**A Famine of the Word of God**

*Amos 8:11-14*

**Introduction**

1. God set before the people of Israel blessing and cursing. He promised, contingent upon their faithfulness, immense blessings and continuance as a nation belonging to God.
2. However, their unfaithfulness would result in immense adversity, and defeat by surrounding enemies.
3. The sins of the people and her leaders, namely idolatry and all the sinfulness it brings, brought the kingdom to division.
4. Still, God promised both kingdoms, contingent upon faithfulness, blessings. The northern kingdom quickly went into idolatry and set up their future for Assyrian captivity.
5. Amos is a prophet from Judah sent to Israel to pronounce judgment upon the sinful nation.
6. They were God’s special people, and would be judged accordingly for their unfaithfulness – **Amos 3:1-2** (they were conducting themselves like all the nations)
7. They would ultimately be destroyed and carried away captive by the Assyrian nation – **Amos 6:14**
8. However, another form of judgment and punishment was promised to come upon them which would be devastating – **Amos 8:11-14** – famine of the word of God.
   1. Note: where God’s word is continually extended through prophets and priests, etc. to bring the people to repentance, God would no longer speak to them.
   2. **Amos 8:1-2** – they were ripe for judgment, and God would no longer pass by them (so as to aid them, or lead them).
   3. Where they had once despised God’s word, they would thirst for it, but it would not be found.
9. Israel was struck by the worst kind of famine. God carried out this judgment, but truly they brought it on by themselves.
10. Is it possible for there to be a famine of the word of God today? What did Israel do to bring this famine upon themselves?
11. Materialism
12. The kingdom of Israel was prospering greatly the time Amos prophesied.
    1. It caused them to neglect the spiritual.
    2. **Amos 3:15** – emphasis on God destroying their luxuries. (Extra houses.)
    3. **Amos 6:1-8** – in their focus on the material, they found false security, but had neglected the spiritual, and were going to be destroyed like any other kingdom.
13. Materialism will bar out the word of God.
    1. **Matthew 13:22** – thorny soil – cares, riches.
       1. Cares – **Matthew 6:19-24, 31-33** – these worries concerning the material eclipse the far more important spiritual.
       2. Riches – **Luke 12:13-15** – focus on wealth leaves out what is far more important. **(v. 14** – Jesus is showing that this is not even His work – He’s not here to deal in physical matters)
    2. **John 6:26-27** – materialism impairs our ability to accurately estimate.
       1. They placed too much importance on the physical to the neglect of the spiritual.
       2. Their infatuation with physical sustenance caused them to miss the significance of the sign.
    3. When one becomes too invested in the material world, and distracted by these earthly, temporal matters, they will fail to see the true significance of the gospel, and thus will lose the ability to see spiritual truth.
       1. **1 Corinthians 3:1-4** – they took something spiritual, and made it carnal.
       2. Paul and Apollos were fellow workers in God’s vineyard, but the Corinthians’ carnal mind pitted them against each other in competition.
14. Fondness of Sin
15. Israel had not completely cast off spiritual activity.
    1. The majority of their spiritual activity was perverted.
    2. However, they went through the motions, and at the same time were itching to get back to their sinful practices.
    3. **Amos 2:6-8** – oppressive treatment of less fortunate to the extent of panting after such activity, rampant immorality, revelry involved in worship.
    4. **Amos 8:5-6** – desiring religious days/observances to pass so they can resume their deceit, lies, and injustices.
16. Fondness of sin will bar out the word of God.
    1. **James 4:4** – fondness of the world makes one an enemy of God.
       1. Even if it is not fully understood, that one who is an enemy of God by his worldliness will be opposed to God’s word.
       2. God’s word, being put through the filter of the world, will be tainted.
    2. **James 1:21** – required to lay aside sin in order for the word to save you.
    3. Sin defiles the conscience, and leads to the compromise of truth:
       1. **1 Timothy 1:5** – God’s word is intended to produce a good conscience.
       2. **1 Timothy 1:18-20** – Timothy commanded to maintain a good conscience in order to defend the truth.
          1. Hymenaeus/Alexander – rejected faith and good conscience.
          2. Because of this they made shipwreck of the faith.
       3. A defiled conscience will be tempted to alter God’s word, or hear it through a filter so as to avoid further feelings of guilt/condemnation.
          1. They will seek to justify their practices.
    4. **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12** – those who love unrighteousness will not be able to know the truth. They will be deluded.
17. Perverted Worship
18. They were guilty of idolatry, and mere form worship.
    1. **Amos 4:4-5; 5:4-5** – They thought their idolatrous practices at Bethel and Gilgal were good, but as they trusted in them for protection they would fail.
    2. **Amos 5:21-27** – Their worship was not pleasing to God because it was hypocritical, and truly perverted – they had been addicted to idolatry since the wilderness wandering.
19. Perverted worship will bar out the word of God.
    1. **John 4:24** – God seeks worship in spirit and truth.
    2. **Matthew 15:3, 7-9** – Those who practice what is unauthorized in worship supplant God’s word with their own doctrine.
    3. Unauthorized worship is indicative of a disinterest in, and rebellion against the authority of God.
       1. As such, where there is unauthorized worship there is the perversion, or silence of God’s word.
       2. **1 Corinthians 10:6-8** – idolatry at Sinai accompanied with the most base forms of sin in defiance of the holy word of Gd.
20. Forsaken Justice and Righteousness
21. Israel was guilty of letting wrong go unpunished, punishing the innocent, and undervaluing righteousness.
    1. **Amos 5:7** – they pervert justice, making it bitter, and treat righteousness as something to be trampled on. (**6:12** – they can’t do this and expect not damage)
    2. **Amos 5:10** – where the courts were held, they hate those who speak against sin, and abhor those who speaks what is right.
22. Forsaking justice and righteousness will bar out the word of God.
    1. **2 Timothy 3:16** – the scripture is profitable because it works to direct in righteousness, and rebuke and correct that which is unrighteous.
       1. **2 Timothy 4:1-5** – some, not wanting to hear what is right, and be convicted of wrong, will refuse the truth, and heap up those who will relieve their itching ears.
    2. **1 Timothy 1:3-4, 8-11** – fables are to be rejected, and the law taught.
       1. The law rebukes sin and corrects in the way of righteousness.
       2. When righteousness is devalued, then the truth is rejected, AND FABLES ARE SOUGHT AND TAUGHT.
    3. Righteousness must be demanded, and when there is unrighteousness, justice must be upheld.
       1. This comes in the form of rebuke, leading to repentance.
       2. When there is not correction, sin cannot be swept under the rug.
       3. **1 Corinthians 5:1-2** – their pride led to the tolerance of sin when disciplinary actions should have been taken.
       4. **1 Corinthians 5:6-8** – Paul explained that their actions were threatening the purity of the church.
          1. **(v. 8)** – must keep working in “sincerity and truth.”
          2. Implication – unrighteousness left unchecked, thus, justice ignored, leads to a neglect, if not total rejection of truth.
    4. **1 Thessalonians 5:14, 19-22** – the unruly must be warned. If not, then such is part of the quenching of the Spirit as evil is not abstained from.
    5. Bottom line – if righteousness is trampled on by sin not being addressed, and injustice stands because sin is not dealt with, the word of God is being refused, and will fade.
23. Distaste for Truth
24. Ultimately, Israel was subjected to a famine of the word of God because they demonstrated through long practice that they had a distaste for the word.
    1. **Amos 2:11-12** – God blessed them with men dedicated to holiness, and those who spoke the word of God. However, they rejected those gifts, and compelled such men to ungodliness.
    2. **Amos 7:7-9** – A vision regarding Israel’s impending doom.
       1. Plumb-line – string with a weighted end used as a guide for building walls with true verticality.
       2. Wall – Israel, built according to God’s standards in the beginning.
       3. God with the plumb-line – testing them by the standard – they had rejected God’s ways, such would show, and they would be destroyed.
    3. **Amos 7:12-13** – hearing the prophecy, Amaziah told Amos to leave, and never prophesy again. **(2:11-12)**
       1. Since the truth was spoken against them, they didn’t want to hear it.
25. A distaste for truth will bar out the word of God.
    1. **2 Chronicles 36:15-16** – God’s attempts at beckoning Judah rejected.
    2. **Hosea 4:6** – they rejected knowledge and would be destroyed.
    3. **Romans 1:18, 28** – Gentiles suppressed the truth, and God gave them to a debased mind.
    4. **Matthew 13:10-17** – the truth is not given for those to know who have hardened their hearts to it.
       1. They will be unable to discern the truth.
    5. Supply and demand – if the demand for truth is not there, then the truth will fade.

**Conclusion**

1. Israel was subjected to a horrible thing. Where God continually revealed Himself to them through His word, and beckoned them to repentance when they erred, He would no longer give them His word.
2. In its presence, Israel did not desire God’s word. In its absence, Israel longed for it, but would not receive it.
3. We have been blessed with the complete revelation of God’s will **(Jude 3**).
4. However, if we aren’t careful, there could still be a spiritual famine of the word of God brought on by the same matters which produced the famine in Israel.
5. Let us always value the truth, and live by it so that indeed, we may live.