

“All the Prophets Testify”: Amos 8:1-14

Midweek Bible Study – 2026 June 17

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<https://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/prophets>

Invocation & Opening Prayer

Follow-up to last class: pace, depth, other comments or questions?

Outline (the following is adapted from *TLSB* p.1457; we are expanding/collapsing the major divisions as we proceed through them):

- I. Judgment against the Nations (1:3-2:16)
- II. Declarations concerning Israel (3:1-6:14)
- III. Visions (7:1-9:15)
 - A. Visions That Do Not Come to Pass (7:1-6)
 - 1. Vision of the locusts (7:1-3)
 - 2. Vision of the fire (7:4-6)
 - B. Visions That Do Come to Pass (7:7-9:10)
 - 1. Vision of the plumb line (7:7-9)
 - 2. Historical interlude (7:10-17)
 - 3. Vision of the summer fruit (8:1-14)** [Lessing sees 8:4-14 as an interlude of sorts]
 - 4. Vision of the Lord beside the altar (9:1-10)
 - C. Restoration of David's Booth (9:11-15)

Note that Amos 8:4-7, about the dishonest merchants, is the Old Testament Reading for *Lutheran Service Book* Proper 20 C, for the Sunday on September 18-24 in that year of the Three-Year Series, when the Amos Reading is paired with the Gospel Reading of Luke 16:1-15, the so-called “Parable of the Dishonest Manager”.

Vision of the summer fruit (8:1-14):

8:1 *This is what the Lord God showed me*: confer 7:1, 4, 7; perhaps compare 7:3's “declares the Lord God”. After the “historical interlude” of 7:10-17, Amos resumes putting the visions into words (confer 1:1's “The words of Amos...which he saw”). *CSSB* had commented that the phrase “Introduces reports of visions that convey God's message through things seen as well heard”. Lessing draws the pattern parallels between this fourth vision and the preceding third vision (7:7-9). We should note God's grace in His act of revelation itself.

Behold, a basket of summer fruit: “Behold” always is a sign-post of something important that follows. Luther preferred taking the Hebrew as a cage of birds being fattened for slaughter. Regarding the “summer fruit”, *TLSB* comments, “Likely figs, one of Israel's most important fruits, harvested in Aug/Sept.” Roehrs-Franzmann refers to the fruit as “bright, colorful, beautiful” and says it “might seem an eminently fitting symbol for the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II”. Kretzmann says the fruit was ready to be consumed. Lessing says Amos may have seen the vision at that time of year, and Lessing reminds us of Amos's agricultural background.

8:2 *And he said, "Amos, what do you see?":* confer 7:8. We might say the Lord's question is clarifying and inductive, making sure that Amos knows what he is seeing and leading him to draw the significance of it.

And I said, "A basket of summer fruit.": as in 7:8, Amos correctly identified what the Lord was showing to him. *GWfT* indirectly notes that food is a part of the three parts of this chapter: the food being sold by the merchants and the feasts-turned-famine in the judgment visited upon Israel by the Lord.

Then the Lord said to me: the Lord gives Amos the significance of the basket of summer fruit. Lessing comments, "he alone is able to interpret the meaning".

The end has come upon my people Israel: *TLSB* notes wordplay in that the Hebrew translated "fruit" (*qayits*) sounds like the Hebrew word translated end (*qets*), and Lessing notes similar wordplay in 8:1 with "summer" and "fruit" and says they may have sounded more-identical at the time. Keil-Delitzsch notes the Hebrew word translated "end" does not on its own mean ripeness for judgment but destruction. The NIV translates "ripe fruit" and "the time is ripe" (as reported by Lessing, the NEB and Jerusalem Bible are similar), and *CSSB* comments, "Israel was ready to be plucked." *TLSB* explains, "The harvest serves as a metaphor for death and/or judgment...Simply put, Israel is threatened with being plucked, thrown into a basket, and devoured by Assyria." Kretzmann refers to the end of Israel's "national existence". Laetsch says Israel and Judah are in view (confer Lessing), and Laetsch notes that once fruit has been picked "the opportunity for growth is past, irrevocably ended."

I will never again pass by them: confer 7:8. *TLSB* comments, "The curses threatened in the covenant for abandoning the Lord...will soon begin to materialize."

8:3 *The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,":* the ESV text notes say that "temple" could be "palace" and that the whole phrase clause could be "The singing women of the palace shall wail", which reading Lessing seems to prefer. *TLSB* notes, "Songs of idolatrous worship will become wailing lamentation when the carnage begins. Corpses will be strewn everywhere." Keil-Delitzsch also makes explicit the connection between the dead bodies and the change in the songs. Confer 8:10's feasts into mourning and songs into lamentation. *CSSB* comments, "There would be no thanksgiving songs for this harvest...only the silence of despair." Laetsch says the songs are personified as howling or shrieking. Regarding the day, confer the singular "day" in 8:9 and 8:13, compare the plural "days" in 8:11, and see the people's time references in 8:5. This "day" at least seems to be the day the Assyrians conquer Samaria, if not also when the Babylonians conquer Judah, and when the Romans Jerusalem, as Lessing discusses, noting also the Last Day, when there still is a remnant, though not specifically the day God's judgment was visited upon Christ.

declares the Lord God: confer 8:9 and 8:11, and perhaps compare 8:1's "This is what the Lord God showed me", though what Amos saw now has been explained in words. Words interpret the signs.

“So many dead bodies!” “They are thrown everywhere!” “Silence!”: Luther takes the Hebrew, “The multitude of dead bodies will throw forth silence everywhere.” As the ESV presents, there are three interjections with no interjectors identified. Regarding the throwing of the bodies, and against apparently many commentators, including Lessing, Keil-Delitzsch rejects the idea that there are too many to bury but says the Lord has cast them to the ground on every side. Lessing notes the escalation to the death of the people of Israel in this vision, and Lessing comments, “In the eschaton, the rotting, burning corpses of raised unbelievers will be eternally abhorrent”. Regarding “Silence”, *TLSB* refers back to 6:10 and comments, “A typical reaction when God confronts people with their sinfulness.” Roehrs-Franzmann says, “Men will be so overwhelmed by the disaster that the usual lamentations will be omitted.” Keil-Delitzsch calls it “an admonition to bow beneath the overwhelming severity of the judgment of God”. Laetsch says, “The majesty of the Lord’s avenging justice and holiness will strike men dumb” (that is, unable to speak). Kretzmann adds, “If a sinner acknowledges his sin, he will also be ready to bow in silence and humility under the hand of God when some punishment comes upon him.”

8:4 *Hear this*: Amos apparently resumes speaking on the Lord’s behalf if not the Lord’s actual words. Keil-Delitzsch connects the Lord’s explaining to Amos the meaning of the vision with Amos’s announcement “to the unrighteous magnates of the nation”, and Keil-Delitzsch calls it “the last admonition” (likewise Kretzmann, arguably following Keil-Delitzsch.) Laetsch notes that Amaziah had not silenced Amos, as arguably already was clear with 7:14-17.

you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end: the Hebrew for bringing to an end is different than the “end” mentioned in 8:2. *TLSB* comments, “A refrain in Amos’s prophecy. The covenant stipulated a very different treatment of the poor”. Laetsch takes what the ESV translates “poor” as “meek” and describes them as “subjecting themselves to the Lord and His will”, so “the pious Israelites”.

8:5 *saying*: Amos gives examples of what the dishonest merchants say. Of vv.4-6, *TLSB* says, “Another list of specific ways that the people—esp the wealthy—pervert justice and oppress the poor.” *TLSB* also notes that the “People obviously did not have their hearts in worship.” The people’s time references may be mocked in the Lord’s time references that follow further below.

“When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale: *TLSB* explains, “First day of the lunar month was a regular festival.” The Sabbath was a weekly observance, of course. *CSSB* notes “The official religious festivals, when commerce ceased”. Laetsch notes that there was no Divine command regarding ceasing commerce on the new moon and that the merchants only outwardly observed the festivals. Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “The holy days are too long for them in their eagerness to get back to business”. Presumably the annual festivals would also bring an end to commerce for a time? Lessing discusses them briefly, noting the New Moon celebration was not on their level, and Lessing later notes that Nehemiah had people doing business on the Sabbath. Some remember stores being closed on Sundays and other holy-days. Seemingly absent is the realization of the time as set apart for God to work rest and recreation in His faithful people by His Word in all of its forms.

That we may make the ephah small and the shekel great: the ESV text notes indicate an epha was about 3/5 of a bushel or 22 liters (Lessing says between 9 and 18 quarts) and that a shekel was about 2/5 of an ounce or 11 grams (Lessing says 9.4 ounces). Cheating on the quantity sold and on the payment to be received in both cases helps the merchants and hurts the customer.

and deal deceitfully with false balances: *TLSB* comments, “To make matters worse, these people habitually defrauded unsuspecting customers with dishonest weights, measures, and scales”. Lessing refers to bending the cross-beam of the balances. *GWfT* explicitly mentions the Seventh Commandment, that Commandment not to steal, to take our neighbor’s money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

8:6 *that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals:* *TLSB* comments, “Some in Israel stooped to trafficking in slave trade.” Keil-Delitzsch refers to someone’s being “handed over to the creditor by the court of justice, because he was no longer able to pay for a pair of shoes, *i.e.*, the very smallest debt”. Laetsch offers a similar explanation regarding payment for the shoes or a price sufficient to buy a pair of sandals. Lessing seems to prefer the idea of the low debt that forced people into slavery.

and sell the chaff of the wheat? ”: *TLSB* comments, “Some merchants were taking sweepings off the threshing floor and mixing them in with the grain in order to ‘bulk up’ their bags of wheat. Beyond the dishonesty and price inflation involved, this was also an unhealthy practice.” Lessing discusses all people’s covetousness and lack of contentment apart from God’s working in us through Christ.

8:7 *The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob:* Laetsch notes that the scene suddenly changes from the earthly to the heavenly. the Lord swore by His holiness in 4:2 and by Himself in 6:8, where He also said that He abhorred the pride of Jacob. (Compare the false swearing in 8:14.) If, as *TLSB* suggests, the land of Israel is in view, then, as *TLSB* comments, “Swearing by a corrupt and idolatrous land is highly ironic.” (Confer/compare 8:14’s “Guilt of Samaria”.) Nevertheless, the Lord’s statement that follows is nevertheless taken to be genuine. *CSSB* comments, “Israel took pride in the fact that the Lord was her God.” Roehrs-Franzmann similarly says, “The God in whom they boast is the remembering Witness of their deeds and will visit them upon the doers’ heads.” Keil-Delitzsch says “The pride of Jacob is Jehovah” (not surprisingly confer Kretzmann). Lessing again sees “Jacob”, the original name of “Israel”, as referring to both northern and southern kingdoms.

“Surely I will never forget any of their deeds: we may think of forgiving and forgetting, but, when the Lord is executing righteous judgment on the unrepentant, then forgetting is not done. Keil-Delitzsch says to forget a sin is to leave it unpunished.

8:8 *Shall not the land tremble on this account*: Keil-Delitzsch says the negative question denotes strong assurance. “The land” in this case might be taken as the people in the land, and “tremble” might be taken as repentance, as the portion of the verse the follows seems to reiterate. “This account” would seem to be the Lord’s promise not to forget their deeds and so visit His judgment upon them (confer Keil-Delitzsch, who rules out a reference back to the sins). Keil-Delitzsch suggests, “under the weight of the judgment, the earth will quake”. Somewhat differently, Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “The earthquake shall make the ground under their hurrying feet as unstable as the flooding and receding of the Nile, and all the dwellers in the land shall mourn”. Laetsch also seems to have a literal earthquake or earthquakes in view, commenting, “The rising and sinking of the floodwaters of the Nile, spreading ruin and disaster, are emblems of earthquakes which shall spread destruction throughout the land”. Lessing takes the quake literally and theologically.

and everyone mourn who dwells in it: Confer the mentions of mourning in 8:10. God through Amos had made similar seemingly firm promises of final judgment that apparently did not result in repentance presumably despite time for repentance.

and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?”: *TLSB* explains, “Famous for overflowing its banks in the spring and then steadily receding, the Nile is a simile for how the invading Assyrians would flood Israel and then eventually depart, leaving nothing but debris and stench in their wake.” That explanation seems to not fit the context in some ways. *CSSB* refers to heavy seasonal rains in Ethiopia raising the Nile as much as 25 feet, flooding the valley, depositing rich soil on the land.

8:9 “*And on that day,*”: note the plural “days” in 8:11 and the singular “day” in 8:3 and 8:13, and recall the people’s time references in 8:5. *TLSB* refers to “The day of the Lord”, though that expression can have various senses. Some of what follows seem to refer to the day that the Lord brings judgment on Israel in the form of the Assyrians, and other of what follows seems to refer to the day that the Lord comes in glory to judge the living and the dead. We remember that in the prophetic perspective, events that will happen in some sense separately can be seen and/or described as happening in some sense together or simultaneously. Kretzmann commits to “the day of the Lord’s punishment upon Israel”. Keil-Delitzsch also reminds that “every judgment that falls upon an ungodly people or kingdom, as the ages roll away, is a harbinger of the approach of the final judgment.”

declares the Lord God: confer 8:3 and 8:11.

“I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight: TLSB comments, “Eclipses and darkness are often mentioned in connection with the Lord’s judgment and the Last Day...when the entire created order will manifest the Creator’s outpoured wrath.” Luther says these are figures of speech since we never read that it happened that the sun set at midday. We might think of Good Friday’s darkness from Noon to 3:00 p.m. (Lessing notes that the church father Lactantius equates 8:9 with the events of Good Friday.) And, we normally might think of the sun’s continuing to shine behind dark clouds, as we think of the Lord’s continuing to love us despite afflictions that might be taken as suggesting otherwise. Keil-Delitzsch says eclipses are not in view but says the sun sets at noon for a person when he or she is snatched away by death in the midst of life. Lessing refers to the Lord’s ability to “uncreate” described in the “creation” hymns of 4:13; 5:8-9; and 9:5-6.

8:10 *I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation:* confer 8:3’s songs becoming wailings and 8:8’s mention of mourning. *TLSB* comments, “Singing and rejoicing of religious celebration would give way to outpourings of grief and sorrow.” We remember that the Northern Kingdom’s religious rites were not God-pleasing. We may also think of God’s promises on other occasions to turn mourning into dancing (for example, Psalm 30:11). Laetsch comments, “Then there will be no more gay festivities for which the money was pressed out of the poor, no more songs, nor gaudy clothes, nor marvelous hairdos, but mourning, and lamentation, and sackcloth, and baldness, the hair having been torn out in despairing grief, and bitter woe on a bitter day!”

I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head: both external signs reflect internal grief. *TLSB* comments, “In ancient Israel, putting on sackcloth and shaving one’s head showed that one was undergoing a period of mourning”.

I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day: *TLSB* comments, “Children, esp males, not only embodied a family’s aspirations but also helped provided for their parents in old age. Accordingly, the death of an only son constituted one of the greatest and most grievous of all misfortunes, truly ‘a bitter day.’” *CSSB* refers to the “bitter day” as “The opposite of the ‘day of celebration’”.

Keil-Delitzsch notes “the judgment will not be a passing one, but will continue.” Confer Luther, who also rules out the mother’s being able to have other children. Lessing refers to Naomi’s changing her name to Mara, related to the “bitter” here. Kretzmann refers to sorrow that “cannot be appeased”. We might think of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:17-24 and the widow of Nain in Luke 7:11-17, whose only sons were revived by Elijah and Jesus, respectively. (The Virgin Mary’s situation also might come to mind, and Lessing thinks of God’s Only Son.) Of course, believers’ grief, even over only sons, is appeased by the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the body and the blessed reunion in heaven!

8:11 *Behold, the days are coming,*”: compare the singular “day” in 8:9 and 8:13, and recall the people’s time references in 8:5. The singular “day” can refer to a “period of time”, especially when not defined as “evening and morning” as in the Creation account. *CSSB* comments on these days as “When God’s judgment begins to take effect.”

declares the Lord God: confer 8:3 and 8:9.

“when 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: TLSB comments, “Because the people have rejected and despised God’s Word, and even forbidden His prophets from prophesying (2:12; 7:12-13), they will soon receive their just deserts [not “desserts” but that which is “deserved”]—the Lord will no longer provide ‘the bread of life,’ His life sustaining Gospel (cf Dt 8:3; Jn 4:10, 14; 6:35).” With those New Testament passages seemingly in mind, Laetsch comments, “No bread of life to nurture their starving soul, no drop of Gospel water to quench their awful thirst.” *TLSB* quotes Gregory Nazianzus and Luther, who elsewhere refers to the Gospel as a passing rain shower that moves on after a while when it is not received (confer Kretzmann, who, in 1924, refers to needing to heed Luther’s word “also in our day”, and Lessing, who quotes AE 45:352-353 at some length). *CSSB* comments, “In times of great distress Israel turned to the Lord for a prophetic word of hope or guidance...but in the coming judgment the Lord will answer all such appeals with silence—the awful silence of God”. Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “They will not hear; they shall not hear.” We remember that they wanted the prophets to be silent, and that is what in some sense they got.

8:12 *They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro:* we might expect north to south, if sea to sea is east to west (the Dead Sea in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west), which apparently it is not (though compare Kretzmann). Rather, Keil-Delitzsch points to Psalm 72:8 and Zechariah 9:10 (not that we have to agree those are the same in meaning) and says the meaning is “from the sea to where the sea occurs again, at the other end of the world, ‘the sea being taken as the boundary of the earth’ Hupfeld).” Lessing admits that what Keil-Delitzsch describes is possible but prefers the Dead Sea and Mediterranean Sea understanding or the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. The other clause, Keil-Delitzsch says, “contains an abridged expression for ‘from north to south and from west to east,’ *i.e.* to every quarter of the globe.” The conjunction “and” can introduce a parallel expression. *CSSB* says simply, “Throughout the land of Israel, even to the Transjordan” (the area “across” the Jordan, east of it, from the perspective of the land to the west of it). Kretzmann refers to “the limitless extent of the Arabian Desert”. Lessing suggests south is not mentioned because of either the Negev desert or reference to Jerusalem from where God is roaring forth judgment.

to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it: *TLSB* comments, “Desperate but futile search for divine guidance. They will find no word of comfort or consolation.

8:13 *In that day the lovely virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst:* regarding the virgins and young men, *TLSB* comments, “Coming judgment will be so severe that even those in the prime of life will perish”. And, regarding the thirst, *TLSB* comments, “Apparently recalls the drought threatened in 7:4.” *CSSB* says simply, “Both physical and spiritual. Their strength sapped, even the lovely girls and strong boys of the nation would faint and fall useless.” Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “Even the youngest and strongest will be unable to endure this drought”. Keil-Delitzsch says, “Those who now stand in all the fullest and freshest vigour of life, will succumb to this hunger and thirst”, adding “If the strongest succumb to the thirst, how much more the weak!” Luther refers to the lack of education in the Word of God and so the individuals unsuitableness for office.

8:14 *Those who swear ... they shall fall, and never rise again.*”: some contrast with the Lord’s oath in 8:7 by Himself may be intended with the people’s falsely swearing by three false things (confer Lessing to some extent). On those who swear, *CSSB* comments, “By the gods of their various religious centers...the false gods in which they trusted rather than in the Lord.” Not that we would say they should have been swearing by the Lord’s Name. Roehrs-Franzmann notes that “To swear by a deity is to acknowledge is reality and power.”

by the Guilt of Samaria ... As your god lives, O Dan ... As the Way of Beersheba lives:

The NIV text notes suggest some alternatives to “Guilt” and “Way”. Roehrs-Franzmann suggests that the Hebrew that the ESV translates “Guilt” “is an intentional corruption of Ashera, the name of the Canaanite mother goddess. It means ‘guilt’ and would be the prophet’s way of naming the goddess and condemning her worship in one breath.” *TLSB* connects Samaria with what *TLSB* calls “Idolatrous worship of the golden calves at Bethel”. Dan’s god is also linked by *TLSB* with apostasy. Keil-Delitzsch sees the reference to the golden calf at Bethel and the golden calf at Dan. Beersheba in Judah was mentioned in 5:5, and *TLSB* comments, Oath for false gods and evil practices of Beersheba. A horned, cut-stone altar was discovered there at a ‘high place’ or shrine.” Regarding the “way of Beersheba”, Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “Perhaps Amos is castigating an idle oath which expresses a superstitious belief in the saving efficacy of a pilgrimage to Beersheba. Moslems still swear by the way to Mecca.” As to the fulfillment, Keil-Delitzsch says it “commenced with the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, and the carrying away of the ten tribes into exile in Assyria, and continues to this day in the case of that portion of the Israelitish nation which is still looking for the Messiah, the prophet promised by Moses, and looking in vain, because they will not hearken to the preaching of the gospel concerning the Messiah, who appeared as Jesus.”

What are you taking home from the prophecy considered tonight?

TLSB’s Law and Gospel Application Note for Amos 8:1-14 says, “Amos’s vision of the basket of summer fruit points to the Lord’s judgment, which will soon cut down the people of Israel for their idolatrous worship, their greed, and their callous mistreatment of their brethren. If we persist in doing evil and despising God’s graciousness, we will receive the same reward—punishment from God and eternal separation from His life-giving Word. Treasure the Word! Our God is gracious and continually stands ready to receive the repentant heart and lift it up with His Word of forgiveness and peace in Jesus.”

Among other things, *GWfT* discusses a church body’s not having “the Word of God in richness unless it has it also in truth and purity”, referring to “Israel, with its mixing of religions (syncretism)” as “a case in point”, referring to 1 Corinthians 5:6 where the effect of a “little yeast” of error leavens the whole lump, and referring to Galatians 1:6-9 where God desires that we respond to errors by condemning the false teachers with curse formulas, anathemas, which indicate a severing of fellowship.

Next time, June 24, Amos 9:1-15

Closing Prayer & Benediction