

## Amos 3:1-4:13 (PM)

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Date: 02 July 2023

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] So, 800 years before Christ, around 800 BC, there's a guy, he's called Amos, he lives in the Promised Land, and at this point in history, the Promised Land is broken up into two bits, right? A northern kingdom and a southern kingdom, Israel and Judah, and Amos was a shepherd, he lived in the southern kingdom, and God called him to travel north to the northern kingdom to speak to the people of Israel.

And the book of the Bible, called Amos, records what God told him to say. Simple. We're week two into a six-week series looking at these words.

And as we'll go, we'll learn that God is very, very committed to his people. God is very committed to us.

He doesn't want us to drift in our faith. He doesn't want us to lose our way spiritually. He's very committed to us. He watches, he sees, he feels what's going on, which means when he's unsatisfied, when he is disappointed, he acts.

He does something. He disciplines. He judges. And Israel, at the time of Amos, was spiritually really rotten. There was a group of very wealthy people who remained wealthy off the back of the poor.

[ 1 : 2 3 ] And they would happily turn up to church each week, putting on a good show, presuming that God was cool with whatever they did because, you know, they're God's chosen ones. And God sees it all, and he's really displeased.

So he sends Samos into town to deliver this catastrophic verdict on them. So, you ready? Let's get into details.

So do you see how Amos starts? And it's probably really helpful to have the Bible open, page 765, I believe. Do you see how Amos starts? He's ready to tell them that God's going to judge them.

But do you see what he does first in verse 1? He says, I brought you out of the land of Egypt. You were the only, you only have I known of all the families of the earth. You were slaves, God says, and I rescued you.

I didn't have to do that. I rescued you from all of the people of the earth. I chose you. I chose you. But it seems like the Israelites had taken on Canaanite pagan values.

[ 2 : 3 1 ] A sort of a religious, a sort of a pagan way of doing religion, which was this. It's like this. The Canaanite religions had no real ethical implications.

So you'd go to the temple, you'd throw some money in the offering pot, and then you kind of just do whatever you wanted. A little money, a little ritual, and then you live as you please. And that's how the Israelites were approaching God.

They thought they could do whatever they wanted because they were the chosen ones. We're God's chosen ones. We're the special guys. It's kind of like the Christian equivalent of us saying, I've got Jesus.

I'm all set. Like I can, I'm just going to settle in and just do, just kind of just do whatever. Because I've got Jesus. I go to church often-ish.

I'm good. But that's not the way to live, is it? It's not the way to live back then. It's not the way to live now. You know, we can actually, we can have Jesus, but still face the displeasure of God.

[ 3 : 31 ] This is what was happening back in the days as well. So these Israelites, they were people of immense spiritual privilege like us. God had chosen them, but they were riding on that.

They sort of viewed God's, they sort of thought God's sole interest in life was just to make them happy and bless them. And they were such entitled people. So to these folks, Amos says, the Lord has spoken against you and will punish you for your iniquities.

But going back to the start, he punishes because he loves. He calls them out because they are his people. You could put it like this.

God says, we're in a covenant relationship. But that doesn't mean that you can get away with more. It actually means I'm going to hold you to a higher standard.

When I drop my kids off to school, I say the same thing to them each day. I say, today, I want you to be kind, courageous, and helpful.

[ 4 : 42 ] I want you to be kind, courageous, and helpful. I love my kids. They're my kids. They could, I could, I would forgive them for anything. But I hold them to a higher standard than other people's kids.

Let's keep going. Verse 1 and 2, as a reminder, God loves his people. He loves them, so he will keep them accountable because he loves them. Because he is so committed to them.

So God is going to discipline them. All right, the next thing to talk about is what will that discipline actually look like? Like, practically, what does God actually say he's going to do to these people who are spiritually kind of rotten?

And that's chapter 3, verses 11 and 12. It's very clear. Therefore, thus says the Lord, an adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds will be plundered.

So it's pretty clear. An enemy country will invade, God says. That's what's going to happen. An enemy country is going to invade and sort of take most of you out. And that actually happened 50 years after Amos was written.

[ 5 : 56 ] Now, God says he won't be completely destroyed, which is what verse 12 is about. That's that kind of quite odd verse there. As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of a lion two legs and a piece of ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued with the corner of a couch and part of a bed.

So it's like if a lion attacks a sheep, it's not going to disappear completely. There'll be like a bit of a foot, like a shank left. Yeah, something like that.

Like for Israel, it's like, I'm not going to like, you won't disappear. There'll be a bit of a couch left and a bit of a bed left. Interestingly, things used for comfort.

That's probably not a coincidence there. So the picture is this. God is coming like a lion. The judgment will be catastrophic, but there will be a remnant left because the goal is not a lion annihilation.

The goal is actually restoration. Now, Amos does not want the Israelites to think he is messing around when he says this to them.

[ 6 : 59 ] He says the country is going to come in. It's going to take most of, you know, it's going to destroy the place. Amos doesn't want these guys to think these are just empty words. Like I'm just sort of fooling around here.

It's like, I've said this before. Sometimes I'll say ridiculous things to my children. Like ridiculous things. Like if you don't get off the PlayStation, I'll throw that PlayStation out the window. Like I have no intention of throwing out, you know, a PlayStation 3 worth an enormous amount of money.

I'm not going to do that. Obviously, it's just empty words. But Amos wants to know, I'm not messing around. We're not messing around here. Which is, if you look at verses 3 to 6, there's that series of riddles, which is hard to sort of work out what's going on.

That's what that's trying to convey. A series of little riddles where the answer's always no. There's two examples here I'll give you. Does a lion roar when there's no prey?

No. Does a bird fall into a snare when there's no trap? No. See, one thing always follows the other. They're inseparable events. So when this judgment comes in the form of an invasion, God doesn't want them thinking, goodness, this is a bit random.

[ 8 : 09 ] This is just like a thing that happened. Just out of nowhere. He wants them to know, verse 8, the lion has roared.

Now, as an aside, we cannot equate every trouble in our life to God's disciplining us, right? I stubbed my toe.

Was it because I yelled at my mother? That is not, you can't, it doesn't quite, it's not like that. It's not quite that simple. But, but, it is probably good spiritual practice.

When trouble happens in your life, something breaks down, you lose a relationship, or you fail at something. It's probably good to ask the question, is God removing something that I've been leaning on?

Is God taking away a prop that I've been leaning on in my life for a reason? Is God visiting me somehow in this? Because there's compromise in my life.

[ 9 : 12 ] Does God somehow want to deal with me? Meet me somehow in this? You can't always make that connection. Bad things happen, God has punished me. No, no, no, you can't. It's not a linear relationship.

But it's probably good spiritual practice to ask if God is doing something in this. Let's keep going. What have we learned so far? A little bit of a summary quickly here.

God has the right to judge, and He judges because He loves us. With, with this relationship, there's great accountability, first thing. Second thing, we've also learned how God will judge these folks.

It's through this catastrophic invasion. An invasion that will take out their churches. It's going to take out their summer homes. That's verses 14 and 15. All the places of comfort that they go to.

All the things they lean on are going to be gone. Come on. That's what God, that's what God is going to do here. And now, I want to get to this question. A very important question. Is why? Why is He doing this?

[ 10 : 08 ] Because it's such a serious thing to do. Chapter 4. We're going into chapter 4 now. Verse 1. One of the great lines of the Bible.

Hear this word. You cows of Bashan. It's brilliant, right? You cows of Bashan.

I love this. You don't need a theological degree to know that when you call somebody a cow, that's an insult.

That's an insult, right? In any language. You can back me up here, right? In any language, in any time in history, that is not a favorable assessment of somebody.

Let me read verse 1 in its completeness of chapter 4. And you'll be reminded again of why this assessment came about.

[ 11 : 12 ] Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria. It's kind of like a wealthy area. Who oppress the poor. Who crush the needy.

Who say to your husbands, bring me a drink. It's like this little window into the life of the upper class in Samaria. It's like you're peeking into the window of the house and you see this really lazy, wealthy woman drunkenly ordering her family around so she can just get absolutely tanked.

And all of their wealth is made on the backs of the poor. Now, if you think it's terrible that it's just picking on woman here, we'll get to the men.

We will get to the men in later chapters. So don't feel like you're being selectively insulted here. The men will be insulted later. Lazy woman ordering the family around.

Once they get tanked, all their money is built on the backs of the poor. They had summer homes. They had winter homes. Verse 15. They had homes made out of ivory. I don't even know what that means. But like it's opulence, isn't it?

[ 12 : 23 ] It's a great life. They had a great life. But it was built on injustice. And they go to church. Verses 4 and 5. They go to church. Bethel is the place of worship.

If you look at 4 or 5, there's this very sort of sarcastic call to worship. Come to Bethel and transgress. Saying, go to church and sin. And what's going on there?

And it says you bring your sacrifices, you bring your tithes every three days. Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and freewill offerings. It's like you go to church. You even give more than you need to.

But because of how you live, your whole worship is just, it's a mockery. So God judges them. He judges them for their indifference.

He judges them for their self-centeredness. He judges them for their vacuous religiosity. In chapter 4, 6 to 11, again, there's a series of things that's sort of tricky to understand what's going on.

[ 13 : 22 ] But they're helpful to us because they explain to us that God's judgment, it's not like God all of a sudden just loses his temper. He's looking at this place going, oh my goodness, look at these people. Oh, this drives me crazy.

God doesn't lose his temper like we lose our temper. And all of a sudden, just out of nowhere, just, you know, call this invasion in. God doesn't lose his temper like I do, you know, with my kids.

Verses 6 to 11 is a list of things that God allowed to happen to Israel. And you slide your eyes down that list. It's famines and drought and crop failures. And verse 11, you see that repeated line.

Yet you did not return to me. Yet you did not return to me. You did not return to me. All this stuff happens, and at no point are they kind of considering, goodness, is God speaking to us?

Should I return to God? Do we need to repent? It's like I've got nothing to lean on. Like, I don't know what we're doing here. Like, at no point did they ever think about God and all of the troubles.

[ 14 : 24 ] They were not coming to God. So Amos says, God is coming to you. And he's coming to you in a very serious way. And the words of verse 12 are very chilling, aren't they?

After so many words, verse 12, Amos says, prepare to meet your God, O Israel. Now let me close up here. God is committed to us.

He is committed to us as a community and as individuals. And we're on the other side of the story of the Bible where we know about Jesus dying on the cross for us and rising again. So we know so much more about that commitment.

How costly it was for God to be committed to us. He's so committed to us that he doesn't want us to be spiritually dead.

So if you choose to follow Jesus, folks, you should know what you're dealing with. You're dealing with a God who is not going to leave you alone. Who doesn't want you to drift. Who won't let you drift.

[ 15 : 28 ] Or become complacent. He doesn't want you to fool around and do stupid things. Jesus loves you. And because he loves you, you can experience his displeasure.

All this stuff about, this is not just like, oh, this is all Old Testament stuff. New Testament is much nicer. No, like Hebrews 10 says it's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of a living God.

Friends, our God is a lion. Twice the passage calls him the Lord of hosts. Which is just a phrase, if you've been here in Christian circles, you've heard it for years.

It literally means the Lord of armies. This is not a happy picture of God. God is the lion that roars.

And he roars because he loves you. And if he's unhappy with what you're doing, you will know. So come to God. Come back to God if that is you.

[ 16 : 25 ] Friends, there is abundant forgiveness in life. Amen.