

The Summer Fruit – Amos 8

“National Sins Bring National Plagues”

Introduction – John Gill: In this chapter a fourth vision is delivered, the vision of a "basket of summer fruit"; signifying the destruction of the ten tribes of Israel, for which they were ripe, and which would quickly come upon them, #Am 8:1-3; the rich are reprov'd for their oppression of the poor, their covetousness and earthly mindedness, #Am 8:4-6; for which they are threatened with entire ruin, sudden calamities, and very mournful times, instead of light, joy, and gladness, #Am 8:7-10; and particularly with a famine of hearing the word of God, #Am 8:11,12; the consequence of which would be, a fainting of the young men and virgins for thirst, and the utter and irrecoverable ruin of all idolaters, #Am 8:13,14.

Note: This vision the Lord gave Amos of the "summer fruit" was approximately 30 years before the total annihilation of Israel at the hands of the Assyrian Empire. The destruction was so totally complete they are now called the "lost 10 tribes."

Verse	Expositors
1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.	<p>Gill: Not of the first ripe fruit, but of such as were gathered at the close of the summer, when autumn began. So the Targum, "the last of the summer fruit;" such as were fully ripe, and would not keep till winter; or, if kept, would rot; but must be eaten directly, denoting the people of Israel being ripe for destruction, and would be quickly devoured by their enemies; and that, as they had had a summer of prosperity, they would now have a sharp winter of adversity.</p> <p>Barnes: At harvest-time there is no more to be done for that crop. Good or bad, it has reached its end, and is cut down. So the harvest of Israel was come. The whole course of God's providences, mercies, chastenings, visitations, instructions, warnings, in spirations, were completed. "What could have been done more to My vineyard, God asks, {#Isa 5:4} that I have not done in it?" A maturity for destruction, in the sight of God.</p>

	<p>JFB: Israel is ripe for her last punishment, ending her national existence. As the fruit is plucked when ripe from the tree, so Israel from her land.</p>
<p>2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them anymore.</p>	<p>Gill: The Targum, renders it “final punishment was come,” the last destruction threatened them. I will not again pass by them anymore; pass by their offences, and forgive their sins; or pass by their persons, without taking notice of them, so as to afflict and punish them for their iniquities: or, "pass through them and more" now making an utter end of them;</p> <p>Calvin: The people had hitherto been warned by moderate punishments; but that as they had become hardened, extreme vengeance was nigh at hand, when God would no longer perform the part of a father or of a physician, but would utterly destroy those whom he had long borne with.</p> <p>MHC: It was autumn with them, and their year would quickly have its period in a dismal winter.</p>
<p>3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.</p>	<p>Gill: Not the songs sung by the Levites in the temple of Jerusalem, this prophecy respects the ten tribes only; but those in imitation of them, sung in the temple at Bethel, and other idol temples (where such filth has been going on – they rose up to play); that is, instead of these, there should be howlings for the calamities come upon them. So the Targum, “they shall howl, instead of a song, in their houses then;” particularly because of the slain in them. There shall be many dead bodies in every place; in all houses and palaces, in all towns and cities; and especially in Samaria, during the siege, and when taken, partly through the famine, and partly through the sword. They shall cast [them] forth with silence; they that have the care of burying the dead bodies shall either cast them out of the houses upon the bier or cart in which they are carried to the grave, or into the pit or grave</p>

	<p>without any funeral lamentation: or, "they shall cast them forth," and say, "be silent".</p> <p>JFB: they shall cast them forth with silence—It is an adverb, "silently." There shall be such great slaughter, so very many corpses, 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.</p> <p>Calvin: - There shall be none of the usual professional mourners (#Am 5:16), but the bodies will be cast out in silence.</p> <p>MHC: They shall bury them in the dead of the night, 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.</p>
<p>4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,</p>	<p>Gill: Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy - Like a man that pants after a draught of water when thirsty; and, when he has got it, greedily swallows it down at one gulp; so these rich men swallowed up the poor, their labours, gains, and profits, and persons too; got all into their own hands, and made them bondsmen and slaves to them; their riches were ill gotten; and suggesting, that their oppression of the needy was one cause of this destruction of the land: Even to make the poor of the land to fail; or "cease"to die for want of the necessaries of life, being obliged to such hard labour; so unmercifully used, their faces ground, and pinched with necessity; and so sadly paid for their work, that they could not live by it.</p> <p>Barnes: "to make the poor" or (better, as the Hebrew text,) "the meek of the land", those not poor only, but who, through poverty and affliction, are "poor in spirit."</p>

5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

Gill: "Saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn?" - The first day of every month, on which it was forbid to sell. They loathed the rest of the sabbath, because they had, thereon, to rest from their frauds. He instances "the new moons" and "sabbaths," because these, recurring weekly or monthly, were a regular hindrance to their covetousness. These carnal earthly minded men were weary of the sabbath, and wanted to have it over, that they might be selling their grain, and getting money, which they preferred to the worship of God. "And the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat" in the shops or markets, for sale: or "open wheat" the granaries and treasures of it, to be seen and sold. Now the sabbath, or seventh day of the week, as no servile work was to be done on it, so no trade or commerce was to be carried on on that day; which made it a long and wearisome one to worldly men, who wished it over, that they might be about their worldly business. "Making the ephah small" a dry measure, that held three scabs, or about a bushel, with which they measured their grain and their wheat; so that, besides the exorbitant price they required, they did not give due measure. "And the shekel great" - that is, the weight, or shekel stone, with which they weighed the money the poor gave for their grain and wheat; this was made heavier than it should be, and so of course the money weighed against it was too light, and the poor were obliged to make it up with more; and thus they cheated them, both in their measure, and in their money. "And falsifying the balances by deceit?" contrary to the law.

Barnes: The shekel was a fixed weight, by which, up to the time of the captivity, {#2Sa 18:12 1Ki 20:39 Jer 32:9} money was still weighed. They increased the price both ways, dishonestly and in hypocrisy, paring down the quantity which they sold, and obtaining more silver by fictitious weights; and weighing in uneven balances. All such dealings had been expressly forbidden by God; and that, as the condition of their remaining in the land which God

	<p>had given them. “Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.</p> <p>JFB: So greedy are they of unjust gain that they cannot spare a single day, however sacred, from pursuing it. They are strangers to God and enemies to themselves, who love market days better than sabbath days; and they who have lost piety will not long keep honesty.</p>
<p>6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?</p>	<p>Gill: “That we may buy the poor for silver” - Thus making them pay dear for their provisions, and using them in this fraudulent manner, by which they would not be able to support themselves and their families; they might purchase them and theirs for slaves, at so small a price as a piece of silver, or a single shekel, worth about half a crown; and this was their end and design in using them after this manner; see #Le 25:39,40. “And the needy for a pair of shoes” that is, for a mere trifle they would pervert justice; if two men came before them with a cause, and both poor; yet if one could but give a pair of shoes, or anything he could part with, though he could not give money; so mean and sordid were they, they would take it, and give the cause for him, however unjust it was. “[yea], and sell the refuse of the wheat” - not only did they sell the poor grain and wheat at a dear rate, and in scanty measure, but the worst of it, and such as was not fit to make bread of, only to be given to the cattle; and, by reducing the poor to extreme poverty.</p> <p>MHC: 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.</p>
<p>7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency</p>	<p>Gill: “The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob” - The God of Jacob and</p>

of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

his glory, the most excellent of all Jacob's enjoyments, and of whom he had reason to boast and glory; see #Am 6:8. "Surely I will never forget any of their works; God will NOT forget their wicked works, especially those now mentioned; God forgets when he forgives them, or suffers them to go unpunished; but though he had done so long, he would do so no more; on which they might depend, since he had not only said it, but swore to it.

MHC: 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.

Poole: The Lord; who changeth not, whose words and purposes are immutably true and stedfast, who hath often told you, that unless you repent he will punish for your sins, now he hath sworn it, and sends you word by me, that he hath in most solemn and irrevocable manner determined, published, and expressly declared that he will visit all your sins upon you.

8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

Gill: "Shall not the land tremble for this" - So great are the oppressions here exercised, that the very axle of the earth is even ready to crack under them. Amaziah, that hedge priest of Bethel, had said of our prophet, that the land was not able to bear all his words, #Am 7:10, but Amos more truly affirmeth, that the land trembled under their many and mighty sins, and could bear them no longer; the earthquake happened about this time, #Am 1:1, and it

	<p>was a just wonder, that the earth had not opened her wide mouth, and swallowed them all up quickly into hell. And every one mourn that dwelleth therein? <u>National sins bring national plagues.</u> “And it shall rise up wholly as a flood] i.e. the land shall rise up, shall seem to do so, when it is floated and flooded with water. Here then is threatened an overflowing scourge, a universal destruction covering the face of the country.</p>
<p>9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:</p>	<p>Gill: “And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God,” – that is when this deluge and desolation of the land shall be, now spoken of - that I will cause the sun to go down at noon. It doubtless designs the kingdom of Israel, their whole policy, civil and ecclesiastic, and the destruction of it; particularly their king, princes, and nobles, that should be in great adversity, and that suddenly and unexpectedly; it being a fine sunshine morning with them, and they in great prosperity, and yet by noon their sun would be set, and they in the utmost darkness and distress; and I will darken the earth in a clear day; the land of Israel, the people of it, the common people, who should have their share, in this calamity and affliction; and though it had been a clear day with them, and they promised themselves much and long felicity, yet on a sudden their light would be turned into darkness, and their joy into sadness and sorrow.</p> <p>Trapp: Here the Lord threateneth to encumber the land with horrible and mournful calamities, when it shall be least thought of. Earthquakes, inundations, sudden and dreadful darkness, are sure effects and signs of God’s heavy displeasure against men’s sins. I will cause the sun to go down at noon] A sudden change, as was at Sodom; the sun was fair risen upon it that very day that it was destroyed.</p>
<p>10 And I will turn your feasts into</p>	<p>Gill: “And I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins” - For a token of your great</p>

<p>mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.</p>	<p>grief, as the custom then was. “And baldness upon every head” - You shall pull out your hair for grief. “And I will make it as the mourning of an only son” - which is very bitter. Like the death of the first born in Egypt. And the end thereof as a bitter day]. There shall be great lamentation in that day.</p> <p>Barnes: “And the end thereof as a bitter day” - Most griefs have a rest or pause, or wear themselves out. “The end” of this should be like the beginning, nay, one concentrated grief, a whole day of bitter grief summed up in its close. It was to be no passing trouble, but one which should end in bitterness, an unending sorrow and destruction; image of the undying death in hell. There will be no hope anything will ever get better.</p>
<p>11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:</p>	<p>Gill: There will no more prophets nor prophecy among them, or any to tell how long their captivity should last, or when it would be better times with them.</p> <p>JFB: “I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” - a just retribution on those who now will not hear the Lord’s prophets, nay even try to drive them away, as Amaziah did (#Am 7:12); they shall look in vain, in their distress, for divine counsel, such as the prophets now offer (#Eze 7:26 Mic 3:7).</p> <p>Poole: A spiritual famine joined with a corporal famine; their bodies were pined with famine, destitute of bread and water; and this God sent too. But the famine of the soul is worse and more grievous.</p>
<p>12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.</p>	<p>Gill: “And shall not find it” - And why? they despised it when it was in their power; they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, with those lawyers, #Lu 7:30. He would have gathered them, but they would not be gathered; he would have purged them, but they would not be purged, #Eze</p>

	<p>24:13,14, they are therefore miserable by their own election; as Saul was, who slighted Samuel while he was alive, and would have been fully glad of his counsel when he was dead.</p>
<p>13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.</p>	<p>Gill: “In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst” - after the word, for want of that grain and wine, which make young men and maids cheerful, #Zec 9:17; but, being destitute of them, should be covered with sorrow, overwhelmed with grief, and ready to sink and die away.</p> <p>JFB: faint for thirst—namely, thirst for hearing the words of the Lord, being destitute of all other comfort. If even the young and strong faint, how much more the infirm (#Isa 40:30,31)!</p>
<p>14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.</p>	<p>Gill: They that swear by the sin of Samaria - The calf at Bethel, which was near Samaria, and which the Samaritans worshipped; and was set up by their kings, and the worship of it encouraged by their example, and which is called the calf of Samaria, #Ho 8:5,6; the making of it was the effect of sin, and the occasion of leading into it, and ought to have been had in detestation and abhorrence, as sin should; and yet by this the Israelites swore, as they had used to do by the living God; so setting up this idol on an equality with him: “and say, thy God, O Dan, liveth;” the other calf, which was set up in Dan; and to this they gave the epithet of the bring God, which only belonged to the God of Israel: “and the manner of Beersheba liveth” - "the way of Beersheba" the long journey or pilgrimage of those at Beersheba; who chose to go to Dan, rather than Bethel, to worship; imagining they showed greater devotion and religion, by going from one extreme part of the land to the other, for the sake of it. Dan was on the northern border of the land of Judea, about four miles from Paneas, as you go to Tyre {s}; and Beersheba was on the southern border of the land, twenty miles from Hebron {t}; and the distance of these two places was about one hundred and sixty miles {u}.</p>

And by this religious peregrination men swore; or rather by the God of Beersheba, as the Septuagint render it; though the phrase may only intend the religion of Beersheba, the manner of worship there, it being a place where idolatry was practised; see #Am 5:5. The Targum is, even they shall fall, and never rise up again; that is, these idolatrous persons, that swear by the idols in the above places, shall fall into calamity, ruin, and destruction, by and for their sins, and never recover out of it; which was fulfilled in the captivity of the ten tribes, from whence they have never returned to this day.

Calvin: They shall fall, and rise again no more; that is, their stroke shall be incurable, for God has hitherto employed moderate punishments, which could not heal them, as they had been obdurate in their evils. The Prophet then declares now that there would be no more any prospect of a remedy for them, and that the wound which God would inflict would be fatal, without any hope of being healed..