



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Give Us Today Our Daily Bread (Amos 8)

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Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to mature in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

Amos 8:1—9:10 records two additional visions, followed by an epilogue that concludes the message of Amos (9:11-15). The subject of the fourth vision (8:1-14) is a basket that is filled with summer fruit. The fruit, however, appears to be overripe, which would be common in Israel at the end of the harvest. The message that Amos communicated was the end had arrived for Israel, just as the basket of overripe fruit indicates the end of the harvest. The nation would soon experience a famine that would be worse than anything previously encountered. The famine, however, would be spiritual as opposed to

being corporeal. The people would hunger for God's Word, and hunt for it as a person hunts for bread; "but they will not find it" (8:12).

God's Word is readily available in our nation today to nourish us "on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine" (1 Tim 4:6), but this may not always be our experience. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and translated into Greek between 300-200 BC. The Septuagint is the name for this translation, and was used widely among Hellenistic Jews because many were beginning to lose their Hebrew language. The Greek translation also provided many non-Jews with the opportunity to read the Old Testament. The New Testament was written in the common Greek (Koine) of the day, which allowed its dissemination to spread rapidly throughout the first centuries of the church, yet its availability was scarce throughout much of the medieval period.

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THE WORD OF GOD IS READILY AVAILABLE TODAY AS "A LAMP TO [OUR] FEET AND A LIGHT TO [OUR] PATH" (PS 119:105), YET MANY GROPE IN DARKNESS.

It is possible to argue that the Word of God is becoming scarce in our time. People do not know the biblical teaching with regard to marriage and sexuality; therefore, families are being destroyed. There are mothers (and doctors who assist them) who ignore the sanctity of life to avoid personal inconvenience. The Word of God is discounted and mocked in much "scholarship"; consequently, our schools and institutions of higher learning are absent of moral values because there are minimal to no values taught. Many civic leaders do not know the teaching of the Word of God with regard to government and politics; therefore, public affairs and policies may be without any substantive purpose. The Word of God is scarce in the business and labor world; consequently, there is exploitation, greed, hatred, and wastefulness. Although the Word of God is abundantly available in our nation today, there is much evidence that it is becoming removed from life as it is today. The Word of God is readily available today as "a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path" (Ps 119:105), yet many grope in darkness. If the Word of God is rejected persistently, God may withdraw its availability. The result would be spiritual starvation.

BREAD AND THE HUMAN MACHINE

(8:1-3) Israel was confronted by the message of the prophets with regard to the judgment that God would bring upon her for disobedience. Following the third vision, God asked, “What do you see, Amos?” The prophet replied with the obvious answer, yet God revealed His intent to spare the nation no longer (7:8). The political and religious leadership of the nation was more interested in personal influence and political stature than God and His goodness. The disobedience of the nation made them insecure rather than secure as they thought. The nation had opportunity to “seek God and not evil” to extend their life (5:14), but chose rather to flee. God is sovereign and just, and can declare that time has expired for any people, even a world power.

THEY LOVED THE NOISE OF THEIR SONGS AND THE SOUND OF THEIR INSTRUMENTS (5:23). GOD, HOWEVER, DESIRED JUSTICE TO “ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE AN EVER-FLOWING STREAM” (5:24).

Israel loved worship. They loved the noise of their songs and the sound of their instruments (5:23). God, however, desired justice to “roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (5:24). God’s people would not remain faithful to Him; therefore, the music would stop and the Lord would “cast them forth in silence” (8:3). “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). The question to ask yourself is, “Do I listen and obey God’s Word, as opposed to favoring those with influence and power?” Amos spoke without ambiguity to Amaziah, yet the chief priest ignored the Word of the Lord and sought rather to preserve the nation’s power structure.

... THERE ARE ALL SORTS OF THINGS THAT LOOK RIGHT AND SEEM TO YOU THE NATURAL WAY [FOR YOUR ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES], BUT DO NOT REALLY WORK.

C. S. Lewis told the story with regard to a schoolboy who was asked what were his thoughts with regard to the character of God. The boy replied that, by his own understanding, God was always seeking to find someone enjoying life and then attempting to end such activity. Lewis corrected such erroneous thinking.

And I am afraid that is the sort of idea that the word Morality raises in a good many people’s mind: something that interferes, something that stops you having a good time. In reality, moral rules are directions for running the human machine. Every moral rule is there to prevent a breakdown, or a strain, or a friction, in

the running of that machine. That is why these rules at first seem to be constantly interfering with our natural inclinations. When you are being taught how to use any machine, the instructor keeps on saying, “No, don’t do it like that,” because, of course, there are all sorts of things that look right and seem to you the natural way of treating the machine, but do not really work.

The lesson is to examine our actions and attitudes, in addition to those of our political and religious leadership. The message of God’s Word is to depart from anything that is wrong.

BREAD AND FREEDOM

(8:4-14) The Northern Kingdom had become a locale that disdained God’s holy days because they were inconvenient. They said, “When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open the wheat market” (8:5). God’s holy days were an annoyance at best, and at worst, they were regarded as an unnecessary and unproductive interruption of business. No one worked during the festival days, and this became a reason for frustration on the part of the business community. Therefore, the businesses concocted new methods to cheat one another and to oppress the poor (8:5-6).

THE WORD OF THE LORD IS A PRECIOUS COMMODITY THAT INSTRUCTS US IN A MANNER THAT PRESERVES AND PROTECTS US. IT IS NOT GOD’S DESIRE TO GIVE COMMANDS TO RESTRICT US; RATHER, HIS WORD WAS GIVEN TO FREE US.

Since the people regarded the worship of God as burdensome, He would punish them by sending “a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD” (8:11). The Word of the Lord is a precious commodity that instructs us in a manner that preserves and protects us. It is not God’s desire to give commands to restrict us; rather, His Word was given to free us. The will of God is for His people to flourish and live. The nation would soon realize the precious commodity that they lost, and would wander desperately to find it (8:12). Those who did “go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD” did not find it and perished (8:13-14).

We may be guilty of adopting the same actions and attitudes of Israel if we regard the study of His Word and the regular worship of Him in fellowship with His people as an inconvenient burden. We do not “live on bread alone” but must have “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). Therefore, let us learn to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (6:11).

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, rev. ed. (1952; reprint, New York: Collier Books, 1960) 69.