

• *The ability to hear God's word will be lost*

If in Israel the word of God is not heeded, then one aspect of God's punishment is that the ability to hear God's word will be lost.

1. **The loss of the genuine** <sup>1</sup>. When the word is rejected there comes an inability to hear it.

<sup>1</sup> 8:11-12

### 1. The loss of the genuine

<sup>11</sup>“Behold the days are coming” – oracle of sovereign Yahweh –

“when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing of Yahweh’s words.

<sup>12</sup>They shall wander from sea to sea, from north to east.

They will run here and there to seek the word of Yahweh – but they shall not find it.”

• *Refusal to heed God's word leads to inability to hear God's word*

Amos does not precisely say there would be a famine of the word. That might be true as well but what Amos says is that there would be a famine of the hearing of the Word. Refusal to hear the word results in inability to hear the word. And that leads to instability and confusion. The people will go ‘from sea to sea’. The Dead Sea was in the south; the Mediterranean was in the west. They go eastward and northward as well. They look everywhere for a source of guidance but they do not hear any word from God, because they are unable to do so.

1. **The uselessness of the false** <sup>1</sup>. In the day when the hearing of God's word has been lost, a generation will arise which is unaware that it has lost anything. Yet the consequences of the lost word will appear.

<sup>1</sup> 8:13-15

### 2. The uselessness of the false

<sup>13</sup>“In that day beautiful girls will faint, and the finest young men will faint from thirst.”

• *The word is lost to the upcoming generation*

The terms speak of young people. When the word is lost the upcoming generation know no better than to turn to the popular gods of the day. It was fashionable to swear by a god whose name was Ashimah; the name was similar to the Hebrew word for ‘guilt’ and Amos makes use of the fact. Also it seems that it was popular to swear by the blessings that were thought to come from a pilgrimage to Beersheba.

<sup>14</sup>“Those who swear by the Guilt of Samaria, whose who say ‘As your god lives, O Dan’ or ‘As the way of Beersheba lives’ – they shall fall and never rise again.”

• *Assyrian cults attract the young people*

But the cults from Assyria which were attracting young people were drawing them into superstition, not into the life of godliness. As a result the entire community would be doomed. Soon the Assyrian armies would arrive and the entire northern nation would be swept away. These young people like everyone else would ‘fall and never rise again’. The inability to hear God's word was fatal. Without God's word there can be no saving experience of God. Religious superstition is a useless replacement for the life of faith. True faith cleanses from sin; religious superstition is designed to get some advantage or happiness from some god. The word of God received brings a knowledge of God. The word of God rejected brings spiritual starvation.

• *Without God's word there can be no saving experience of God*

### 3. The destruction of the fake religion

3. **The destruction of the fake** <sup>1</sup>. The useless religion of northern Israel had all begun when Jeroboam the first had set up a self-invented religion in Bethel. He had offered sacrifice himself at the altar <sup>2</sup>. Now two hundred years later, the entire fake religion started by Jeroboam is about to be destroyed. Amos sees a vision. The destruction of Jeroboam's cult has been much delayed, but now its day of judgement has come.

<sup>1</sup> 9:1-6

<sup>2</sup> see 1 Kings 12:32

• *After 200 years Jeroboam's cult will be destroyed*

<sup>1</sup>I saw the sovereign One, standing beside the altar; and He said, “Strike the heads of the columns so that the thresholds may shake! Smash them on the head, all of them! Then I will kill the rest of them with the sword.

*No fugitive among them will make good his escape;  
no refugee among them will survive.”*

• *The nation will cease*

God stands by the altar, just as Jeroboam had once done. But He stands by the altar to destroy it. The entire superstitious temple at Bethel will be destroyed<sup>1</sup>. The nation will cease; the people will be killed. The judgement is inescapable if they will not repent – and now is so far gone that it is inescapable even if they do repent, as perhaps some did. Calamitous consequences might follow sin even when it is forgiven.

<sup>1</sup> see 1 Kings 12:31–33

The catastrophe about to come will be irresistible.

<sup>2</sup>“*Though they dig down into Sheol,  
from there my hand shall take them.  
Though they climb into heaven,  
from there I will bring them down;  
<sup>3</sup>though they hide themselves on top of Carmel,  
from there I will search and take them away.  
Though they hide themselves from my sight  
in the bottom of the sea,  
from there I will command a sea-monster,  
and it will consume them.”*

• *Calamities will follow them even in exile*

Nothing can separate them from the wrath of God. Even after they have been exiles to Assyria, God’s anger will follow them and there will be further calamities.

<sup>4</sup>“*Even if they go into exile before their enemies, even there I shall command the sword and it will kill them.  
I shall set my eyes on them, for calamity and not for good.”*  
<sup>5</sup>*And sovereign Yahweh, the Almighty,  
who touches the land and it melts  
and all who dwell in it mourn.  
It all rises like the Nile,  
and subsides like the river of Egypt.’*

The God who judges them is the Creator.

• *Yahweh - Creator*

<sup>6</sup> *‘He who built its upper regions in the heavens,  
and establishes its lower structures on the earth, who calls for the waters of the sea,  
and pours them on the face of the earth - ’*

• *And Redeemer*

But He is also the Redeemer.

<sup>6b</sup> *‘Yahweh is His name.’*

• *Now judge and executioner*

The Creator-Redeemer of Israel will become the nation’s Judge and Executioner. What was the sin that brought such disaster? Religion without the word of God. Self-appointed religion. Man-made religion. Religion designed to benefit the worshippers with soft living, idle ways, and no great demands. Such a religion is doomed, and its worshippers will perish along with the fake religion.



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