

AMOS: GOD'S URGENT CALL TO REPENT

XI: God's Ultimate Punishment Of His Silence

(Amos 8:1-14)

I. Introduction

- A. When God needed a messenger to the Kingdom of Israel as it was at the height of its rebellion against Him, the Lord sent Amos, a layman from Judah, to go north to Israel to voice severe judgment against that nation.
- B. Israel had tired of hearing God's prophets warn of His judgment for sin, so in fitting punishment, God would be silent after the nation had been punished by an invasion when she desperately desired a word from Him.
- C. This ultimate punishment of divine silence is clarified in Amos 8:1-14, and we view it for our insight:

II. God's Ultimate Punishment Of His Silence, Amos 8:1-14.

- A. After receiving three visions from God, Amos saw a fourth vision, that of a basket of ripe fruit, Amos 8:1-2a.
- B. When God then asked Amos what he saw in the vision, and Amos said, "A basket of ripe [or summer or end-of-the-year] fruit," the Lord replied, "The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer," Amos 8:2b NIV. There is a rich play on words in this conversation that makes it powerful: "ripe fruit" translates the Hebrew word *qayis*, and "ripe time" renders the word *qes*. (B. K. C., O. T., p. 1447) When Amos thus told the Lord that he saw a basket of *qayis*, God replied, "*Qes* for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer."
- C. The Lord added that when Israel's national punishment fell, the songs in the temple would turn to wailing, there would be many, many bodies everywhere on the ground and there would be silence! (Amos 8:3)
- D. These two results of God's judgment – human grief and divine silence – are explained in Amos 8:4-14; Ibid.:
 1. Since Israel had expressed greed and committed many acts of dishonest gain, the Lord would punish the nation with great mourning by the punishment of a Gentile invasion of Israel, Amos 8:4-10:
 - a. God condemned the greedy who trampled the needy and destroyed the poor by asking when would the New Moon feast be over that they might sell grain and the Sabbath end that they might market wheat by skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals that they could not afford to pay back, selling even the dirty, soiled sweepings of the wheat mixed in with regular wheat, Amos 8:4-6 NIV; Ibid., p. 1431, 1448.
 - b. The Lord added that He would not forget any wicked thing His people did, that the land would indeed mourn, for God's judgment would rise like the annual flooding of the Nile in Egypt that, upon receding, left the landscape flattened, Amos 8:7-8.
 - c. Indeed, God would bring the people gloom, turning their religious feasts into mourning and their singing into weeping, and He would make them wear sackcloth and shave their heads in deep grief so that they would mourn as if they had lost an only son in bitterness, Amos 8:9-10.
 2. In addition, God would severely punish His people with His silence when they most longed for a message from Him, for they had long rejected His prophets' words that had warned them to repent, Amos 8:11-14:
 - a. God would send a famine through the land, one that did not involve a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord, Amos 8:11.
 - b. Men would stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east searching for a word from the Lord, but they would not find it, Amos 8:12.
 - c. In that day, even lovely young women and strong young men, those who were typically the most energetic of the people, would faint because of their thirst for a message from God, Amos 8:13; Ibid., p. 1449.
 - d. At that time, those in Israel who had perverted the worship of God by compromising it with the golden calf idols of Samaria and Dan or the image of Beesheba would "flock to the capital or traverse to the farthest points in a bravado appeal" for a word from the Lord, Amos 8:14a; Ibid. The problem with these efforts was that the people had mingled the worship of God with idols to their shame, so any imploring for the Lord's response that utilized these wicked forms and places of worship was utterly futile, Ibid.
 - e. In the end, those who were involved in this final, compromised effort to get a message from the Lord would fall, never to rise again, Amos 5:14b.

Lesson: Since Israel had long failed to heed God's warnings to repent, His punishment on her would fall, and along with that punishment when Israel would long for a message from the Lord, God would be deafeningly silent!

Application: Since those who accept God's Word are given more and those who reject it lose what even they have (Mark 4:24-25), may we value God's Word and obey it to avoid His punishment of a spiritual famine of His Word!