

# An Intimation of Hell

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Date: 28 August 2016

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that you are a God who speaks. We ask, Father, that you help us to be able to hear your word, to listen to your word.

We ask, Father, that your word would come into our lives in such a way that we will be free and that we will bear much fruit in this world to your glory.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. In the early days of, for the first three or four years of our marriage, my wife and I always lived in a house with other people, sort of a bit of a, I guess almost like a bit of a move-in type house before there was a move-in, but we'd live in a poor type of area, live with some other Christian couples and maybe at least try to pray with each other and do a few things in the neighborhood.

And in one of these cases, it was a house, there was us, Louise and myself, I think we had one or two kids. There was another couple with a kid, I think, one kid, one child.

And I think there were two single people. And the four of us came to the conclusion that the other married couple, that there was just some really unacceptable behavior going on.

[ 1 : 1 6 ]     And we had to ask them to leave. And from my point of view, regrettably, it was unanimous amongst three of the four of us that I should be one to have the conversation with the other couple.

And so I prayed about it and asked the guy out for coffee. And, you know, there's no way to hope that, by the way, you should move out of the house.

We'll just naturally come up in conversation. So we sat down, and I can still remember, I sat down and I looked at him and said, I almost said his name, call him Bob.

Bob, four of us think you have to move out, you and your wife and your child. I mean, I don't know, there's just, I couldn't think of any, you just had to get right to the topic.

And you couldn't sort of beat around the bush or anything. Sometimes with awkward conversations, you have to do that. And so I guess, although I have sort of led you into it, the text today is an intimation, a harbinger, a hint, a pointer to the reality of hell.

[ 2 : 2 5 ]     That's what Amos 8 is amongst other things. It's an Old Testament text which lays the groundwork and points to the Christian doctrine of the reality of hell.

And that's a very, very, very, very, very, very, very unpopular topic in Canada, even amongst churches. And so that's what we're going to look at. So if you have your Bibles, open them up and we'll look at Amos 8.

And the text begins in a way that doesn't make it look like it's talking about hell at all. In fact, it begins in a very, very, very odd way. And just before we start reading Amos 8, I mean, one of the things that people might say, in fact, often it happens when Christians try to talk about how the Bible, in this particular case, it's not really the doctrine of hell, but it points to the reality of hell.

And it points to the doctrine that will be developed in the New Testament, not the Old Testament, but in the New Testament. And so people say, well, George, you know, you're just taking things out of context. The Bible doesn't really teach this.

Like, George, it's all just filled with poetic imagery. And here's the thing. Here's the way the book of Amos is structured, just so you understand that this isn't just something which is, you know, George just has this, he's anal.

[ 3 : 47 ] And, you know, he's getting really old, and he's getting more and more grumpy. And so he just wants to talk about an anal grumpy thing. It's not like that at all. The way Amos is set up, there's three different parts. The first two chapters is one part.

And it's very interesting. It's a series of eight poems, or oracles. And it talks about some besetting or main sins of the six nations that surround Israel and Judah.

And then it talks about the sins of Israel and Judah. So it's a general picture of how God is judge of both Israel, Judah, and all the nations. And then in chapters three, four, five, and six, it's the second section.

It's a bit of a different literary structure, a bit of back and forward. And some people comment that it's almost as if somebody's making a legal brief and trying to say to Israel, these are the things that are going on in your nation, which are really, really, really wrong.

And it means that you're under God's judgment because of it. And they're grouped around three types of things. In chapters three, four, five, and six, it's grouped around economic and political oppression and injustice.

[ 4 : 53 ] And it's not just an anti-capitalist rant. It's not just about government. It's everything. It's talking about how at the level of the culture, at the level of government, at the level of religious and spiritual institutions, at the level of business, and at the level of just private behavior, that there's economic oppression and injustice that's going on that God hates.

He hates it. It goes completely against him. And the second category of sins is false religion. And the third category of sins is that their habit, their ever-deepening habit of telling God to shut up, to silence God.

And that's what goes on in chapters three, four, five, and six. And in the third section of the book of Amos, seven, eight, and nine, it's organized around five visions. And the visions are sort of talked about.

And chapter seven had three of them. Chapter eight is all around the fourth vision. And chapter nine, the first part of it, is around the fifth vision. So that's the context. I'm not just taking this out of some type of context.

It's not a proof text. Because I'm getting really old. And, you know, maybe you think I'm anal and I'm getting grumpy. And I probably am getting grumpy as I get older. You can pray about that for me. Nobody should want to get grumpier and grumpier as they get older, by the way.

[ 6 : 19 ] And so here's the context. And now after all this, you're going to go, George, the beginning seems lame after that long introduction. But it's important. Listen to it.

Verse one. In the first half of verse two. This is what the Lord God showed me. Right? It's a vision. Behold. In other words, look. Okay? Whoa, look, look, look.

Okay? A basket of summer fruit. Lame, right? After all that introduction. A basket of summer fruit. And God said, Amos, what do you see?

And I said, a basket of summer fruit. And then we'll get to what the Lord says in a moment. So here's the first thing about it. The vision is something which actually, if anything, it's not, most people would see that.

Here's the thing about that. I was thinking about that all this week. Barbara Allen, she really likes it that two or three times a year we have special bulletin covers. God bless her. And I don't mind it. One of them is Christmas.

[ 7 : 14 ] One of them is Easter. And the other one is Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving. And so every Thanksgiving we have a special bulletin cover. And in fact, a basket of summer fruit might very well be our bulletin cover. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if in churches in North America, on Thanksgiving Sunday, many of them have bulletin covers with baskets of summer fruit.

All of the nice produce, the fruit and the vegetables of the year, nice big basket, tasteful display. In fact, many churches, when we used to have a church building, we would actually have, you know, pumpkins and fruit and all and all up at the front to decorate it for Thanksgiving Sunday.

So on one hand, it's a very, very innocuous image. But this sort of, it's just a minor, I don't know, do I have points, Andrew? You do. Okay, so this is a very, very minor point, but it's really an important one to keep remembering, is that the Bible reports and interprets.

That's what the Bible is. The Bible reports or records and it interprets. And both parts of it's important. The Bible tells us the things that God has done, how he created the world, how he delivered Egypt, how he made a covenant, how he, you know, destroys the Tower of Babel, how he sends Jesus.

And there's all these things that the Bible records God doing, but the Bible also interprets it. Because as we know, it's very, very hard just from seeing something to be able to interpret what on earth it means.

[ 8 : 34 ] And so we have this sort of surprising vision, a basket of like the end of the harvest and here's all of the harvest and it's really bountiful.

And it's a surprising vision. Because it's easy to look at this and say, oh, it's a good thing. It's going to be a hopeful vision. It's filled with fruit and veggies.

But now it takes a very, very sudden and surprising turn. And if you read verses, we'll read all of verse 2 and we'll read verse 3 again.

So we'll read verse 2 again. And he said, Amos, what do you see? And I said, a basket of summer fruit. Then the Lord said to me, the end has come upon my people Israel. I will never again pass by them.

The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day, declares the Lord God. So many dead bodies. They are thrown everywhere. Silence.

[ 9 : 35 ] Now partly, I didn't know this before I looked up, although the Bible, many of your Bibles have a little note that may be helpful. In Hebrew, there's a bit of a play on words.

And the word in Hebrew for summer fruit and the word in Hebrew for the end are two different words. But in spoken Hebrew, they sound the same. So then in a conversation, you'd have to know from the context whether or not it's referring to summer fruit or the end.

And if it was written, you wouldn't have to know. You would just know it by looking at it. But spoken, it's a play on words. And it's a very, very interesting vision because it's, I mean, with the play on words, it's a little bit, I guess, like how a comedian in his or her diatribe, they'll take a word out of one of the stories to segue into their next story or joke.

And then they'll take a word or a phrase from that to move into their next thing. And that's, in a sense, what Amos is doing, what God is doing through the vision and through the interpretation. But it's very, very interesting because, you see, it's partly the vision is dealing with the gap between Israel's self-perception and self-assessment and the reality.

And Israel really was very much in the year 750 BC or 740 BC. It really was very much like Canada today. It was a country where there's lots of different spiritualities, where there's still a type of formal religion.

[ 11 : 07 ] It was a country that was very, very prosperous. And it was a country that was very, very safe. But it was safe and prosperous primarily by accident, just like Canada is.

I hope I don't offend you, but Canada is safe by accident. If we had a border with Russia, we would have a very different country. I mean, our military would be five times bigger, just to put it quite bluntly.

Might even have to be ten times bigger than what we currently have. We really, in a sense, it's just because we have these really friendly, very prosperous neighbors to the south that we have a lot of our prosperity.

And we definitely have all of our safety. And in Israel, it was the same thing at the time. It was a very, very prosperous country and very safe. And their safety really had to do just because of the fact that it came during several decades where there were internal problems in two big empires that were nearby.

That kept them preoccupied with each other and kept them worried about getting out of their own boundaries, lest the other one engage in a war. And that was going to come to the end some 20 years or so after the writing of Amos, when in fact Assyria arose triumphant.

[ 12 : 18 ] And in 722, maybe about 20 years after the writing of Amos, the northern nation, the nation of Israel, is invaded by Assyria. And it's completely destroyed. And there's no Jewish people left from that kingdom.

The people that Amos is speaking to, objectively, historically, some 20 years after the writing of Amos, ceased to exist. After the Assyrian invasion.

So their self-perception is, and I think I talked about this last week, but this is true by coincidence. I had to go to Vancouver and back this week for some denominational business.

And I was getting on the plane on Thursday. And there's this young woman way up ahead. And she had looked like she had like a two-year-old and a four-year-old. And it looks like she was trying to get a two-year-old and a four-year-old by herself into a plane.

And so the whole lineup to get into the plane stops while she's trying to wrestle the kids, put them in the seats, get stuff up on bins.

[ 13 : 23 ] And I'm just standing there holding my stuff. And I'm in first class. And I just look around. And, oh, there's Beverly, the Supreme Court Justice of Canada, beside me with her husband, Frank. Oh, sort of neat.

They're just sitting there working. But here's the thing, right? If you, I've said this before, how would, how, if when the Supreme Court meets, when the cabinet meets, when the mayor meets, what is their perception of themselves spiritually and economically?

They would see us as being on the right path, things to still work on, as us being a prosperous nation, that things are going well. It's a basket of summer fruit. And God uses this vision to try to puncture by this wordplay to make them realize that their self-perception and self-assessment is completely different than the reality.

that, in fact, they're under God's judgment. And so there's this very, very powerful image. Nothing will ruin a yoga class more than God showing up.

Nothing will ruin the worship in many cathedrals than God showing up. And one of the things we have to pray for ourselves is that if God shows up, it wouldn't ruin our day.

[ 14 : 58 ] In fact, actually, I mean, I don't know what's going on in our hearts, but even the way that the Anglican worship is structured following the Book of Common Prayer, it's that the model is in the first part of the service is that Jesus gathers his people.

And then God speaks to us by his word. Then we enter into holy communion as we remember Jesus' death upon the cross and his mighty resurrection and the Lord's Supper that he instituted. And then the Holy Spirit leads us out.

The whole way of the structure of the service is hopefully that we understand that it's Jesus who gathers us, that God speaks to us, that we remember and receive grace as we partake of communion and think about Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit leads us out.

But that's what happens here in verses 2 and 3 is that they're in worship and God shows up, and it means wailing and death. Because for many cathedrals and churches, the worst thing that could happen would be that God shows up.

Now, some of us might say, George, isn't this a little bit unfair of God? Like, it seems a bit extreme. It seems a little bit anal.

[16:11] In fact, George, it seems really anal. Not just a little bit, but a lot. Well, remember, that's why I said at the beginning, you know, here's how the book of Amos is structured of the three sections.

And the three visions that we looked at last week are also this God bearing witness to his people, God speaking to his people about what's going on. And the text itself helps us to remember these primary things that Amos, that God has been speaking to Israel throughout all of Amos.

And it goes immediately into a time of remembering us. If our reaction is, well, God shows up and it leads to all of this death and wailing, and surely that seems a bit extreme. Immediately, Amos, I mean, God, interpreting this vision.

Look at verses 4 to 6. Hear this, you who trample on the needy, and bring the poor of the land to an end. Just actually pause here before we go any further.

The word for needy here, it's a very, very good word. It could also be translated as weakling or underdog or powerless person.

[17:16] And so needy is, you know, if you think about it, they're all good words. Needy is a very, very good word. Like some of you might say, George, I don't run Google. I'm not a deputy minister in the government.

I'm not the Supreme Court, the head of the Supreme Court of Canada. I'm not in Justin Trudeau's cabinet. Like, I don't run a business. I don't do any of these things. And so it's easy for us to hear.

In fact, I've heard Amos preached, where it just merely becomes an anti-capitalist rant. In other words, the text is for other people to listen to rather than us.

But here's the question for each of us before we go any further. How do we treat, or how in our history have we treated, weak people who can't do anything against us if we're mean to them?

Like in your office or in your class, is there a socially, or in your family, is there a socially awkward person that nobody likes, and people either talk about them behind their back, or even to their face, do things that are mean and laugh at them?

[18:32] And when that happens, do you rise to their defense? Or do you let it happen? When there's a chance at a party, or at lunch, do you make a point to seek out that socially awkward, weak person to sit with them?

Or are you worried that if you identify too closely with the socially awkward, weak person, it will affect your status? Do you trample on the weak?

Do I? When I point to you, I have three fingers pointing back at myself. I'm not trying to say I'm somehow exempt. Like in a moment, I'm just going to talk about honesty.

Do we, when we try to tell about what's going on in the office, or in school, or some other way, do we exaggerate, do we hide the popular person's faults, or exaggerate what they've done in a good way?

Do we exaggerate our own accomplishments, and try to hide the things that we've done that are wrong? Are we honest about that? When we have a yard sale, or we want to try to sell something on Kijiji, do we misrepresent what we put on Kijiji, and say, oh yeah, it's lightly used, it's only three years old, and we don't tell them that it actually came from a home daycare with 20 completely and utterly out of control kids who jumped on it?

[ 20 : 09 ] In other words, are we dishonest? Because you know what? Come on, this is really worth it. We should get at least another 50, you know, 20, 10 bucks, at least another 10 bucks. Are we dishonest for just a couple of dollars?

And it's going to talk in a moment about being in church and thinking about other things. And I'm not going to say that, George, you don't have to worry about that. You're up there trying to remember your sermon.

You don't know what it's like to listen to you. Good grief, to listen to you, to listen to you, to listen to you. George, no wonder my mind is wandering. You know, I go to other services and Bible studies and other types of things where other people are leading, so I understand that it can be really hard.

But what does our mind drift to? Often what our mind drifts to reveals our idols. And if our mind is always drifting, if we're in a meeting and our mind is drifting to that mean thing that somebody said to us and how we want to get them back, if our mind drifts to some pornographic images or adultery, if it drifts to imagining that we're really great in sports or in singing or in business, like, what our minds drift to help to reveal to us what our idols are.

like, when you're in a business meeting at work, does your mind drift to what the Bible says? And I'm not trying to be hard on us.

[ 21 : 50 ] I'm just trying to help us to understand how easy it is when we hear the Bible to think that the Bible is talking about other people, not about ourselves. Listen to verses 4 through 6.

Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, saying, when will the new moon be over, that's a religious festival, that we may sell grain?

You know, that's in other words, they're in a church service and the Sabbath that we may offer wheat for sale. They're in church, they're in a religious festival, all they're thinking of is making money. Their bodies are there, their minds and their hearts are somewhere else.

And then it even gets worse, that we may make the effa small and the shuckle great and deal deceitfully with false balances, that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the chaff of the wheat.

So the text is talking about us. And it's trying to touch our own hearts.

[ 22 : 52 ] So remember that the vision is a vision of summer fruit and he uses the vision of the summer fruit to talk about the end. And the end is that God actually shows up.

He actually shows up and he shows up in the middle of worship. It ruins worship. And as I said, as we get deeper into the interpretation, we see that it's a hint, a rumor, a pointing to the doctrine of hell.

And some of you might say, well, George, okay. I mean, that was probably true about those moral things. And you are probably right that I do tend to look at this and think, well, I don't do anything with deceitful false balances, so I don't have to worry about this.

Text doesn't really refer to me. And gosh, I sure hope that mean guy Trump is listening to this text because it'll really nail him right between the eyes like is what I want, is where our mind starts to go.

Where Hillary Clinton, \$156 million from a few donors to get access. I mean, we can think about how these things affect the politicians and others and not think about how it affects us.

[ 24 : 04 ] But George, isn't a lot of it just poetry? Like George, I mean, in a few moments it's going to talk about the moon, I mean, the sun going dark and the rivers rising. I mean, George, you're going to try to, you're trying to take something which is really fundamentally just a poetic text and try to make it look like it talks about something real like hell because George, I think you're talking about as if something like hell really exists and George, this is poetry that we're talking about.

This is poetry that we're talking about. Well, oh actually, I missed a point. Andrew, could you put up the second point? Sort of a bit out of order but I still want to put it here. Meeting God is inevitable.

Meeting God is inevitable. It's one of the constant messages of all the book of Amos. It's inevitable. But let's look at this imagery language here.

It's going to come up right away in verses 7 through 10. The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their deeds. Shall not the land tremble on this account and everyone mourn who dwells in it and all of it rise like the Nile and be tossed about and sink again like the Nile of Egypt and on that day declares the Lord, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth and broad daylight.

I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation. I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head. I will make it like the mourning, M-O-U-R-N, mourning, for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.

[ 25 : 35 ] The end of it like a bitter day. The hard part for us to understand this text and obviously on one hand there's something poetic about it but it's more than just poetry.

It's trying to communicate to us something which our culture helps to, in a sense, program us to not to be able to hear. Andrew, if you could put up the next thing.

I am a creature living in creation with a creator. But we think of ourselves as being masters or gods who live in a self-made or technologically made world.

That's how we think of ourselves. But we're not. We're not. We aren't masters or gods with small g's.

who live in a world of our creation. When I was coming home in the plane yesterday there was this guy who was really, really grumpy. I heard him talking to the poor women who were serving.

[ 26 : 44 ] He was really grumpy, really aggressive because he wanted to go to the bathroom and they were still serving food to other people. And you could see that he thought that everything in the plane and all of their work habits and even other people being able to get their coke or their tomato juice should all revolve around his particular needs when he had to meet them.

But, you know, there's a system, there's fairness, there's other people, it doesn't work that way. But in our lives, you know, we tend to think of like that all of it is like there's a room like this, well, we can rent this room and this is a self-made room.

But we forget the fact that we are creatures. We really are. We were born. We will die. We live in a created order. We're dependent upon the planet hurling around the sun at a certain speed and turning on its axis at a certain speed and we're dependent on gravity and we're dependent on an environment and we're dependent on everything.

We are just completely and utterly, we cannot exist apart from a created order. And that created order has a creator. And that's who we really are and we find it profoundly uncomfortable to be reminded that we had a beginning and that we will have an end.

We find it profoundly uncomfortable to be reminded that we're creatures and that there is in fact a creator. We find it very, very uncomfortable and unsettling.

[ 28 : 11 ] And even if we can take it in church, it's so easy for us to go out and walk and begin to live as if that's not the case. There is no creator and it's not a created order. That we are somehow masters of our destiny, masters of our fate, masters of the universe and we're part of Canada and if the water doesn't work, the electricity doesn't work, it's somebody else's fault and maybe I should even be able to sue them and get some money back for the discomfort that it's caused me because we believe we've made it, we control it, we're masters, but we're not.

We're not. The Bible is more realistic about human existence than Hollywood or universities or our culture that maintains us in illusions of what the world is like and what we are like in existence.

And so what we see in this text is like in Genesis chapter 1 and 2, God creates human beings and he makes the entire, everything that exists, he makes everything that exists, he makes human beings alone as ones who bear God's image and they have a special role to tend the earth as stewards for the glory of God and in fellowship with God, in fellowship with God as his stewards to tend the planet.

And we fall, we desire to be like gods, and to not acknowledge that God is God and that he is the creator and it bends us, it twists us, the theological word is that we become fallen and it affects all of the created order and all of this language of the sun and the moon, on one hand it is poetic, but it's poetic to communicate this important truth that when human beings who are made to be in fellowship with God and under God to be stewards of the created order that when God judges human beings, all creation mourns because we are creatures in a created order and as part of that created order comes under God's judgment, all of creation mourns.

And it's here that we see some of these intimations of hell.

[ 30 : 48 ] Just look back to verse 2, the end of verse 2. The end has come upon my people Israel. I will never again pass by them.

Look at verse 7, the very last bit. I will never forget any of their deeds. Look at verse 10, the last words, and the end of it like a bitter day.

And jumping ahead, the very last words of verse 12. They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it. And the very last verse of the whole section, verse 14, the very final words, they shall fall and never rise again.

Some people still think that God's not fair. I'm going to deal with that in a second, but in fact, partly what this is describing is what can only happen if God exists and we inevitably meet him.

And part of what we see here is that God, in fact, is very fair. We human beings don't need justice from God. It's our arrogance to think that we need justice from God.

[ 32 : 06 ] We need mercy. I mean, we do need his justice. That's at the center of the whole moral order. We don't want God's justice to crumble and all of a sudden moral orders to crumble, but we need mercy.

But look at verses 11 and 12. We see here, in a sense, the justice of God, the fairness of God. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land.

George, this doesn't sound very fair. 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. They shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east.

They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it. Now, here's the interesting thing about this text is it isn't that God stops speaking or that he takes his word away, but the time comes when people can no longer hear.



You see, all the way through the book of Amos, God keeps reminding people that they have developed habits and a culture, both personal habits and cultural habits, to tell God to be silent.

[ 33 : 18 ] God be silent, God be silent, God be silent, God be quiet, God don't speak, God I don't want to listen, God be silent. And at some point in time, God gives us what we have desired from him, only to discover that it's ruinous for us.

And it's a very, very tragic image. Imagine a Star Trek episode to maybe be able to get the weight of it. And in a Star Trek episode, some of the crew go down to this ship and they don't realize that as they go down to the ship, they've done something to transgress the ancient masters who built the ship 100,000 years ago or whatever.

And a strange delusion comes upon them. And in this strange delusion, they're not allowed to leave the ship. But the ship, every day, every morning, there's food that's set up for them in a large hall, which they know where it is and they go into it all of the time.

They pass through it constantly. And in that, every day, there's an entire Chinese buffet. There's an entire Indian food buffet. There's an entire Caribbean food buffet. There's an entire North American carnivore buffet.

There's an entire vegan buffet. And it's all set out there. And yet, the people on the Star Trek ship trying to figure out what's going on with this crew and they're watching the crew and the crew are standing right in the midst of all of these buffets and saying, we're starving to death.

[ 34 : 44 ] There's nothing here to eat. And in the Star Trek Enterprise, they're saying, we can't let these people back onto our ship. There is a strange delusion and illness that they are surrounded by food and yet believe that there's no food there and they're starving to death.

They say to the Enterprise, we're dying of thirst. and the Enterprise looks and there's goblets of water and pitchers of water and of beer and of wine and of Coke and of everything all around them.

And it's a strange delusion. You see, here's the thing about the justice of God in all of this. What would it be like for those of us who don't really love the truth to meet God who is only truth?

What is it like for us who sometimes are a bit dishonest to meet the being who is pure honesty? What is it like for us who occasionally like to trample on the weak and be unjust to meet pure justice?

What is it like for us who desire to have some other God any God but the living God to finally be in the presence of God himself inescapably in his presence undeniably in his presence undeniably in the presence of that which is just is perfectly true perfectly beautiful perfectly pure perfectly himself and if we have developed deep habits of wanting anything other than that to be inescapably in his presence will lead to our wailing.

[ 36 : 51 ] We have worshipped the uncreator and we are finally faced because we believe that we are a self-made person and we are finally brutally conscious that we are in the presence of the creator and all our desires to believe in uncreation or a master of our being our own universe are revealed to be complete delusions.

If God meets us and God is who he is then to be in his presence inescapably and purely but by grace will lead to our wailing.

He can't stop being who he is. And if all of our life we have said to God be silent how can we complain if all of a sudden we no longer can hear him at all?

and the text shows this tragedy of they keep going looking everywhere to hear the voice of God but where do they go? They go to idols look at verses 13 and 14 in that day the lovely virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst those who swear by the guilt of Amaria and say as your God lives Odan and as the way of Beersheba lives they go everywhere other than to God as they die and they shall fall and never rise again.

This can be pretty stark and I mean on one hand for us as Christians it's just a matter for us to be gripped by this.

[ 38 : 35 ] The full doctrine of hell will be discussed and developed in the New Testament especially from the words of Jesus but here's some things lots of points just in a couple of things over the last few minutes here's the thing within the text.

God confronts to connect. If you could put that up Andrew please God confronts to connect and I'm not just saying that because I want to say it next week you'll see that after eight and a half chapters of God constantly telling people of their danger that their self-perception is completely and utterly at odds of their real need the final few verses of the book of Amos give the possibility of redemption.

God is confronting us to connect he's not confronting us to disconnect but to get our attention that we might call out to him in mercy and in the text there's two places where it also points to this possibility of mercy if you could turn to verse seven verse seven the Lord is sworn by the pride of Jacob surely I will never forget any of their deeds he doesn't say he won't forgive he says he won't forget there's a whole other sermon on this but you know for most of us the way we live our lives is forgetting the wrong things that we've done and hoping that others forget and we live remembering the wrong things of our enemies or those who displease us and we desire that everybody remember those bad things that they've done and we don't realize that we're treating ourselves and others to very different standards and for many of us when we go to make an apology we don't actually make apologies what we do is make a long list of excuses to show that there's actually nothing that we ever did that was wrong and needs any forgiveness and we're deeply confused but this text says that God won't forget he can't forget he knows all things but it doesn't say he won't forgive there's this if we're attentive in this subtle thing it'll become more clear next week there's this chance we can call out to God for mercy and there's other another thing in this text which also points at an even deeper truth the fact that God in fact will provide a means by which we can be reconciled to him and it comes and it and it comes in listen to it again and on that day declares the Lord

God I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth and broad daylight I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation I will bring sackcloth and every waist and baldness on every head I will make it like the morning for an only sun and the end of it like a bitter day we Christians know that some 750 years or 760 years after the writing of this text there was a day when God the son of God walked to his execution and he paused and said to the woman do not mourn for me and we know that there was a day where there was like the morning as if the death of an only sun when the sky went dark for three hours and where the earth trembled and there were earthquakes at the moment of his death it was a bitter day a day of mourning and a day of sack cloth the same text which hints at the reality of hell but opens the door that the

God who does not forget can yet still forgive and have mercy on his people because he does not confront to disconnect but he confronts to connect the same text points to that day in Golgotha when God the son of God will pay the price that you and I cannot pay and offer a sacrifice that we could never offer ourselves and bear in himself that which we did that was wrong so that God's forgiveness might be available to all who put their trust in him and so if you're a guest here or a seeker here if you walk away from here thinking that I think that I'm more honest than other people or more truthful than other people and that to become part of church of the messiah church of the messiah is that collective known as people who are only honest who only listen to God that is not the case we are to be people who are gripped by Amos 8 and recognize that we need God's mercy and have received his full total and complete mercy in the person of his son and what he did for us on the cross that I stand before God not trumpeting my honesty or my ability to listen to him but I humbly and with gratitude stand saying he has stood in my place in my place condemned he stood and the righteousness

[ 43 : 58 ] I stand with before you now father is not something that I have earned or accomplished but I am clothed in the perfect life of Jesus when he offered his life in exchange for mine and it is by grace we stand it's God's grace that allows us to look at those things in our lives that we have done that are wrong knowing that we can look at them and begin to deal with them because Jesus knew about that and died for that too it's as we're gripped by the gospel and we understand the forgiveness offered to us in Jesus that we can begin to understand our need to forgive others that we might be free it's because of what he did for us on the cross that we can begin to listen to those texts in the bible that so terrify us when they talk about money or sex or how to use our power or how to care for the poor or the weak or the needy and they can so terrify us and we can understand because the gospel that

God loves us so much that he in the person of his son died to deal with all that there is within us which is unjust and dishonest he did all of that for us and so we can have the courage to understand that when we listen to his instruction it is for our good and for the good of our society and if you could put up the next to last slide I think I missed God service number six God does not offer to forget he offers to forgive and then number seven here's the thing about listening to the Bible I can listen to another person without agreeing with them I cannot listen to God without agreeing with him please stand Andrew could you put up the final point please here's a prayer sort of in closing I'll just say it and then I'll invite you to join with me in saying it in a moment dear

Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel who listens to your word and lives a just and honest life for your glory that's what the text is pushing us to not to become proud and conceited about how honest we are how good we are at listening to God but as his word convicts us to be able to confess to God God there's whole areas of my life I didn't realize I was shut I don't realize Lord that I can't read your Bible because all I do is think about how it applies to Clinton or how it applies to Trump and I never think about how it applies to me or I think how it applies to my brother-in-law or my dad but I don't think how Lord I didn't realize I don't listen to you and as we're gripped by the gospel as that becomes the basis on which we stand we have begin to get freed up to have self examination and then call out to God for his help to amend our lives because who doesn't want to live a life that is honest and true like on one hand that's what we want we know that's what we were made for and it says we're gripped by the gospel as we give ourselves to

Jesus and trust him as our savior and as that gospel grips us that out of gratitude and out of that being the center of our moral map and our mental map that these other acts and changes in our hand times i government love of man li avec our name a man