

## Prayer

Almighty God and gracious Lord; sometimes it seems as if things happen to us which are not part of Your will and purpose for us. We struggle to stay close to You and do what is right and true. Take these dark moments and transform them by the power of Your Holy Spirit. May Satan be defeated, and the suffering we endure be turned into glory for the sake of Your Kingdom. All praise to You, Almighty God and gracious Lord: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Missions

*Pray for preachers to teach the church today about the priority of mission in all its forms, in service, evangelism, and engaging with people throughout the world in the name of Christ.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray about racial tensions in the world, and against all racism*
- *Give thanks for electricity and for the good it can do for all*
- *Seek the Lord's will about wasteful supermarket packaging*

## Meditation

Some people like to pray generally,  
No names, just impressions, feelings,  
Wants and pleadings from the heart:  
Their God is but an abstract thing,  
As real to them as a star in the sky;  
Its existence proved only by a theory  
Proposed by someone else.

Is your prayer like this, or different?  
For no God is God unless He's real  
And there for us to speak to, one to one:  
No God is God unless He's done  
Something to break the barrier  
Between Himself and us, and all creation.  
And Christ has done just that.

Jesus is the one; He shows us God,  
He is God, so open up pray to Him:  
Let Him be to you the One He really is,  
The One who loves you, to death.  
We pray to our God who cares.  
We pray to God who speak to us,  
We know Him personally.

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## Bible Study - Amos 8:9-14

<sup>9</sup> 'On that day,' says the Lord GOD, 'I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. <sup>10</sup> I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into funeral songs; I will make you all wear sackcloth and shave your heads; I will make it like mourning for an only son, and the end of the day will be bitter. <sup>11</sup> 'The time is surely coming,' says the Lord GOD, 'when I will send a famine throughout the land; not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. <sup>12</sup> They will wander about from sea to sea, and from north to east; they will run all around to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it. <sup>13</sup> 'On that day beautiful young women will swoon and the young men will thirst. <sup>14</sup> Those who swear by the idol of Guilt in Samaria, and say, "As your god lives, O Dan," and, "As the Way of Beersheba lives," they will fall, and never rise again.'

## Review

There comes a point in time when God acts decisively against sin. If we have not learned this from Amos, then we have missed something along the way! Sin and wrongdoing, whether it is of the religious, personal or social kind, is not just an affront to God, it is destructive of all that is best within humanity and it can also destroy the people who commit it. Therefore, God's action against sin is always comprehensive, both personally and cosmically; it sounds very dramatic, but our passage today is about this.

Amos prophesies a 'day of the Lord', which is 'darkness not light', in which all the usual things by which people take their bearings are turned on their heads. Time will become confused (8:10) as night and day exchange places; the seasons of the year will disappear and be replaced by 'mourning for an only son' (8:10) and human need for food and water will be replaced with a hunger and thirst for God's Word (8:11). Indeed, people will travel all over the world to search for God's Word but not find it (8:12). Those best placed in society to achieve things, young men and women, will fail to find fulfilment; and finally, those who claim to be God's people yet worship other gods will find that they have completely failed!

We know that Amos' prophecy was given against Israel, the northern nation that had rebelled against the line of David after the days of Solomon. Given what we know from Amos' prophecies about the corrupt nature of the society which developed in the north (2:6-11, 5:1-17 etc.), these prophecies make sense, but we know that Amos had already prophesied the end of the northern kingdom (2:12f., 6:1f. 8:1-3 etc.), so what is the destruction in this passage all about? It is dark, war-like, and rather mysterious.

Amos spoke about the coming of a special 'day of the Lord', a cataclysmic event described in coded words that were barely familiar, at which God would change the whole world and destroy evil (8:14)! What was this about the sun turning dark in broad daylight? What was this about Jewish feasts being turned into mourning songs for an only Son (8:10)? What was this about a hunger and thirst for God's Word and people wandering all over the world to find it? It is hard to imagine what the people of the day thought of these prophecies, and some recent writers have suggested that these words were added later to Amos' prophecies.

There is another explanation, which is that this prophecy did indeed have some meaning for the people of the day, though we do not know a great deal about it. For example, perhaps the 'son' mourned for in verse 10 was one of the infant kings of Israel in its last warring days. Nevertheless, for us today, we can see here something of what happened at the time of the death of Jesus on the Cross. It also appears to be a prophecy of the proclamation of the Gospel and resistance to it in the last days! What is this about the failure of those who seek to worship both Almighty God and also other idols (8:14)? It is a warning to all God's people for all time that our God is a jealous God!

You may feel that I have stretched Amos too far. Most people say that there is no connection between Amos and Christ; but why should we accept this limitation? Even Isaiah, writing a few decades later, picked up Amos' theme about the 'day of the Lord' (Isaiah 2:11f. 7:18f. etc), and received prophecies himself about the servant of God who would rule His people after suffering for their sins even to death (see Isaiah 40f., 52,53). The final message of this passage therefore speaks directly to us today; we cannot afford to try and live our faith as the northern people of Israel did, by worshipping the Lord and other gods as well. As Amos says; 'they will fail and never rise' (8:14).

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## Questions (for use in groups)

1. In your group, discuss the ways in which this prophecy by Amos offers warnings to God's people today.
2. Is it correct to say that God has created a famine for His Word today, so that we will return to Him with renewed desire? Discuss what this might mean?
3. Discuss the meaning of verse 13 in the light of this study.

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*It is hard to read these words and not think about Jesus' own words concerning the coming 'day of the Lord' in Matthew 24 (and other Gospels), for example. Every text in the Bible that alludes to the final acts of God are both terrifying and also extraordinarily comforting. It is terrifying because none of us can be entirely sure what will happen; and it is comforting because we know that in Christ, we may be sure that God, through*

*Christ, will help us and save us. All this is very important for our faith. Some people try to ignore it all, but if you read the Bible, the subject never goes away!*

### **Ideas for exploring discipleship**

- *How can you respond to the interesting and special challenge of this passage of Scripture? Which part of this passage spoke to you? Perhaps there is some part of this text that needs to be shared more fully, and it is your duty to do so!*
- *Pray for the world in which we live, and the debates that take place almost constantly about whether it can continue to sustain life given the pollution of the world. Pray that God's people will be able to say that God is in control of what is happening to us.*

## **Final Prayer**

Give us humility, Almighty Father, in the face of the great truths of the Gospel. May we handle them with dignity and care, and always remember that we are dependent upon You for everything, including our wisdom and understanding. Guide us in all truth, Almighty Father; AMEN

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