International Bible Lessons Commentary
Amos 8:1-14
New International Version

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, June 28, 2015

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The International Bible Lesson (Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series) for Sunday, June 28, 2015, is from Amos 8:1-14. Please Note: Some churches will only study Amos 8:1-6, 9-10. Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse International Bible Lesson Commentary. Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further discusses Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the International Bible Lessons Commentary website along with the International Bible Lesson that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the International Bible Lesson Forum.

International Bible Lesson Commentary
Amos 8:1-14

(Amos 8:1) This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: a basket of ripe fruit.

In addition to the Holy Spirit giving Amos words to speak, God showed visions to Amos and talked to him about their meaning. Both Joseph and Daniel interpreted the dreams and visions of others with the help of God, and God helped Amos interpret the dreams or visions that God gave him. A basket of summer fruit would be the produce right before the fall season.

(Amos 8:2) “What do you see, Amos?” he asked. “A basket of ripe fruit,” I answered. Then the LORD said to me, “The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.

God began His dialogues with Amos by asking Amos a question that verified he had seen the vision correctly, and he had. Summer fruit is ripe fruit that is picked and ready to be eaten; in the basket it was ready to be served, just as justice was ready to be served by God in Israel. For many seasons, or for many years actually, God had warned the Kingdom of Israel to repent, but the nation’s leaders had refused to repent and lead the
nation to repent; therefore, the time had finally come for God to punish the nation as God had threatened: God keeps all of His promises.

(Amos 8:3) “In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!”

As God had said through Amos earlier, God hated their songs because their hearts were far from Him and they were often songs of praise to their idols. When God’s punishment came, their songs would turn to wailings, not just the professional wailings of paid mourners, but real wailings at the death of a multitude of people. Paid mourners would die along with their families, and the dead bodies of a multitude would be cast out of their homes and their cities. “Be silent” or do not complain, O Israel, for you deserve your just punishment.

(Amos 8:4) Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land,

God addressed the wicked directly through His prophet Amos. Once again, God gave them the reasons He would punish them. They trampled on the needy, and God would send the Assyrian army to trample on them (though Amos did not name the Assyrian army by name, God used the Assyrian army to crush the nation in 722 BC). They ruined the poor when they stole from them and enslaved them, and the Assyrians would enslave them in exile if they survived their battles with and defeat by the Assyrian army.

(Amos 8:5) saying, “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?”—skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales,

When the wicked went to worship, because their hearts were far from God so were their thoughts. They could hardly wait for worship to finish so they could get back to their evil businesses, to increasing their wicked wealth, because their hearts and thoughts were set on power and wealth, and not on God. They also spent time in worship plotting how they could lie to and cheat others. In worship, they did the opposite of love God and learn how to love others as God commanded.

(Amos 8:6) buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

During worship, they impatiently waited to cheat others, and they often planned how to do so during their religious festivals. Perhaps they plotted with other wicked people as they ate their festal meals together. They used bribes and plotted how to buy their fellow Israelites in order to enslave them. They plotted how to steal the land when a farmer
became needy. They mixed the refuse of threshing with the wheat to cheat the buyer when he came to buy good wheat by weight and measure.

(Amos 8:7) The LORD has sworn by himself, the Pride of Jacob: “I will never forget anything they have done.

The LORD had sworn by himself when He spoke to Amos, because He could swear by no one and nothing greater than himself. “The pride of Jacob” was the LORD himself. Jacob (whose name was later changed to Israel) and the Israelites as a kingdom had taken pride in the fact that God had called them to be His people and had blessed them for centuries. Because God had blessed them continually and because they had turned from God to abuse others, God would not forget their immoral and unjust deeds but would punish them.

(Amos 8:8) “Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt.

God described an earthquake to Amos. The land would rise and fall and be tossed about like the water in the Nile River. There may have been more earthquakes than the one reported in Amos 1:1. Everyone would mourn when their homes and protective city walls were demolished by an earthquake, similar to the fall of Jericho when the Hebrews entered the Promised Land. Through earthquakes and other means, God would do battle with the Assyrian army He sent to destroy Samaria and to punish the unrepentant Israelites.

(Amos 8:9) “In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.

In the Kingdom of Israel, God would bring “the day of the LORD” in 722 BC when the Assyrians looted and burned the city. The smoke and dust from their homes being burned and shattered to bits would have blotted out the sun on the day of the LORD in their time as Amos foretold. Darkness came over the whole land from noon to 3 o’clock when the religious leaders crucified Jesus (Matthew 27:45). When Jesus talked about His coming again, He said “the sun will be darkened” (Matthew 24:29).

(2 Kings 8:21) I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.

Amos declared what God would do in the future to the Kingdom of Israel because in spite of repeated warnings the nation would not repent. Amos emphasized that mourning would spread throughout the land, and the official sign of mourning would be
putting on sackcloth and the shaving of heads, which the Assyrian army may also have
done to them to humiliate the Israelites when they stole their fine clothing as booty and
shaved their beards in ridicule (see 2 Samuel 10:4-5 for an example of this type of
humiliation). To lose an only son is for a person or family to lose all hope for the future.

(Amos 8:11) “The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “when I
will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for
water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.

In addition to the famine caused by war, pestilence, and drought, the Israelites would
suffer a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. The political and religious leaders
had silenced the true prophets of the LORD. Amaziah silenced Amos to the best of his
ability (Amos 7:10-17). Therefore, the Israelites brought the famine on themselves, and
as just judgment God decided He would send them no more true prophets of God. As
punishment, they would hear no words of comfort from God’s prophets for they had
rejected them and God.

(Amos 8:12) People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to
east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.

Because they did not want to hear the words of the LORD, there would come a time
when they would not be able to find anyone to speak the words of the LORD no matter
where they went. They refused to listen when God sent them prophets who called them
to repent and obey the Lord; instead they persecuted the true prophets of God. In a time
of punishment, they would seek words of comfort and hope from the LORD, but God
had no words of hope for the unrepentant and rebellious because of their wicked hearts
and thoughts.

(Amos 8:13) “In that day the lovely young women and strong young men
will faint because of thirst.

Many of the beautiful young people were beautiful because of the wealth acquired
through wickedness, perhaps the wickedness of their parents. They had no concern, and
were not trained to have a true concern, for God and His commands. Therefore,
whatever their thirst, they would faint physically and spiritually on the day of the LORD.

(Amos 8:14) Those who swear by the sin of Samaria—who say, ‘As surely as
your god lives, Dan,’ or, ‘As surely as the god of Beersheba lives’—they will
fall, never to rise again.”

Many of the Israelites swore or made promises using the names of their false gods to
guarantee their truthfulness and sincerity in making their promises and to seal their
solemn obligations to others. They had no intention of keeping their promises, and their
mute idols would neither condemn or commend them or help them in their
deceitfulness. They worshiped idols in the places their leaders had created for them, and they and their idols would fall “never to rise again.” Their idols could not save them, and God would punish them with death and exile using their enemies.

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Name some of the ways God communicated with Amos and the Kingdom of Israel.

2. What kind of vision did God give Amos when He said that the end has come upon His people?

3. Why would the songs of the temple become wailings?

4. Why did many Israelites look forward to the new moon to be over?

5. What kind of famine did Amos say God would send upon Israel? Why do you think God said He would do that and how do you think would He do it?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson.*

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