

# A Famine of Hearing

*Amos 8:11-14*

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**Introduction:** What was the response to the preaching of Amos against the nation of Israel? We read in 7:10-17 the response of Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, representing the king & the nation. He first speaks to the king & labels Amos as preaching a conspiracy against the nation (:10-11). He then accuses Amos in verses 12-13 of preaching for money & trespassing on the “sacred” precincts of Bethel. Amos then answers Amaziah in verses 14-17. Though he was not a prophet by training (“son of the prophets”), he was called of God to deliver his message to Israel (:14-15). Amos then proclaimed harsh words of judgment upon Amaziah (:16-17). “Amaziah had position, wealth, authority & reputation, but Amos had the Word of the Lord. Amaziah served the king of Israel & depended on him for support, but Amos served the King of kings & had no fear of what men could do to him” (Wiersbe).

After this confrontation with Amaziah, Amos received more messages from the Lord. It is the Lord encouraging & confirming Amos as His prophet. The message recorded in chapter 8 reveals 3 things: the end is coming (:1-3); why the end is coming (:4-6); & how the end is coming (:7-14) (Wiersbe). I call your attention tonight particularly to verses 11-14, but let’s consider them in their context.

## I. The end is coming (8:1-3)

- A. Israel is likened to “*summer*” fruit > it was at the end of the physical harvest.
- B. Israel is at the time of harvest judgment > see Jeremiah 8:20.

## II. Why the end is coming (:4-6)

- A. Israel has broken God’s law & covenant.
- B. Israel has failed to love God & God’s people.

## III. How the end is coming (:7-14)

[4 pictures of coming judgment]

- A. The picture of an earthquake (:8).
- B. The picture of darkness (:9):
  - 1. Possible eclipse? There was one in 763 B.C.
  - 2. Prophesied of the Day of the Lord; see Isaiah 13:9-10 & Joel 2:30-31.
- C. The picture of a funeral (:10):
  - 1. A joyful feast now turned to mourning.
  - 2. The mourning as for the death of an only son (loss of heir & family line).
- D. The picture of a famine (:11-14):
  - 1. It was not a famine of physical bread.
  - 2. It was a famine of spiritual nourishment >
    - a. Compare Matthew 4:4, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*” (& cf. Deuteronomy 8:3).
    - b. Consider: “In times of crisis, people turn to the Lord for some word of guidance or encouragement; but for Israel, no word would come” (Wiersbe).

Interpretation: “Here the prophet’s vision went far beyond the impending dispersal of the 10 northern tribes to the age-long wanderings of the Hebrew people. He saw them enduring a spiritual famine & his prophecy has come true. The famine began with the rabbis’ growing infatuation with tradition. In time, after the crime of Calvary & the Romans’ destruction of Jerusalem. The Jews substituted the Talmud for the Word of God, & for thousands of years they have tried to feed their souls on religious husks’ (Phillips).

“Now the Lord tells her (Israel) that, since she despised His Word through the prophets when it was brought to her, she was to know the cessation of all prophetic communication... How perverse is the nature of man: when he has the Word of God he despises it; when it is withheld he seeks it because of the severity of the chastisement” (Feinberg).

Application: “Let it at once be observed that the statement does not refer to a capricious withholding on the part of God of His words to men. It rather indicates a condition of man in which he is incapable of hearing, of discerning, of knowing. The Word of the Lord may still be uttered. Prophets may still be speaking. The writings may still be read, but the people do not hear the voices. A famine of hearing the Word of the Lord describes a condition of life in which the message from the unseen is not heard” (G. Campbell Morgan). Is this hearing with the ear but not with the heart? (cf. I Cor. 2:14-16).

Results of this famine? Restlessness (:12-13). Morgan suggests, “Every attempt to satisfy life without God has this issue. This is the reason of all the restless feverishness which is so evident today.”

Reasons for this famine? Either insincere worship or substitute worship:

Illustration of substitute worship from John Blanchard – church in CA & football from Pro Team. His conclusion: “The drive for greater attendances will always open the door for unworthy methods, but even when crowds of people have been persuaded to attend we need to remember the 20<sup>th</sup>-century British Methodist preacher W.E. Sangster’s warning: ‘A crowd is not an achievement; it is only an opportunity’. [Compare the gimmicks used in the 60’s & 70’s down South.]

Conclusion: How do we avoid a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord? We must be assured that God is speaking through His Word (Matthew 4:4). We must approach His Word with the attitude of Samuel in I Samuel 3:9-10; the attitude of the David in Psalm 119:18; &/or the attitude of Cornelius in Acts 10:33. Blanchard concludes: “In the planning & structuring of our church services & other events, in our music, in our special presentations, & especially in our preaching, we should be driven by one constant concern: *what would glorify God?*” He continues...

Consider tonight your assurance, your approach, & your attitude toward the Word of God.