

## Amos Part 2 “The Famine of the Word” Amos 8:9-15

As I begin Part 2 from the Minor Prophet Amos this week, I have discovered that starting with Chapter 7, God inspired Amos to preach on five visions of judgment. We could spend weeks with the sermons of Amos; however, you all get the point that the prophecy of Amos warns of a coming judgment. In Chapter 7, there are three judgments. One a swarm of locusts, another of fire, and the last one a plumb line. Plumb Line? When I read those words, my curiosity leaped into overdrive. More on the subject of plumb line in the coming weeks. Today, we will dive into the judgment and warning on the horizon in chapter eight of Amos; “The famine of the word.”

Let’s pray

Lord, inspire us to prepare for worship, both in this age and by week as we meet, and in the age to come when we stand before You, either prepared or unprepared. Please help us to feel the biblical call to worship, seeing the reasons to join heaven in worshipping you before the last grand celebration of triumph. Help me, Lord, to speak in honor and truth. I pray that my lips' words and my heart's meditation please you today. Amen.

Outside observers might think Christians in today’s culture have more clout and vitality than ever. Despite a secular culture hostile to Biblical truth, this nation is dotted coast to coast with megachurches drawing thousands to arena-like settings each week. Then, we have social media sites drawing millions of people far away from the calling of fellowship with fellow believers. However, the world has had far more influence on the church than vice-versa because today’s evangelical churches borrow fads absorbing opinions from popular culture. One popular book for pastors suggests that in the current political climate, the **worst** possible way to begin a sermon is to tell people to open their Bibles. Really? One lead pastor in one of the largest churches in America recently suggested that Christians should stop saying, “The Bible says...” After all, he said, the Bible is an ancient text,

continuing to say that most people do not take it seriously, insisting that pointing to the Bible only makes our message sound less persuasive, hopelessly irrelevant. I will say that it is total nonsense. The Bible itself is eternally applicable and infinitely more relevant to the issues of life and godliness than any pop-culture references, literary analyses, or viral video or gimmick.

The idea that contemporary churches are giving people too much Scripture is the very height of absurdity. I am here to say that the so-called self-proclaimed Christian of today is biblically malnourished. A shortage of biblical preaching is the number one reason the evangelical movement is so spiritually anemic. The Bible foretold times like these. This is where today's message is relevant, for the Old Testament includes this prophecy. Hear these words from Amos 8:11. "Behold, 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 2 Timothy 4:3-4, the Apostle Paul foresaw a future era marked by a severe shortage of God's Word. Paul predicted that a time would come when people in the church "will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." Paul might well have been speaking to our generation. Unfortunately, sound preaching is declining in the largest and most heavily marketed evangelical congregations. Sure, the pulpit ministry remains a feature of these churches; however, the messages are superficial and rarely Biblical. The trend leans toward human relationships like the LGBTQ+ agenda, building success and self-help, and recovery from addictions, where preaching God's Word has never been more out of season or style.

The Apostle Paul praises his young protégé Timothy in a straightforward reaffirmation of the primacy of the Bible to "preach the Word." Scripture is, after all, the Word of God and, therefore, to be proclaimed fearlessly and faithfully regardless of how the winds of

fashion seem to blow. From 2 Timothy 4:2, “Preach the Word; be ready in and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” The familiar words “preach the Word” come in verse immediately preceding Paul’s prophetic warning about people refusing to hear God’s Word. Look at the empty pews around you. That means before Paul even mentioned that a time of wandering and famine was on the horizon. Paul told Timothy what to do about it. Scripture is the only source of the spiritual nourishment people are starving for.

According to the latest survey conducted in 2021 by the Barna Group and the American Bible Society, between 87% and 92% own at least one Bible. Furthermore, the average American owns as many as 9 Bibles. It should be of no surprise that one-third of Americans never pick it up, only to collect dust on the shelf. Why? According to LifeWay Research, people either do not have time or do not see how the Bible relates to them, or sadly disagree with what the Bible says. As of January 2021, the proportion of American adults who never use the Bible has fallen to its low point of 29%. Indeed, today’s famine for the Word of God is self-imposed.

The present famine is the result of similar causes in Amos’ day. In Amos 6:1-8, material luxury became the cause of pride, which God hated. Their luxury prompted them to “put off the day of doom” in their minds because they did not want to think about the future. It is no different in today’s culture. In Deuteronomy 8:11-14,17, God had warned Israel that it might cause some to forget God. Likewise, Jesus warned that riches could choke those who had received the Word. Secondly, the days of Amos witnessed moral corruption, and in today’s world, the world’s standards often become the standards of those in the church. When this happens, people will not want to feed upon the Word of God, for it would make people very uncomfortable if they did.

Thirdly, there is religious corruption. In Chapter 2, verses 6-7, Amos alludes to the people of Israel who could not wait for religious days to be over. I'm curious how many people in this country cannot wait for Sunday services to be over so they can work or play. If people

are unwilling to spend time in sincere worship, it is easy to see why they will not feed on God's Word daily. The present famine also produces familiar results where young people faint from thirst and others fall, only not to rise again. The daily lives of Christians suffer from a lack of spiritual food, easily overcome by temptations amid the everyday trials of life that overwhelm them. New Christians fall away, and young people often lose interest; even the behavior of some elders, preachers, and teachers falls away. In summary, many churches today suffer from spiritual malnutrition influenced by materialism, immorality, and a lack of true spirituality by CHOICE, imposing a famine upon themselves for the Word of God.

In the Book of Daniel 8:8-14, Daniel saw a vision of another "little horn" that would cause the daily sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem to cease and would cast truth down to the ground. His dual prophecy came true when Antiochus Epiphanes sacked Jerusalem in 168 BC, then set up a statue of Zeus in the Temple and offered swine blood on the altar offensive to the Jewish people. Daniel's vision foreshadows a determined effort by a ruthless dictator to completely suppress the biblical faith at the end of the age, who will attempt to foster religious uniformity. Daniel's visions are linked to the actions of false teachers at the end of the age. Furthermore, the words of Jesus state that just preceding His return, "many will come in my name and will deceive many" (Matt 24:5).

Here is where we have been fooled by false teachings contradicting Scripture. Jesus, his apostles, and the Church He founded kept a Saturday Sabbath. He observed the biblical Holy Days—historical sources and the biblical record show that Jesus was not born on December 25. According to Scripture, this factual information will be suppressed at the end of the age because it conflicts with traditional beliefs promoted by the religious system that will dominate the world.

The Bible also indicates in Revelation 6 that militant religious activity will increase as we approach the end of this age. In the last days, false teachers will bring destructive heresies, ridiculing biblical doctrines

and speaking evil of the truth, twisting Scriptures to support erroneous ideas. Folks, it is happening right before our eyes. We must understand where world events lead today and that we “seek the Lord while he may be found.”

In the end, God’s Word will still be available, but it will be rare that His words will be heard. The truth will remain obtainable; his inspired messages are still accessible. However, as a curse on the land, God will cause His truth not to be heard. It is a hearing that includes focused, careful attention, is taken to its conclusion, and ends in obedience. It will not be like a physical famine, which we would recognize as a tragedy. A famine of hearing the truth will seem like a relief to many because no voice is calling them to think about eternity. The first victims of this famine are the young susceptible because their parents failed to provide a solid foundation of truth for the young, only knowing what the older generation has taught them. Brothers and sisters, an entire generation is falling for the lie that there is no absolute truth and that everyone’s opinion is valid unless those opinions rest on biblical truth. Be cautious, my friends. The result is stumbling, for God tells us to keep the falsehoods out. Let us live obediently to God’s will as we find it revealed in Scripture, and the Bible will prove itself both a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path. Amen.