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Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reminds us that God Will Not Delay Justice. The study's aim is to point out that while God does not judge evil instantly, He will in due time. The study's application is to set our hearts on patiently waiting for God's judgment in His time and in His way.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Amos 8:2

And He said, "Amos, what do you see?" So I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the Lord said to me: "The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The sovereign LORD appeared a fourth time to Amos, this time asking him to identify an object. When Amos answered that it was a basket of ripe fruit... the LORD then replied, The time is ripe (lit., “The end has come”) for My people Israel. The meaning of the Lord’s reply lay in the similar sound and significance of the words “ripe fruit” (v. 1) and “time is ripe” (v. 2). “Ripe fruit” (qāyîs) was “summer fruit” or “end-of-the-year fruit”—the last fruit of the season, fully ripened, with a short edible life. “Ripe time” (qēṣ) was “end time” or “cutting time”—the “reaping time” of death. Israel was ripe for a dreadful harvest; her end had come. There would be no stay of execution, no last-minute reprieve. The Lord would spare them no longer. On the day (cf. vv. 9, 13) when God would “end” Israel’s life (cf. 5:2-3; 6:9-10), the songs in the temple would turn to wailing (cf. 8:10; 5:16-17). Hymns of joy and trust in the Lord would turn to howling chants of lamentation and disbelief at what His hand had done to them. The cause of their grief would be the many, many dead bodies lying everywhere. So great would be the slaughter that there would not be enough people or places to bury the dead. Innumerable corpses would lie on the ground, to be eaten by dogs and birds, or to become fertilizing dung for the fields (1 Kings 14:11; Jer. 8:2; 9:22; 16:4). When the weary mourners would finally cease their weeping, when they would lift wet eyes and questioning faces to seek a reason for the sorrow that engulfed them, they would find only silence. No answer would come. God would have no more words to say.

These two results of God’s judgment—human grief and divine silence—are described more fully in verses 4-14. Because of their greed and dishonest practices, God would cause an unprecedented mourning in the land. Israel’s businessmen single-mindedly pursued a profit, and did not care that they were trampling the needy and doing away with the poor of the land (cf. 2:6-7; 5:11). Preoccupied with making money, the businessmen begrudged the interruptions caused by the monthly feast of the New Moon and the weekly observance of the Sabbath. They impatiently fidgeted till these days of rest and worship (Ex. 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:14-17; 34:21; Num. 28:11-15; 2 Kings 4:23; Isa. 1:13-14; Ezek. 46:1-6; Hosea 2:11) were over so that they could resume their aggressive dealings. They cunningly found ways to add to their profits—skimping the standard measure so that customers got less than they paid for, boosting the price by substituting heavier shekel-weights so that customers were overcharged, and cheating with dishonest scales by tampering with the cross beam of the balances. Not content with these covenant violations (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; cf. Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23; Hosea 12:7; Micah 6:10-11), they compounded their sin by deceptively selling an inferior product—the sweepings of soiled and trampled grain mixed and packaged with the clean pure wheat. They cared nothing about human suffering or the inability of the poor to pay their prices. Instead, they forced the needy into slavery in exchange for insignificant sums. The LORD, however, had sworn by Himself (unlike its use in 6:8, the Pride of Jacob occurs here as a title for God; cf. 1 Sam. 15:29). God swore that He would never forget any of the evil things they had done. Because of their heartless greed and dishonesty, because of these covenant violations, their Warrior-God would advance against them and the land would tremble under His steps. The quaking tremors would be so violent that the whole land would rise... and then sink like the annual swelling and

God Will Not Delay Justice
receding of the Nile... the river of Egypt. The shattered ruins of farms and buildings would cause all who lived in the wake of His path to weep and to mourn. That day of punishment would be a day of darkness, for the sovereign LORD would bring about eclipses: the sun would go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. Eclipses in 784 B.C. and 763 B.C. would have enabled Amos’ hearers to imagine the eerie fear and panic of such a time. Then in the midst of earthquake (8:8) and darkness the avenging Lord would begin His decimation of the people (cf. 5:2-3; 6:9-10; 8:3). The sword of their God would bring unprecedented grief on the land as He turned their feasts into funerals, and all their glad singing into weeping laments (cf. v. 3). The loss of life would be so widespread that every family would grieve and every home would observe the rites of mourning. God would cause all of them to wear sackcloth (a coarsely woven material, generally made of goats’ hair) against their bodies (Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 2 Kings 6:30; Job 16:15-16; Dan. 9:3) and shave their heads as a sign of sorrow (Job 1:20; Isa. 3:24; 15:2-3; Jer. 47:5; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18; 27:30-31; Micah 1:16). The intensity of their grief would be like the most tragic mourning of all—the mourning for an only son, whose death ended every hope for a family’s future (Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12:10). The end of that day would not be the end of their grief. Instead, its culmination would usher in another bitter day—the mourners’ own “bitter day” of death. (For the day of one’s death as a “bitter day”; cf. 1 Sam. 15:32; Job 21:25; Ecc. 7:26.) After a day of mourning for others, the mourners themselves would die.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

An unemployed man was able to find a job, but he needed a car to fulfill travel needs that were part of the new employment. One dealer seemed eager to help, and the payments proposed were reasonable. Not mentioned verbally was the fact that the payments were to be made semimonthly, and the buyer discovered this fact too late. Making two payments per month was impossible for the purchaser if he were also to provide basic necessities for his family. The results were that he had to return the car, he lost his new job, and he forfeited his down payment. Many Old Testament issues and practices seem far removed from our twenty-first-century experience, but not that of exploitation of others. It still happens—often. Acts of greedy exploitation make themselves known by both individuals and corporations. Such acts are committed by the rich, the poor, and those in between; the victims are in the same categories. It is all too easy to wring our hands and develop a mere “Isn’t it awful!” outlook when we see exploitation. Today’s lesson helps us move beyond that.

The opening words of the book of Amos reveal only a few facts about him. No ancestors are named, but the prophet stated his residence to be Tekoa, a town about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. Tekoa’s elevation of 2,280 feet above sea level is a factor regarding one of his three occupations. Amos 1:1 states that he was a shepherd, but it is not the usual Hebrew word for that occupation. The word indicates that he cared for a special type of sheep, smaller animals that produced excellent wool. There is evidence that this type of wool was desired by royalty. Mesha, a king of Moab, paid his annual tax or tribute to the kings of Israel with wool from such sheep (2 Kings 3:4). The dry season each summer caused Amos to move his sheep west, toward the Mediterranean Sea, in order to have pasture for his flocks in the lower regions. This relates to his second occupation involving sycamore trees, which produce figs (Amos 7:14). Such trees grow only in lower areas. Amos may have been a seasonal worker who gathered the figs; or he may have worked to cut, pierce, or pinch the ends of the figs, which hastened ripening, added to the sweetness, and allowed an insect in it to escape. These figs grew in “the western foothills” of Judah (1 Chronicles 27:28), but also in Egypt and southern Africa. Amos 7:14 also mentions his career as “shepherd,” but a different word is used from that translated the same way in Amos 1:1. The word in 7:14 may refer to caring for cattle or oxen. A similar word is used for the oxen cited in 6:12, so it is sometimes assumed that Amos cared for such animals as well as sheep. Opinions are divided on whether Amos owned these enterprises, or if he scrambled among all three as a laborer to make a living. By going annually to the west where a major trade route existed, he had opportunities to talk with travelers and other shepherds, thereby learning about the conditions in other nations. This enhanced his ability to speak authoritatively about them.
A suggested outline of the book of Amos is that of three major sections: chapters 1, 2; chapters 3-6; and chapters 7-9. The first section features eight messages to eight nations and cities. The second section has five sermons that announce God’s pending judgments on Israel; these are marked by the phrases “Hear this word” (Amos 3:1; 4:1; 5:1) and “Woe” (5:18; 6:1). The third section contains five scenes of divine revelation to Amos (7:1-3; 7:4-6; 7:7-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-4); we might call these visions, although that specific word is not used. In addition, there is a dramatic, historical interlude in the last part of chapter 7. Each of the first three visions features a promise of destruction for Israel. The first vision is that of an invasion of locusts; Amos besought God that this would not happen, and God relented. The second vision was that of a ravaging fire; again Amos prayed that it might not come to pass, and the judgment was averted. The third vision was that of testing Israel against God’s plumb line, and Amos was convinced: God’s judgment was just. The destruction of Israel would reach to the palaces and the sanctuaries of Israel. It was at that point in Amos’s prophesying that “Amaziah the priest of Bethel” told him to shut up and go home, back to Judah (Amos 7:10, 12, 13). In response, Amos protested that he was not a prophet in any professional way. He then listed the ways he made a living (see above). Amos also responded with prophecies about Amaziah: he would die in a foreign land, his children would die by the sword, and his wife would become a prostitute in order to survive (Amos 7:14-17). Whether staying in Israel or leaving for Judah, Amos had two visions yet to be received. Today’s lesson takes us to the first of those remaining two.

**Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

**God’s Season for Judgment (Amos 8:1-3)**

1 Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit.
2 And He said, "Amos, what do you see?" So I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the Lord said to me: "The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.
3 And the songs of the temple Shall be wailing in that day," Says the Lord God -- "Many dead bodies everywhere, They shall be thrown out in silence."

**A time of gathering (1-2)**

*A gathering of the elect (Matt 24:31)*

31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

*A gathering that will bring all the scattered children of God together (John 11:51-52)*

51 He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, 52 and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

*A gathering of the redeemed from all the earth (Ps 107:2-3)*

2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say this — those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, 3 those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

*A gathering so that we may give thanks, praise and worship to God (Ps 106:47)*

47 Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.
A gathering together of the people God created and are called by His Name (Isa 43:6-9)

6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth — 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." 8 Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. 9 All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble. Which of them foretold this and proclaimed to us the former things? Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right, so that others may hear and say, "It is true."

An end of time (2)

A time of judgment (Eccl 3:17)

17 I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed."

A time that has been appointed by God (Dan 11:35)

35 Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

A time when Jesus hands over His kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24-25)

24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

A time that God controls (Isa 46:10)

10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

A time that is nearer than we think (Rom 13:11-12)

11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

A time of suffering, death and silence (3)

Suffering because of not returning to God (Amos 4:10)

10 "I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to me," declares the Lord.

Death accomplished by God's angels (Isa 37:36)

36 Then the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning — there were all the dead bodies!

Silence because of the power and holiness of God (Lev 10:1-3)

1 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 3 Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke of when he said: "Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored."" Aaron remained silent.
God’s Reason for Judgment (Amos 8:4-6)

4 Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail,
5 Saying: "When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit,
6 That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of sandals-- Even sell the bad wheat?"

Judgment for mistreatment of the needy and poor (4)

*Mistreatment by denying rights (Eccl 5:8)*
8 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still.

*Mistreatment by oppressing the poor (Luke 4:18)*
18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,

*Mistreatment by not defending the rights of the weak and poor (Ps 82:3)*
3 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.

*Mistreatment by rejoicing in the misfortune of the poor (Job 31:29-30)*
29 "If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him— 30 I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against his life—

Judgment for dishonoring the time for rest (5)

*A Sabbath time of rest (Exod 20:9-10)*
9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.

*A time of rest from work (Neh 13:15-18)*
15 In those days I saw men in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. 16 Men from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah. 17 I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this wicked thing you are doing — desecrating the Sabbath day?

*A time of rest that can be entered into (Heb 4:3-6)*
3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'” And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.” 5 And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest.” 6 It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience.
Judgment for greed (6)

Greed that manifests itself through property gained using fraud (Mic 2:2)

2 They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.

Greed that manifests itself through illegal possession (1 Kings 21:16-19)

16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard. 17 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: 18 "Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. 19 Say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood — yes, yours!''

Greed that manifests itself through discontent with current possessions (Eccl 4:8)

8 There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless — a miserable business!

God's Day for Judgment (Amos 8:9-10)

9 "And it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord God, "That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight; 10 I will turn your feasts into mourning, And all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, And baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, And its end like a bitter day.

A day of darkness (9)

Darkness of the land (Isa 5:30)

30 In that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks at the land, he will see darkness and distress; even the light will be darkened by the clouds.

Darkness of wrath (Zeph 1:14-15)

14 "The great day of the Lord is near — near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. 15 That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.

Darkness before the coming of the day of the Lord (Joel 2:31)

31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

A day of mourning (10)

Mourning because of not being prepared (Matt 22:11-13)

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'
Mourning over sin (2 Cor 7:10-11)

10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

Mourning over acceptance of sin (1 Cor 5:2)

2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from David Guzik

A. Rotting and corruption in Israel.

1. (1-3) The basket of summer fruit.

Thus the Lord GOD showed me: behold, a basket of summer fruit. And He said, Amos, what do you see? So I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then the LORD said to me: The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore. And the songs of the temple shall be wailing in that day, says the Lord GOD; Many dead bodies everywhere, they shall be thrown out in silence.

   a. A basket of summer fruit: This was fruit that was ripe, and would not keep long. Just as the time is short for summer fruit, so the time is short for Israel.

      i. In the original Hebrew, the prophets point is far more emphatic because he uses a play on words that difficult to communicate in English. The overt connection between the vision and Israel's fate was in the word-play based on the similar sounds [between summer and end] . . . The point of this vision, then, is the finality of judgment. (Hubbard)

      ii. So when Amos replies to the Lord that he sees a basket of ripe qayis, God replied Qes! An end is to come upon Israel. (Boice)

   b. The end has come upon My people Israel . . . Many dead bodies everywhere, they shall be thrown out in silence: Ripe fruit is close to being thrown out, and a similar judgment will come upon rotten Israel.

2. (4-6) Dishonesty and cheating the poor in Israel.

Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land fail, saying: When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the scales by deceit, that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals; even sell the bad wheat?

   a. Who swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land fail: Amos returns to his familiar theme of social justice, decrying those in Israel who make their money from the unjust treatment of the poor and vulnerable.

   b. When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? Israel kept the New Moon and Sabbath, but only outwardly. Inside, they rejected these special days appointed by God and they couldn't wait until they were over.
c. **Making the ephah small and the shekel large:** There was chronic corruption and cheating in the business world, and God saw it and was angry. When they sold wheat (sometimes bad wheat), they used a small measure. When they bought or gave change, they used a large measure for the shekel.

i. Cheating and dishonesty in business is not a small sin, nor is it a sin excused of necessity. God sees it and takes account.

**B. How God will judge Israel.**

1. (7-8) The certainty of judgment.

   The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall the land not tremble for this, and everyone mourn who dwells in it? All of it shall swell like the River, heave and subside like the River of Egypt.

   a. **Surely I will never forget any of their works:** This reminds us that time can never erase sin. We often feel that if we or if others forget the sins of our youth, then God must forget about them also, but that is not the case. Only the atoning work of Jesus can cover sin, not time.

      i. We can make a contrast between Amos 8:7 and Hebrews 6:10: *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.* God does not forget the good works of His people, and He does not forget the evil works of those who reject Him.

   b. **All of it shall swell like the River, heave and subside like the River of Egypt:** Amos knew that the Nile River rose and fell regularly. He pictures the land and people of Israel so shaken by judgment that they heave and subside like the rising and receding of the Nile River.

2. (9-10) The extent of judgment.

   And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord GOD, That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight; I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day.

   a. **That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight:** Because of the reference to celestial catastrophe, many think Amos is now looking forward to the circumstances surrounding the ultimate day of the LORD.

      i. Though, some think Amos is only referring to an eclipse. Two such eclipses have been calculated to have occurred in Amos lifetime: one in 784 B.C., the other in 763 B.C. (Hubbard)

   b. **I will make it like mourning for an only son:** Amos tries to capture the depth of the mourning with this metaphor. We also remember the connection to Zechariah 12:10, which describes repentant Israel’s humble return to the Messiah in the last days: *And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*

3. (11-14) The famine of hearing the Word of God.

   Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord GOD, That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it. In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst. Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, who say, As your god lives, O Dan! And, As the way of Beersheba lives! They shall fall and never rise again.
a. I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: Most people think the worst kind of famine is a famine of bread, but Amos reminds us that the worst kind of famine is a famine . . . of hearing the words of the LORD.

i. Notice carefully the nature of this famine. It is not a lack of God's Word, but a famine . . . of hearing the words of the LORD. The condition described is that of being deaf to the words of Jehovah, not able to hear them. It is not a case of God withholding His revelation; but of people being in such a state that they do not see it, do not hear the words. (Morgan)

ii. It is true that there may come times where there is a famine of God's Word, either through neglect or unfaithfulness. But that isn't what Amos means here. This is a problem with the hearer, not with the preacher. The preacher may have his own problems and the hearer as well may have his.

iii. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 describes the right way to hear the Word of God: When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

iv. We may question ourselves, whether we feed enough on God's Word. If we would grow strong, we must feed, not on condiments and sweetmeats, not on tit-bits and scraps, not on versicles and pious sentences; but on the strong meat of the Word, on the doctrines, histories, types of Scripture. Oh for more hunger and thirst for these! (Meyer)

v. Since it is true that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4), then it is true that a famine of hearing Gods Word is ultimately worse than a famine of bread.

b. They shall wander . . . seeking the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it: When we push away Gods Word for a long time, we may find ourselves in the place were we shall not find it even if we wanted to.

i. We remember that the ability to hear Gods Word and benefit by it is a gift from God, and a gift not to be despised.

ii. Jesus alluded to this principle in the Parable of the Soils and the Sower: Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. (Mark 4:24-25) When we seek God, it generally becomes easier to find Him. When we push away God, it generally becomes more difficult to hear and receive His Word.

c. Those who swear by the sin of Samaria . . . shall fall and never rise again: God promises that the idolaters of Israel shall face judgment, and lasting judgment.

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Destruction! Desolation! Doom! These concepts dominate the book of Amos. Would his preaching have produced the desired result of repentance if he had toned down the harshness of his message? That is extremely doubtful, for nothing was going to change the people at that point. That, however, did not mean that there was no room for a positive aspect to the message. Most prophets blended messages of doom and hope. Amos, for his part, offered a very positive outcome in Amos 9:11-15. Two of these positive verses are cited by James at the famous conference in Jerusalem (Acts 15:16, 17). James made the point that God was concerned that Gentiles be included for honoring his name and that the prophets had foretold that that was to happen.
God loves the world, and the prophets revealed that even Gentiles would be included in God’s plan. God wants to forget sins! This is affirmed in Isaiah 43:25, a verse that has been termed the high point of grace in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 31:34 also affirms as much. That verse is a part of the promise of the new covenant; included in Hebrews 8:8-12, it forms part of the longest quotation of the Old Testament in the New. The outcomes of the current ungodly trends and megatrends are important to contemplate. But the Christian must not become so enamored with how bad things are (or can be) that he or she forgets the glorious blessings that God has planned for his people. Thus while we acknowledge the reality of sin, we also accentuate the positive of forgiveness that is available in Christ alone. The church must determine to do what it can to care for the needy, but the spiritual dimensions concerning sin, righteousness, and forgiveness must be shared as primary. May it be so until Christ returns!

**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

1. God's patience should be appreciated, not presumed upon (Amos 8:1-2)
2. The terrible judgment that awaits sinners indicates how offensive sin is to our holy God (vs. 3)
3. How we treat the needy reveals our true character (vs. 4)
4. Religious observance that has no impact on one's daily life is abhorrent to God (vss. 5-6)
5. Sinful actions inevitably draw the attention and the just judgment of God (vs. 9)
6. We should not think that present enjoyment indicates God's approval (vs. 10)