was a serious cash cow, and market it aggressively, even if you knew without a doubt that it would kill 80% or more of those who used the product? The answer from a majority of the students – yes, they would. Cash was king. Ethics was introduced as a mandatory class the following year. But this reflected the heart of the business community, profit at all costs. This was also the heart of the business community of Israel.

They thought nothing of trampling the poor. There are certain things that everyone must buy in order to live, the ruling elites of the land made certain that the cost of those items inordinately damaged those who did not have the resources to pay for them. The King would enable the law of the land to provide for selling less of a product at a higher price. Like creating shortages of staples like wood for heating and cooking, wheat for making bread, and other staples.

The ruling elite would make decisions to intentionally cause shortages and raise prices, trampling the poor and increasing the number of people enslaved to them (Amos 2:6 – 7).

Fortunately, we no longer see that as a temptation for any government around the world today. I wish that were the case. The reality is, this is an old playbook which those who wish to obtain and retain political power have used way to frequently. We see it at play in the west even today. “History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new.” (Ecclesiastes 1:9, NLT)

The way that the merchants of Israel did business was in order to provide the benefit of the doubt to them and no one else.

When they did business, the merchants used inaccurate measurements so they could rob their customers. The Law demanded that they use accurate weights and measures (Lev. 19:35–36; Deut. 25:13–16), but they cared only for making as much money as possible. (Wiersbe 1996, 68-69)

How bad is this? We overhear them talking about how the worship of YAHWEH, if they even did worship Him, got in the way of business.

I remember moving into an area of the country that had in place, Blue Laws. I had moved there from the people's republic of California where there were no constraints on sales of much of anything. Blue Laws were laws that prohibited the selling of certain items on Sunday, or even mandating that certain types of business could not even open on Sunday. For example, all car dealerships must be closed one day a week, your choice of Saturday or Sunday.

In Israel, they had the Sabbath, a total shut down of business operations once a week. That was a problem for the business community.

Amos 8:5

“saying, “When will the new moon be over, So that we may sell grain; And the Sabbath, so that we may open the wheat market, To make the ephah smaller and the shekel bigger, And to cheat with dishonest scales,”” (NASB 2020)

New moons and the sabbath were supposed to be times set aside for the worship of YAHWEH and resting. It was one of the big ten for the nation that they must follow. What we see Amos calling our attention to is the widespread fraud and deception that existed at the time in Israel.

Yes, Israel was experiencing an economic boom, and they were doing so by ripping off their own people. I would also think that same business practice was going on with the surrounding nations as well. “They pursue their evil dealings with such zeal that they begrudge the time taken away from business—the celebration of the new moon once every four weeks, and the sabbath every seventh day. They are no longer capable of sharing in the joy of these festive occasions.” (Wolff 1977, 326)

Not only do they begrudge having to take a day off, but they also really begrudge not being able to swindle and deceive all of their customers. They decrease the size of the ephah. You think you are buying one ephah of grain but due to the measure being off and to the benefit of the seller, you may be paying for $\frac{3}{4}$ of ephah but think you have a full ephah. Today this is called shrinkflation.

They did not have exact coinage at that time, so they would weigh out the payment being made. Opportunity number two to take advantage of their customers. That scale also was off kilter.

In the excavations at Tirzah shops were found dating to the eighth century which had two sets of weights, one for buying and one for selling. (Mays 1969, 144)

Amos finally states it very clearly at the end of verse 5, “...to cheat with dishonest scales.” This temptation still exists today which is why certain measures and scales are regulated by government agencies.

But our culture has found a way around that. Keep the box the same size or even make it larger, put less in it, but charge the same price as before. Most do not bother to read the quantity measure on the box, but some are shrinking in terms of the quantity. Again, that is called shrinkflation and it is not a new idea.

You may not have noticed that your favorite beverage or snack now comes in a smaller package for the price, but now that you know, what will your response be the next time you see it for sale? “Who cares?” Probably not. “Wow, what a rip-off,” is more likely.

If you do choose to buy the product again, you’ll be doing so in spite of your feelings toward the company that makes it...Shrinkflation is a form of deception and is therefore dishonest. (Weinstein 2022)

The business practices of the ruling elite of Israel, which Amos is condemning, are also the practices of some business and merchants today. Here is the thing that Amos is pointing out to Israel, God remembers.

Those who are adversely impacted today are the same as in the time of Amos, those who can least afford it. Just a quick note, God sees, and God remembers. “Cheating and dishonesty in business is not a small sin, nor is it a sin excused of “necessity.” God sees it and takes account.” (Guzik 2000, Amos 8:4-8)

The urban merchants appear to have monopolized the market; they were able to sell to landless peasants at a high price. They had the resources for stockpiling grain, and in a time of poor crops were in a position to control the economy completely. This is the group whose avarice is dramatized in the quotation. Amos applies to this new situation the old norms of the covenant. What appeared to be progress and good business to the merchants was in his eyes disobedience to Yahweh. (Mays 1969, 143)

Amos 8:6

“So as to buy the helpless for money, And the needy for a pair of sandals, And that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?” (NASB 2020)

Shades of Amos 2. Once again, we see the goal of the merchants and the ruling elites is not only to take in as much cash as possible, but to also enslave their brothers and sisters for as little as possible.

And about the quality of the grain that they are selling. They are selling the refuse of the wheat as if it was top product. It isn't.

These enterprising individuals were crooks, "the merchants' crookedness was compounded by the fact that the wheat they did sell in shrunken quantities and for inflated prices was not always wheat itself but sometimes refuse (verse 6), i.e. wheat swept up from the ground or threshing floor and therefore mixed with foreign materials." Adulterated product in other words. (Hubbard 1989, 234)

Amos 8:7

"The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob, "Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds." (NASB 2020)

So much for God winking at sin. Time does not erase sin. This still holds for today as well. Here, "God swears and binds himself to judgment because 'of their action'. God will not pass over or forgive their sins any longer (8:2); he will never ever forget how they have brutally mistreated the poor." (Smith 1998, 343)

Let that sink in for a minute.

God will never forget how they mistreated the poor. How is our culture doing so far when compared to that of Israel?

Their only hope was to repent and return to the Lord.

Our only hope is for the church to repent and return to the Lord and for those who do not know Him, to come to their senses and accept what it is He did on the cross for them.

Romans 3:21–24

"But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."" (NLT)

Their only hope and our only hope is a total and complete reliance on the grace of God. For Israel though, the majority have rejected Him to the point that He is done talking to them. He is going to take action against those who have oppressed His people.

This oath that the Lord has sworn will show up as judgment.

Amos 8:8–10

"Because of this will the land not quake, And everyone who lives in it mourn? Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile, And it will be tossed about And subside like the Nile of Egypt. And it will come about on that day," declares the Lord GOD, "That I will make the sun go down at noon, And make the earth dark in broad daylight. Then I will turn your festivals into mourning, And all your songs into songs of mourning;

And I will put sackcloth around everyone's waist, And baldness on every head. And I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, And the end of it will be like a bitter day.” (NASB 2020)

Because of the injustice that is more than an incidental issue for the nation, because YAHWEH will not forget unconfessed sin, a rhetorical question is asked. “Yahweh, through the prophet, was saying in effect, ‘What else can anyone expect? What else is the reasonable response to such flagrant injustice but the shaking of the very land which you have corrupted?’” This is a prediction of an upcoming earthquake. (Hubbard 1989, 235)

Remember, they were looking forward to the Day of the Lord (Amos 5:18) when the bad guys get zapped. They are the bad guys who are going to get zapped.

Earthquakes - Earthquakes are usually associated with God's specific judgment against wicked people, particularly in the book of Revelation. They also function as signs from God, indicating the final day of divine judgment when God will bring his purposes in salvation and condemnation to an absolute climax. In this regard, the earthquake at the time of Jesus' death on the cross (Matt. 27:54) is particularly significant.

Earthquakes in the Old Testament era also function as powerful indications of God's presence and purpose, especially at times of divine intervention in the affairs of his people—both to demonstrate his displeasure and wrath at their sin and to remind them of his awesome power and holiness. (Renn 2005, 319)

Earthquakes speak to judgement. There is something else too we need to remember. He is warning of an impending event.

Amos 1:1

“The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he saw in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” (NASB 2020)

You want validation of his resume? You want to know if he truly is a prophet? For emphasis Amos refers to the annual flooding of the Nile River. This no longer occurs due to the Aswan High Dam, but until that was completed, this was an annual event. Anything in the way would be tossed around. The land would change too. The coming earthquake would be like that – life changing.

This earthquake will be a major—an earthquake that will cause great upheaval and lead to mourning. (Hoyt 2018, 295)

Amos appears to use this earthquake as a “proof” that his words about the captivity would be fulfilled. If the epicenter were in the Mediterranean Sea, one would expect a tsunami phenomenon (tidal waves). Interestingly enough, some of the rabbinic sources seem to refer to such a phenomenon.

Amos 5:8 and 9:6 state, “Who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the face of the earth” (Luria 1987: 259–62). Because Amos was able to predict this earthquake two years before it happened, something modern geologists cannot do, Dr. Austin has begun to call this earthquake “Amos’ earthquake”! (Franz 2012, 79)

The most vivid archaeological evidence for this earthquake was unearthed at Hazor, in the northern part of Israel, during the 1956 season. The area supervisor, the late Prof. Y. Aharoni, described the destruction to the walls of the houses. Some were cracked and others tilted or fell in a southerly or easterly direction (Yadin 1960: 24). (Franz 2012, 77)

Hazor



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

The pillars were found with a tilt to them, and archaeologists believe that this may have been the result of an earthquake. If so, this may correspond to the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1, which occurred around 760 BC.

Amos 8:9

““And it will come about on that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon, And make the earth dark in broad daylight.” (NASB 2020)

Amos is describing a solar eclipse. He is also describing events connected with the day of the Lord.

On June 15, 763 BC, a total eclipse of the sun took place that was experienced as a partial eclipse in Israel, but in Nineveh, it was a total eclipse. People talk. There is also the possibility it coincided with a visit from Jonah too, more about that in our study of Jonah.

Amos has now predicted two events which we know did occur and impacted life in Israel. A total eclipse of the sun, and a massive earthquake, evidence of which is still visible today. He could also be talking to the future Day of the Lord and what that looks like as well.

Amos describes two “acts of God” that will accompany God’s judgment for these social sins: an earthquake, which will simulate the undulating waters of the Nile River (cf. 1:1), and a solar eclipse (vv. 8–9). (Fee and Hubbard Jr. 2011, 463)

Amos 8:10

““Then I will turn your festivals into mourning, And all your songs into songs of mourning; And I will put sackcloth around everyone’s waist, And baldness on every head. And I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, And the end of it will be like a bitter day.” (NASB 2020)

Two events, stacked on top of each other, an earthquake with death and destruction and a solar eclipse, these two events has substantially changed the attitude in Israel surrounding their festivals and singing. Or at least it should.

Those two events caused pain in Israel. They haven’t seen anything yet. The people can recall the panic and fear surrounding the eclipse, the sudden destruction and death caused by the earthquake. What the Lord is now saying is those two events are nothing compared to what is coming.

“The sword of their God would bring unprecedented grief on the land as He turned their feasts into funerals, and all their glad singing into weeping laments (cf. v. 3). The loss of life would be so widespread that every family would grieve and every home would observe the rites of mourning.

God would cause all of them to wear sackcloth (a coarsely woven material, generally made of goats’ hair) against their bodies (Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 2 Kings 6:30; Job 16:15–16; Dan. 9:3) and shave their heads as a sign of sorrow (Job 1:20; Isa. 3:24; 15:2–3; Jer. 47:5; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18; 27:30–31; Micah 1:16). The intensity of their grief would be like the most tragic mourning of all—the mourning for an only son, whose death ended every hope for a family’s future (Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12:10).” (Sunukjian 1985, 1448)

Only a remnant would remain once this done. That remnant will be the one recovering the bodies which per verse 3, will be everywhere. So many that they will be burning them (Amos 6:9 – 11).

The remnant will be silent and subdued, a bitter day indeed. But it will get worse, Israel did not want to hear the word of the Lord, they ignored the prophets sent to them and Amaziah, on behalf of the King, advised Amos to cease doing what God had called him to do.

The people did not want to hear the word, so they will get what it is they wanted.

Amos 8:11–14

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; They will roam about to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it. On that day the beautiful virgins And the young men will faint from thirst. As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, And say, ‘As your god lives, Dan,’ And, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives,’ They will fall and not rise again.” (NASB 2020)

This is a promise from God that we see being appropriated even today.

God tells any church or any nation that, if they will not hear His Word after He has given it to them, He will withdraw it from them. I think we can see this happening in America. There has been a rejection of the Word of God. The churches have turned to liberalism, and the Word of God is no longer preached. There has come a famine of the Word of God. (McGee 1997, 720)

We live in a culture today that is in desperate need of revival, but many who should, no longer wish to hear the word of the Lord.

2 Timothy 4:1–5

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. **For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.** As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (ESV)

We have arrived at that place in the west. Our culture, as we have discussed before, does not have a Biblical world view but instead has created an aggregation of various beliefs that are “convenient.” “The new American Worldview Inventory 2022 study found that although two-thirds of the parents of pre-teens claim to be Christian (67%), only 2% possess a biblical worldview. The outcome is barely different among the two-thirds who claim to be Christian. A mere 4% of them possess a biblical worldview.” (Barna 2022)

It is becoming increasingly difficult today to find a church that has leadership and teaching adhering to a Biblical worldview and teaching the word.

The famine exists and it is real. Calvary Chapels and other non-denominational churches are at the tip of spear in terms of continuing to teach the word. Southern Baptist Churches also have high numbers when it comes to Biblical Worldview but the study from Barna drives us to prayer for the church today. For example, a few beliefs of pastors today by denomination.

Basic Beliefs of Pastors

Belief held by Pastor	Non-Denom	Evang	ML	Cath	Pent	Trad Black	Holiness
Human life is sacred	90%	62%	68%	34%	55%	40%	35%
Heaven only through Christ	71%	57%	62%	44%	64%	47%	49%
Success = obedience	67%	60%	53%	35%	45%	40%	37%
Reincarnation is a possibility	33%	33%	32%	47%	43%	70%	52%
Good works = earning heaven	21%	34%	30%	77%	47%	66%	55&%
Moral truth is up to the individual	15%	39%	37%	79%	54%	76%	62%
Bible is ambiguous on abortion	15%	26%	49%	61%	35%	51%	40%
Source: <i>American Worldview Inventory</i> , Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, N=1,000 Christian pastors, 2022.							

Here in Amos, the disaster for the nation of Israel will be Divine Silence. YAHWEH will no longer be heard, and the silence will be worse than what takes place to them physically. This impact is what Amos tells them about. “They who will not now hear His word, as proclaimed by the prophets, will then cherish the greatest longing for it. Such hunger and thirst will be awakened by the distress and affliction that will come upon them. The intensity of this desire is depicted in v. 12.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 212)

Amos 8:12–14

““People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; They will roam about to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it. On that day the beautiful virgins And the young men will faint from thirst. As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, And say, ‘As your god lives, Dan,’ And, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives,’ They will fall and not rise again.”” (NASB 2020)

The chapter ends with a vivid description of a people looking for a word from the Lord, and none being found. The Northern Kingdom will fall and not rise up again.

For us today, this is used as a warning by the Lord. If we allow other things to get in the way of our time with the Lord and our time in His word, we begin to get thirsty. That is His way of pointing out to us that we need a course correction.

Amos is working with that idea but he is talking to folks who are not interested in what he has to say.

When Scripture is no longer vibrant or important, when the impressions are no longer real or understandable, when spiritual truths are meaningless to you, the Lord in His love says, “That’s the first sign I’m giving you that something is wrong in your life. The path you’re on will eventually destroy you.” (Courson 2006, 799)

And again, just as Amos was calling or repentance from God’s people, he would give us the same message as well.

1 John 1:6–9

“If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**” (ESV)

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