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Summer fruit

Amos chapter 8 opens with Amos telling us God showed him a basket of summer fruit.

If we drop into this Old Testament book at this point with no background, it could seem to be the start of a beautiful, pleasant vision.

After all, we like summer fruit! Our church is in *Peachland* in the Okanagan with peaches, apples, cherries, grapes, pears, plumbs and apricots. We have seen the orchard across the street from where we live come into and out of blossoms, and look forward to the summer fruit.



But, of course, this vision God gave Amos must be considered in light of its setting to be correctly understood. Amos wrote the book to the northern kingdom of Israel around 755-760 B.C. It was a time of relative peace and prosperity, with the people being “carefree”, or “at ease” (6:1). His purpose was to sound a warning of God’s coming judgment not only on surrounding heathen nations, but on Israel, and also a warning to Judah.

“Listen to this message that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel — against the entire family I rescued from Egypt: ‘From among all the families on the earth, I have been intimate with you alone. That is why I must punish you for all your sins.’” (3:1-2)

Chapters 7-9 picture God’s judgment in five visions.

- The vision of a swarm of locusts (7:1-3).
- The vision of fire (7:4-6).
- The vision of a plumb line (7:7-9).
- The vision of a basket of fruit (8:1-14).
- The vision of God standing beside the altar (9:1-10).

There is a promise of God’s restoration at the end of the book (9:11-15), but the focus is on judgment of the people’s sin, of not following God. For example, 4:12, “Prepare to meet your God, Israel.”

Let's think about the *basket of summer fruit* for a few moments. The vision begins,

“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!’” (8:1-3)

Their time of carefree, at ease living will come to an end.

In the following verses, 4-6, God gives some examples of why He is bringing judgment on Israel.

- They were trampling down, destroying the poor.
- They loved to make money more than to worship God.
- They were cheating to gain wealth.
- They were enslaving the poor by their selfish, greedy practices.

The bulk of the vision, verses 7-14, describe some of the results, the devastation of God's judgment.

Israel on the surface could be likened to a nice, ripe, luscious basket of summer fruit to be enjoyed. But God said it was ready, it was ripe for judgment. Part of that, God tells us,

“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.” (11-12)

They will wander, seeking truth, but like sheep without a shepherd will be unable to find it. The northern kingdom fell, was taken from its land, never returning.

This is a clear, compelling reminder to stay close to God, to love Him and live by His truth. While believers are kept secure by Christ, we experience God's discipline when we are not faithful. That faithfulness is in all areas of life, not just our internal thoughts and motives, but also in how we think of, relate to, how we treat others, as we see repeatedly in Amos.

While not the point of the book, make sure that you remain in God's Word, true to Him, thinking of and relating to others so that you are a *summer basket of fruit* ready for God's blessing, not His discipline.

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