

A Study of the Minor Prophets
The Book of Amos ~ Chapter 8-9
Lesson 5

- I. Chapter 8:1-3: The text immediately proceeds to the fourth vision, where Amos is shown a basket of summer fruit. In dialogue similar to that in the third vision, the Lord explains the meaning of the vision, again alluding to Passover symbolism. Reinforcing the finality of the decision for judgment, the summer fruit (over-ripe fruit) symbolized that an end had come upon Israel; judgment was now inevitable (8:2). The vision ends in a poetic description of Israel's death; the songs of the temple that Israel rejoiced over would become wailing on that day, and the dead would be picked up in silence.
- II. Chapter 8:4-14: Amos begins a new unit, an announcement of judgment that bridges the gap between the fourth and fifth visions. Amos again calls out those who oppress the poor and "trample on the needy". Their hypocrisy is enhanced by social corruption. Their crimes in the marketplace were not limited to grain and wheat. In Amos 2:6, Israel is guilty of "selling the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals". Now Amos completes the cycle, describing the desire of these corrupt merchants: "We can buy the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals" (8:6). Those who were in the business of buying and selling marketplace goods were now in the business of buying and selling humans. In response, Yahweh proclaims his judgment in no uncertain terms: "I will never forget all their deeds" (v. 7b)! To enforce the surety of this promise, Yahweh swears it as an oath (v. 7a).
- III. Chapter 9: Here the Prophet takes a dramatic turn and talks about the hope of salvation. Aside from a hint of grace in chapter five (5:15), the words of Amos have been devoid of hope. In the concluding oracles, however, Amos turns from the inevitability of judgment to the hope of restoration. Beginning with a series of rhetorical questions (v. 7), Yahweh, in effect, asks Israel, "Have no other nations had 'exodus' experiences, have no other nations been planted in lands that were not theirs?" The answer is "of course not"—Israel should know that just as God has planted her in the land, he could surely uproot her. Yet this was not the end of Israel, nor the end of the point being made; although Israel was not unique in her conquest of the land, she was unique in the covenant God had made with her. Amos proclaims that one day the "House of David" will be restored. Amos also talks about hope in the restoration of the land.
- IV. Theological message of Amos: The message of Amos centers on the accusation of sin and subsequent announcements of judgment. Although rich in tone and imagery, the message of Amos is consistent. Israel's transgressions constitute a grave inhumanity on par with that of the nations. Amos's message was a sharp slap in the face to Israel. She who expected the Day of the Lord as a day of blessing would soon discover that it would come as a day of curses and captivity. Theologically, one motif stands above the rest—fear and reverence at the awesome name of Yahweh. The theology of Amos exalts the power and name of Yahweh in his judgments and salvation.