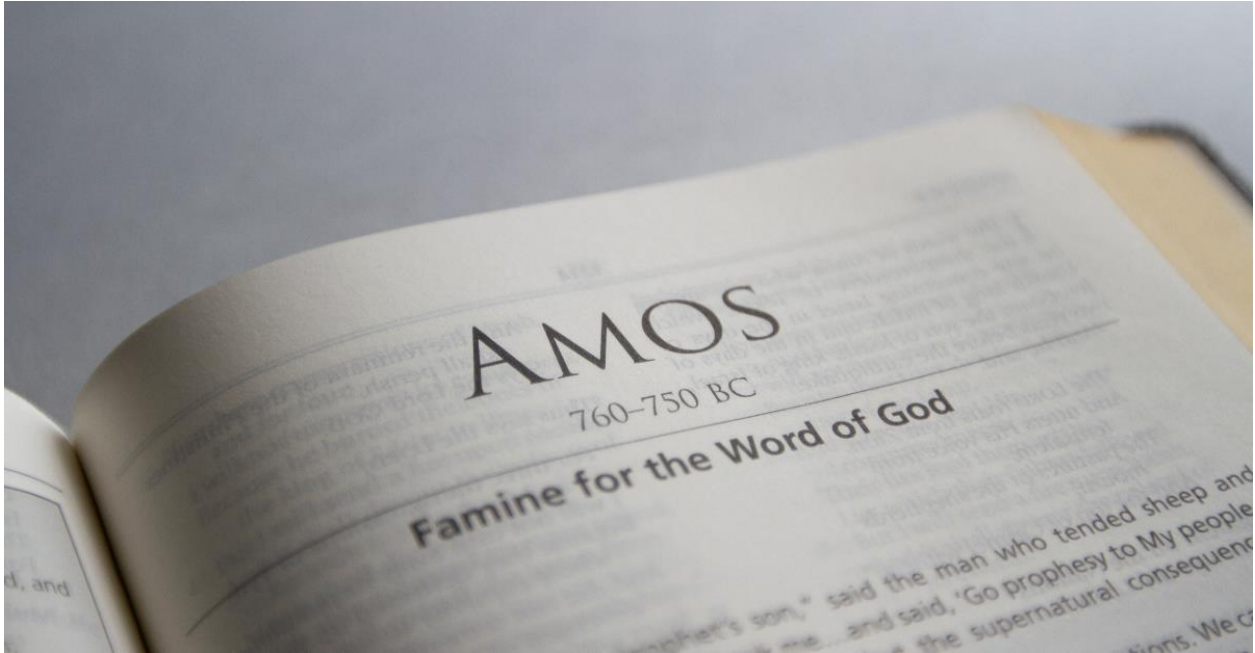


# AMOS 4

## PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD



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*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

Amos 4: Prepare to Meet Your God  
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## Amos 4: Introduction

The heart is the heart of matter in human life. What we desire, we will pursue. What we love, we will indulge.

What Israel did *not* love was the LORD Who had delivered them from Egypt, settled them in their land, bore patiently with their rebellion, re-established their boundaries, and warned them again and again to repent of their sins. They did not love God.

They gave their sacrifices, tithes, and free will offerings to false pagan deities because these did not require anything more from them and allowed them much more “freedom” to indulge in sin. This is what Israel loved: sin. And themselves.

We hope you will find this study of the book of Amos to provide abundant stimulation for your walk with and work for the Lord.

For His glory and praise!

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## 1 Wicked Women Judged

*Pray Psalm 58.3-5.*

The wicked are estranged from the womb;  
They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.  
Their poison is like the poison of a serpent;  
*They are* like the deaf cobra *that* stops its ear,  
Which will not heed the voice of charmers,  
Charming ever so skillfully.

*Sing Psalm 58.3-5.*

(Arlington: [\*This Is the Day the Lord Has Made\*](#))

The wicked from the womb rebel; from birth they utter lies.  
Their tongues of serpent's venom tell; all truth their ears despise.

*Read and meditate on Amos 4.1-3.*

*Preparation*

1. Against whom did the prophet speak?
2. What would happen to them?

*Meditation*

All the relevant words in these verses are feminine in the Hebrew. That is, their distinctive endings (הי- *ohi*) show that the prophet is addressing women. Calvin regards this as applying to the wealthy and at ease in Samaria (Bashan) and translates “husbands” as “masters”. That’s an accurate translation, but I think the shepherd of Geneva missed the point.

As I see it, Amos is speaking a word to the women of Samaria, especially those who were married to the wealthy. God gave Eve to Adam to complete Him. Together, they were the image-bearers of God, more than they were by themselves. A wife should bring completeness to her husband and he for her; and each should be a check for the other against falling into sinful ways.

The women of Bashan were complicit with their husbands in departing the path of the Lord, just like Eve. The sins catalogued in chapters 2 and 3 are here compressed like a zip file and laid at the feet of the wives of Israel’s leaders. They would not escape the wrath of God.

The graphic description of their judgment is chilling: led away, together with their posterity, with fishhooks in their flesh, queued up like cattle, and “cast into Harmon”. Harmon is another name for Samaria, and this suggests—to me, at least—that the cruelty visited on these women was so great that they could not survive the trek out of Samaria, but would die and be cast into pits in the place of their sin.

Horrible? Indeed. But let’s not forget Him Whose flesh was pierced by stripes and nails, and Who, bearing our sins, was cast into a rich man’s grave in His own land. The women of Samaria died because of their own sins. Because Jesus died, not for any sins He had committed but for ours and for those of all the world, He would revive and bring new life to the world.

Even in the horror of judgment, God pointed the way to hope.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

The horror of judgment came because they were complicit with evil yet claimed innocence.

“This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth, and says, ‘I have done no wickedness’” (Prov. 30.20). The intentional obliviousness and stupidity of sin.

“So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; it takes away the life of its owners” (Prov. 1.19). The covetous and deadly consequences of sin.

“‘Woe to the rebellious children,’ says the LORD, ‘who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin...’” (Is. 30.1). The innate and willful stupidity of sin.

“They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molded image. Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass.” (Ps. 106.19, 20) The outlandish and destructive pursuit of sin.

They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things...wondrous works...awesome things...” (Ps. 106.21,22). The foolish forgetfulness and stupidity of sin.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them...Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1.1, 27, 31). The perfection of His glorious creation.

Then sin. And judgment. “Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks...” (Amos 4.2). God continuously warned of sin and the judgment to follow.

And then He sent Jesus— “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5.21).

We then say, as one thief said to the other, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong” (Lk. 23.40, 41).

If we have found that our sin has made us as a “cow” or an “ox”, “so foolish and ignorant...like a beast before [God]” (Ps. 73.22); or “brute beasts”, as Peter describes us in 2 Pet. 2.12-22, we need only to repent, seek forgiveness, completely turn away from them, and walk again on the Jesus Path with Him.

For we are not meant to be beasts, but people created in the image of God, to do His will, and to live completely for Him. He has not given us “a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind...Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began...” (2 Tim. 1.7, 9; Eph. 2.10).

Thus we are willfully obedient unto righteousness; not bovinely wicked unto judgment.

### *Reflection*

1. What is it about sin that makes us so “beastly”?
2. How would you counsel a new believer to begin hating sin?
3. How do these horrible judgments against Israel help you to appreciate the suffering of Jesus?

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*What is got by oppression cannot be enjoyed with satisfaction. How miserable are those whose confidence in unscriptural observances only prove that they believe a lie! Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Amos 4.1-5*

*Pray Psalm 58.1, 2, 10, 11.*

Ask the Lord to search your soul, to help you become more sincere, more faithful, and more obedient to His Word. Rejoice in the righteousness of Jesus, and seek grace to help you become more like Him.

*Sing Psalm 58.1, 2, 10, 11.*

(Arlington: [\*This Is the Day the Lord Has Made\*](#))

Do you indeed speak righteousness, you rulers of the earth?  
And do you judge the sons of men according to their worth?

No, not at all, but in their hearts they seek unrighteous ways;  
their hands weigh out upon the earth cruel violence all their days.

The righteous will rejoice to see the vengeance of the LORD.  
All men will say, "Then God must be, the righteous to reward."

## 2 Religion of Convenience

*Pray Psalm 115.4-8.*

Their idols *are* silver and gold,  
The work of men's hands.  
They have mouths, but they do not speak;  
Eyes they have, but they do not see;  
They have ears, but they do not hear;  
Noses they have, but they do not smell;  
They have hands, but they do not handle;  
Feet they have, but they do not walk;  
Nor do they mutter through their throat.  
Those who make them are like them;  
*So is* everyone who trusts in them.

*Sing Psalm 115.4-8.*

(Plainfield: [\*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus\*](#))

Idols made by men's own hand—ever to Your Name be glory—  
see nor hear nor understand: Ever to Your Name be glory!  
They neither feel nor walk, nor can they speak or talk;  
all those who serve them fall: But unto Your Name be glory!

*Read Amos 4.1-5; meditate on verses 4, 5.*

*Preparation*

1. What did the people of Israel do at Bethel and Gilgal?
2. What did they love?

*Meditation*

Jeroboam I encouraged the people of Israel, whom he had led in a breakaway rebellion, to embrace a religion of convenience: “Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’ And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin...” (1 Kgs. 12.28-30).

Religion shouldn't be hard. It should fit our schedules, match our stride, and demand no more of us than we can conveniently enjoy. Jeroboam I banked on this with the people of Israel, and he got it right. But all who heeded his encouragement got it tragically wrong. What began at Dan and Bethel as shrines, feasts, priests from every tribe, and convenient sacrifices degenerated, over time, to wantonness, sex in the name of religion, and child sacrifice. And the people loved it (v. 5). All to appease and enjoy false deities made by their own hands. Those altars became sin attractors, encouraging and justifying the wickedness of Israel.

Over time, Gilgal replaced Dan as a center of worship. Instead of places to reinforce the fear and love of God, these pagan religious sites became places where the people of Israel did what they loved in the name of religion.

And God hates this. Religion of convenience, religion for its own sake, religion for the fun of it. Better watch out.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Religion to boost one's own standing and self-esteem is another way to misuse worship.

God's words through Amos were echoed by Jesus: "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them...And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men..." (Matt. 6.1, 5).

"...you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God" (Lk. 11.42).

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'" (Lk. 18.10-13).

"For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matt. 23.27).

"Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn. 12.42, 43).

"Come to Bethel and transgress,  
at Gilgal multiply transgression;  
bring your sacrifices every morning,  
your tithe every three days.  
Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven,  
proclaim and announce the freewill offerings; for this you love, you children of Israel!  
says the Lord GOD" (Amos 4.4, 5).

"Therefore the LORD said:

'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips,  
but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men'" (Is. 29.13).

"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.  
And in vain they worship Me,  
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'" (Matt. 15.8, 9).

God hates this. Religion of convenience, religion for its own sake, religion for the fun of it, and religion for one's own self-aggrandizement and esteem.

Better to keep watch on our hearts, keep them close to God, fear Him, and do His commandments (Ps. 119.166). Hard, and maybe even inconvenient at times; but pleasing to the LORD, and that makes all the difference (Matt. 10.28).

### *Reflection*

1. What was wrong with Jeroboam's offering the people a more "convenient" religion?

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2. Do you think people today want their religion easy and convenient or disciplined and self-denying? Explain.

3. Only the Scripture can teach us what true religion is, not popular preachers, powerful politicians, or people-pleasing pastors. Why *must* this be so?

*They thought, indeed, that their worship was fully approved by God, when they offered sacrifices in Bethel and Gilgal. But the Prophet here shows, that the more sedulously they labored in performing sacred things, the more grievously they offended God, and the heavier judgment they gained for themselves.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 4.4, 5*

*Pray Psalm 115.1-3, 9-18.*

Praise and glorify God for His great salvation! Call on Him to bless and increase the ranks of His people and to fill the world with the Name of Jesus!

*Sing Psalm 115.1-3, 9-18.*

(Plainfield: [Nothing but the Blood of Jesus](#))

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!  
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!  
Why should the nations cry, “Where is their God on high?”  
You rule us, LORD, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

All who trust in Jesus yield—ever to His Name be glory—  
find in Him their help and shield: Ever to Your Name be glory!  
O Israel, trust the LORD! He helps us evermore!  
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious LORD —ever to Your Name be glory—  
will attend us evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless all who fear You, LORD, all who obey Your Word,  
all who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase—ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless us with eternal peace: Ever to Your Name be glory!  
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore  
and bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

### **3 Warnings (1)**

*Pray Psalm 106.6, 48.*

We have sinned with our fathers,  
We have committed iniquity,  
We have done wickedly...  
Blessed be the LORD God of Israel  
From everlasting to everlasting!  
And let all the people say, "Amen!"  
Praise the LORD!

*Sing Psalm 106.6, 48.*

(Trust in Jesus: [\*Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus\*](#))

We have sinned, just like our fathers; we have done iniquity.  
Just like them, our hearts have wandered; we have acted wickedly.

*Refrain*

Blessèd be our God and Savior, evermore His praise proclaim!  
Let all those who know Your favor praise Your holy, glorious Name!

*Read Amos 4.1-8; meditate on verses 6-8.*

*Preparation*

1. How did God warn Israel?
2. How did Israel respond?

*Meditation*

Famine and drought: God gave two powerful warnings to His people, that they might wake up from their sinful condition and return to Him.

It's hard to imagine two more devastating punishments. Nothing to eat, no water for crops or animals or children. These were short-term events, but sufficiently severe to have led the people to call on God for relief. But they would not. They continued to pursue their false gods, their idols, just as people today who undergo difficult times nevertheless think that more money or different people in office will restore or ensure their comfort.

But men are not sovereign. The world is not governed by impersonal physical laws. God is sovereign, even over the weather. And when He brings inclement, even destructive weather upon us, it's a good idea to search our souls, call on Him for relief, give Him thanks for His many blessings, and turn from any offensive ways.

Our own nation has experienced drought in many places. And people all around the country suffer from shortages of food and shelter. Terrible storms batter us more than ever. But are we turning to the Lord? Or do we continue to trust in politicians, scientists, better times, or mere hope?

God is warning His people now just as He did ancient Israel. They would not listen. Will we?

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Clean teeth. On first thought that sounds like a good thing, but the reason for their cleanness, was not good. They were clean because the folks were not eating. And that is never a good thing (Amos 4.6).

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Sometimes we look around and think we are doing just fine. On the surface, it seems that we and our churches are fine-tuned instruments, humming along, “Thank you very much.” But underneath all the jovial, pristine cleanness, the people are starving. Just like in Amos’ day.

Peter was a fisherman and Jesus told him, “Feed My lambs...Tend My sheep...Feed My sheep” (Jn. 21.15, 16, 17). Jesus set the precedent with Peter. All are called to ministry; none are allowed to lay the responsibility for their spiritual growth at the feet of someone else. We are told to do that ourselves (Phil. 2.12).

So, unless we want to end up hungry and thirsty in a drought and famine of the Word, we’d best get busy (Amos 4.6-8; 8.11).

God told Isaiah to get out the big grip crayons and write His words before the people: “write it before them on a tablet, and note it on a scroll” (Is. 30.8). He accused them of being rebellious, lying children who would not hear the law of the LORD (Is. 30.9).

Those people also told their seers, “Do not see” and their prophets “Do not prophesy to us right things.” What they wanted was to be told “smooth things” and “deceits” (Is. 30.10). “Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us” they said (Is. 30.11).

They were exhibiting willful power against others; they were not helpless. They could have even encouraged their leaders to speak the truth. But they were awfully busy desiring other things; and they were not seeking to grow in their knowledge of God.

And they were held responsible for their actions. They were culpable beings.

Jesus encouraged a healed leper to help his church leaders stay on the right path. He sent the leper to be a positive witness to them. After Jesus healed him, He told him, “See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (Matt. 8.4).

Every believer is called to study the Word of God, to be useful and obedient Kingdom workers, approved by God, so that we can hear Him say to us, “Well done”. Workers who “Know what His Word says and means” (2 Tim. 2.15 TLB).

We dare not leave it up to the “professionals” to make this happen.

However, we are to encourage our pastors to “see” the Word, to preach “right things”—even hard and convicting things—and always, please, preach the truth (2 Tim. 4.2).

All believers need the strength that is gained through proper worship. We all have important work to do.

Jesus says to all believers, “You follow Me” (Jn. 21.19, 22).  
The path that never lacks water and bread (Jn. 4.10; 6.48).

*Reflection*

1. How’s your time in the Word with Jesus? Are you learning Jesus from your time in the Word? Do you see any areas where your time in the Word could be improved?
2. Why is it important that our reading and study of Scripture should always lead us to Jesus?
3. Whom will you encourage today by asking them to share from their time in the Word?

*Now since the end of punishment is to turn men to God and his service, it is evident, when no fruit follows, that the mind is*

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*hardened in evil. Hence the Prophet shows here, that the Israelites were not only guilty, but had also pertinaciously resisted God, for their vices could be corrected by no punishment. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 4.6-8*

*Pray Psalm 106.44-48.*

Give thanks and praise to God that He forgives our sins and works always to gather us to Himself. Commit yourself anew to Him today.

*Sing Psalm 106.44-48.*

(Trust in Jesus: [\*Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus\*](#))

Look upon us, LORD, with favor, see us in our sore distress!

Hear our cries, with love surround us; turn again to heal and bless!

*Refrain*

Blessèd be our God and Savior, evermore His praise proclaim!

Let all those who know Your favor praise Your holy, glorious Name!

Save us, LORD, from every nation; gather us from all our ways.

And we to Your Name will offer glorious thanks and endless praise!

*Refrain*

## **4 Warnings (2)**

*Pray Psalm 7.9-11.*

Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,  
But establish the just;  
For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.  
My defense *is* of God,  
Who saves the upright in heart.  
God *is* a just judge,  
And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.

*Sing Psalm 7.9-11.*

(Finlandia: [\*Be Still, My Soul\*](#))

Bring to an end the evil of the wicked,  
but let Your righteous ones established be.  
You are my shield, my soul will not be stricken;  
test heart and mind, my true Defender be.  
You are a righteous Judge in every way,  
angry at wicked people every day.

*Read and meditate on Amos 4.1-11; meditate on verses 9-11.*

*Preparation*

1. How did God warn Israel?
2. How did Israel respond?

*Meditation*

God recalled further warnings that He brought upon His people. Blight, mildew, and locusts attacked their gardens, vineyards, and olive trees when they were at the point of bearing fruit (v. 9). Here again we see that the sovereignty of God reaches even to spores and bugs. He commands them to do His bidding in taking away the blessings He had given His people, so that they might look to Him, repent of their sins, and be delivered. But not even blight and plague could move the hard hearts of Israel to return to the Lord.

So God brought warfare against His people, and many of Israel's young men fell to the sword. The armies of Israel were attacked in their tents, and horses and men were slain and left to rot (v. 10). Yet not even the horror, disgrace, and savagery of war would lead Israel to seek the Lord.

Then God struck certain cities in Israel with fire, which appears to have fallen from the sky, as perhaps lightning (v. 11). Whole towns were reduced to ash, yet not even those who managed to escape, like firebrands rescued from the firepit, would turn their hearts to the Lord.

When the prophets of God called the people to see His hand of judgment in these matters, the people put them to silence. They didn't want to hear the Word of the Lord. Their false gods were no help to them, but their hearts had become so hardened to God that they would not heed His warnings and refused to return to Him.

Beware any hardness that might be settling in your own heart.

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*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

God spoke:

I blasted you!

I blasted you with blight and mildew (Amos 4.9).

I blasted you with locusts and plague (Amos 4.10).

I blasted you like I blasted the Egyptians (Ex. 7.20-12.30).

And yet.

You did not—would not—return to Me (Amos 4.9, 10).

Even God's use of the hyperbolic did not reach into their hearts. He tried everything to get their attention.

And ours. Are we looking around? Has He also blasted us, and yet we don't return to Him?

Jesus spoke:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I AM gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11.28-30).

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22.37-40).

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Lk. 21.34-36).

Paul spoke:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12.1, 2).

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly...” (1 Thess. 5.14).

Stephen Stills spoke, *For What It's Worth*:

It's time we stop

Hey, what's that sound

Everybody look what's going down.

Peter spoke, on what's going down:

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...” (1 Pet. 4.17).

Are we listening?

*Reflection*

1. Does it seem to you that God is sending warnings to the Church in this country? Explain.

2. How would you counsel a new believer to keep from falling under the discipline of the Lord?

3. Whom will you encourage today in their walk with and work for the Lord?

*Though one kind of punishment may not convince men, they are yet thereby proved with sufficient clearness to be guilty before God. But when in various ways he urges them, and after having tried in vain to correct them in one way, he has recourse to another, and still effects nothing, it hence more fully appears that they, who are thus ever unmoved, and remain stupid whatever means God may adopt to lead them to repentance, are altogether past recovery.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 4.9, 10*

*Pray Psalm 7.1-8.*

Pray that God will lead His Church to repentance, revival, and renewal, and that the enemies of God's people may be humbled and many of them brought to salvation in Jesus.

*Sing Psalm 7.1-8.*

(Finlandia: [\*Be Still, My Soul\*](#))

O LORD, my God, I trust in You: O save me!  
Deliver me from all who seek my life.  
If in my hands, You find iniquity,  
or any evil, any wicked strife,  
then let my foe pursue and overtake me,  
and without honor I shall surely be.

Arise, O LORD, rise up in wrath to save me!  
Let rage and judgment fall upon my foes!  
From all who know You let abundant praise be;  
rise up on high; the wicked curse with woes.  
O Judge of all, judge now my righteousness  
and my integrity, approve and bless.

## 5 Prepare to Meet Your God!

*Pray Psalm 81.11, 12.*

“But My people would not heed My voice,  
And Israel would have none of Me.  
So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart,  
To walk in their own counsels.”

*Sing Psalm 81.11, 12, 8.*

(St. Petersburg: [My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less](#))

“My people would not listen to Me, but hardened their hearts most hideously;  
I cursed them for their hard-hearted ways to wander in darkness all of their days:

*Refrain (v. 8)*

“O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!”

*Read and meditate on Amos 4.1-12; meditate on verse 12.*

*Preparation*

1. What was God going to do?
2. For what should Israel prepare?

*Meditation*

What “thus” did God intend to do to Israel?

We might be inclined to review the previous several warnings and what God had done then—famine, drought, warfare, destruction, blight, and so forth. But God had already done those things, and still the people refused to return to Him.

Why would He just do more of the same? No, I’m inclined to think that God had something far worse in mind for Israel, something more just and horrible even than what they had known before. The people had not returned to God, despite His many efforts to bring them to repentance. “Thus” He would likewise do to them: He would not return to them. For generations the people of Israel had neglected His Law, refused His standards for worship, panted after pagan idols and ways, and given themselves up to every lascivious, oppressive, and bloodthirsty practice—all in the name of their “gods”—all the while refusing to return to the LORD.

“I get that,” saith the LORD. They wanted nothing to do with Him, so He would no longer have anything to do with them. The Assyrians and Egyptians would carry the people of Israel away into captivity, causing them to intermarry with pagan peoples and transplanting other nations into the former tribal lands of Israel, to become the Samaritans of New Testament times. And “thus” God would have nothing more to do with those ten tribes; He would not return to them.

Except: A day was coming when even the hated Samaritans would turn to the Lord. For they would hear the voice of Jesus and stream out to Him (Jn. 4), and the voice of His apostles and be converted to Him by the thousands (Acts 8), as God made of this ruined nation a new people in Christ Jesus. For they were not all Israel who were Israel (Rom. 9.6-9). Israel gave up on God, but God never gave up on His chosen people.

And He never will.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

For many of a certain age, along with the Burma-Shave billboards, we also remember those equally large signs along the highway that read, “Prepare to Meet Your God”.

Did someone think we were especially bad drivers; or were they trying to get across a spiritual message? Maybe both.

Either way, this is exactly what God was saying to the Israelites: “Your behaviors are reprehensible. I have warned you over and over, yet you have not listened or returned to Me. So, this is it: prepare to meet Me.”

Whether this “meeting” was their earthly end, or their beginning of an eternal separation, it was going to be bad. No doubt about it.

They had in their memory banks God’s plague-action against the Egyptians; assuredly they must have remembered His final act— “And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead” (Ex. 12.29, 30).

The people of Amos’ day had already experienced the plagues; so they must’ve had some inkling as to the possibilities of what could follow. And yet. They did not change their ways or hearts.

Jesus spoke of the same possibility to the people of His day: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10.28).

“Thus I will do to you...because I will do this to you...prepare to meet your God” (Amos 4.12)

“Do you not fear Me?” says the LORD. “Will you not tremble at My Presence...?” (Jer. 5.22).

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Matt. 23.37).

And yet: There is hope in returning and repentance. “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength” (Is. 30.15).

“Behold, I make all things new...

I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Rev. 21.5-7).

Prepare to meet your God in this way; not the other.

### *Reflection*

1. How do you prepare to meet with God every day? What comes out of those meetings?
2. What does it mean to fear God (Matt. 10.28)? How does fearing God relate to loving Him?
3. Drifting from the Lord is the result of neglect of our salvation (Heb. 2.1). How can you know when you are beginning to drift? What should you do then?

*Amos 4: Prepare to Meet Your God*

*What does this particle כֵּן, ke, thus, mean? Some think that God here denounces on the Israelites the punishments they had before experienced: but the Prophet, I doubt not, means something much more grievous. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 4.12*

*Pray Psalm 81.13-16, 8.*

Pray that God would revive His Church, everywhere in the world, and that His people would repent of their sins, be renewed in their souls, and recommit themselves to following Jesus in everything they do.

*Sing Psalm 81.13-16, 8.*

(St. Petersburg: [My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less](#))

Now let us all abandon our ways and listen to God, and offer Him praise!

Our foes He will so quickly subdue, extending His hand to save and renew.

*Refrain (v. 8)*

“O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!”

Then even those despising the LORD would falsely obey and follow His Word;  
in vain they seem to follow His way, yet judgment awaits on God’s chosen day.

*Refrain*

The finest foods for us He will buy, and furnish us an abundant supply.

How sweet our lives can be in the LORD, when only we heed His glorious Word.

*Refrain*

## 6 LORD God of Hosts

*Pray Psalm 80.12-15.*

Why have You broken down her hedges,  
So that all who pass by the way pluck her *fruit*?  
The boar out of the woods uproots it,  
And the wild beast of the field devours it.  
Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;  
Look down from heaven and see,  
And visit this vine  
And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted,  
And the branch *that* You made strong for Yourself.

*Sing Psalm 80.12-15*

(St. Theodulph: [\*All Glory, Laud, and Honor\*](#))

Now You in wrath have spoken and bruised Your chosen vine.  
We languish, LORD, are broken by wrath, deserved, divine.  
Once more, LORD, hear our pleading: return and heal this vine!  
Look down on us, so needy, and show Your love divine!

*Read Amos 4.1-13; meditate on verse 13.*

*Preparation*

1. What does God say about Himself?
2. How does He name Himself?

*Meditation*

To magnify His greatness, God gave Amos three insights with double meanings.

God identified Himself as Creator. He made the mountains, and He creates the wind. Here's the first double meaning: That word "wind" can also be translated "spirit" and may thus refer either to the spiritual realm—which God also created—or the soul of every person—ditto. As Calvin pointed out in his commentary, if we take it as wind, it goes well with the mountains; if we take it as spirit, it leads to what follows: God reveals His (or "his") thoughts to human beings.

God is Creator, and He is sovereign LORD. He also reveals His will to people, making Himself known to every person through His Word and the things He has made (Ps. 147.19, 20; Rom. 1.18-21). Alternately—our second double meaning—He revealed "his" thoughts to Israel, showing them their sinfulness. But Israel chose to silence His prophets and ignore His Word.

Finally, God asserted His majesty and sovereignty: He "makes the morning darkness", that is, before dawn brings the new day. The phrase "Who treads the high places of the earth"—our third double meaning—can signify that He is lofty, high, exalted, and rules over all people. Just as truly, it indicates that He treads down—puts under His feet—all the high places where people worship their false gods.

He is the LORD. He is God. He is God of every created thing. That's the Name of Him with Whom we have to do. We dare not diminish His greatness, for He has revealed His Word to us, defeated death, and bound the devil, and He will soon show Himself in glory to judge the world and gather His chosen ones home.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Behold. He Who:

Forms the mountains

Creates the wind

Declares to man what his thought is

Makes the morning darkness

Treads the high places of the earth.

The LORD God of hosts is His Name. (Amos 4.13)

He knows our thoughts. And just to reinforce that idea, Jesus spoke eloquently on how His people should keep the Law. Inwardly and outwardly. Because He knows what we're up to and what we're thinking: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...for if you love those who love you, what reward have you?"

"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5.21, 22, 27, 28, 43, 44, 46, 48). These are all matters of the heart, that only we, and God, can see. But be assured—He sees. And He, through His Holy Spirit, is more than happy to declare to us those thoughts (Amos 4.13). Good and bad.

The good news is: He declares those thoughts to us so that we will be aware of our sins, repent of them, turn away from them, and get back on the Jesus Path with Him.

"Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life.

Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil.

Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on...

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4.13-15, 23).

"O LORD, You have searched me and known me.

You know my sitting down and my rising up;

You understand my thought afar off.

You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether" (Ps. 139.1-4).

He knows. He sees. He declares our *sinful* and *repentable* thoughts to us.

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And sweetly, too, we know of His tenderness and forgiveness:

"How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!

How great is the sum of them!

If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;

and when I awake, I am still with You" (Ps. 139.17, 18).

God always declares Good News along with the bad.

"The LORD of hosts is His Name" (Amos 4.13). Omniscient. Omnipresent. Omnipotent.

"And behold, I AM coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Rev. 22.12, 13).

*Amos 4: Prepare to Meet Your God*

*Reflection*

1. When you think of Jesus, exalted in glory, what do you see? How does Paul instruct us on this matter in Colossians 3.1-3?
2. Why is it important to remember that Jesus always knows your thoughts?
3. What can you do to grow in your understanding of God's thoughts?

*But that he might rouse careless men more effectually, he then magnificently extols the power of God; and that he might produce more reverence and fear in men, especially the hardened and the refractory, he adorns his name with many commendations.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 4.13*

*Pray Psalm 80.1-7.*

Pray that God will revive His Church and open the hearts of lost people everywhere to hear the Good News of Jesus.

*Sing Psalm 80.1-7*

(St. Theodulph: [\*All Glory, Land, and Honor\*](#))

O God of grace, restore us, and shine on us Your face!  
O save us, LORD, work for us; renew us by Your grace!  
Give ear, O gracious Savior, Who leads us as Your flock:  
Stir up Your pow'r and favor, our King and LORD and Rock!

How long will You ignore all Your people's fervent prayer?  
Shall bitter tears fall ever? O LORD, renew Your care!  
Our neighbors mock and scorn us, they laugh at our distress.  
Renew, O LORD, and turn us, look down on us and bless!

## 7 Watch What You Love

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 14.1-3*

The fool has said in his heart,  
“*There is no God.*”  
They are corrupt,  
They have done abominable works,  
There is none who does good.  
The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men,  
To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.  
They have all turned aside,  
They have together become corrupt;  
*There is none who does good,*  
No, not one.

*Sing Psalm 14.1-3*

(St. Anne: [\*O God, Our Help in Ages Past\*](#))

The fool within his heart proclaims, “There is no God at all!”  
His deeds are wicked, filled with shame who on God will not call.

No good in such as these is found; corruption fills their breast.  
God from His heav’nly throne looks down, their hearts and ways to test.

*Read Amos 4.1-13; meditate on verses 4, 5.*

*Preparation*

1. How was it clear that Israel did not love the LORD?
2. What did they love instead?

*Meditation*

What Israel did *not* love was the LORD Who had delivered them from Egypt, settled them in their land, bore patiently with their rebellion, re-established their boundaries, and warned them again and again to repent of their sins. They did not love God.

They gave their sacrifices, tithes, and free will offerings to false pagan deities because these did not require anything more from them and allowed them much more “freedom” to indulge in sin. This is what Israel loved: sin. And themselves. And they loved these so much that they would not return to the LORD no matter how firmly or frequently He warned them.

The heart is the heart of matter in human life. What we desire, we will pursue. What we love, we will indulge. What we delight in, we will return to. What we aspire to, we will strive to achieve. And if our desires, love, delights, and aspirations are for sin and self, we can expect that God will step in to set us straight (Heb. 12.3-11).

The Corinthians departed the Jesus Path and got into all kinds of troubles because they did not guard their affections (2 Cor. 6.12). God commands us to love Him with *all* our heart, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. That’s it. And He has provided abundant additional instruction as to how that works out and sent His Spirit to dwell in us and transform us into the likeness of Jesus (2 Cor. 3.12-18). But we need to ponder every day and throughout the day the question Jesus asked Peter: “Do you love Me?”

We see how much of Father loves us (Jn. 3.16). Let Him see how much we love Him.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

The Champlain Valley Exposition and Fair just ended this week. As the advertisements proclaimed, “It is the exclamation point of summer!” (Euphemisms galore). Sadly, because we are older, the weather was bad, it is 15 minutes from our house, it is a lot of walking (pick one), we did not attend this year. But our kids and grandkids had a marvelous time and rode lots of rides and ate lots of fair food. It is a requirement of sorts, that one consumes enough fair food to feel a little queasy at the end.

But my point in bringing up the fair is to mention the salesmen that line the fairway. Now, I’m sure a lot of them are well-meaning and love to entertain and make people happy; but maybe just a few are trying to sell you something you really don’t need or want to participate in. But either way, they are trying to get your attention and bring you into their sphere of activity.

Out of the purest heart of love—because it is God we are speaking about--He hollered to His children in much the same way. Come into My sphere of thinking. Hear how I long for you to come to Me. I’m trying to get your attention, for your sakes, as this is your eternal life at stake:

Step right up.

Come to Bethel and transgress. How about:

Come to Gilgal and multiply those transgressions.

Bring those sacrifices every morning!

Bring those tithes every three days!

Keep offering those sacrifices of “thanksgiving”.

Proclaim and announce those “freewill offerings”.

Come on people. You know you love this!

Right over here. Step right up!

Somehow this Proverb seems appropriate: “A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but even the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel” (12.10).

God’s children were offering sacrifices and tithes and thanksgiving, yet their hearts were far from Him. It looked obedient and dutiful, but in fact was cruel and sinful and wicked. They “honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me...” (Matt. 15.8, 9), God said.

The simplicity of what God wants should shame us into obedience.

He wants us to know and obey Him. He wants us to believe that Jesus, His Son, is God.

He wants us to know that believing in Jesus is the way to eternal life with Him.

He wants us to live for Him in His Kingdom.

He wants us to listen to His Word, pray, and follow the Holy Spirit, and live through His power.

By these gestures and lifestyle we show that we love and appreciate Him (Jn. 14.15; 15.14); and want very much to step into His sphere of activity.

God speaks in many ways to His children. His repertoire is limitless.

“And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice” (1 Kgs. 19.11, 12).

God is calling to us: either like those on the fairway, or in the still small voice. To hear Him each morning while reading His Word, speaking with Him quietly in His Presence, communing continuously with Him throughout the day, seems to me, a beautiful way to live one’s life.

Yet because of His great love for us, He will communicate in other ways as well. Personally, I prefer the quiet.

But you choose. He has many ways. But frankly, “Watch what you love.”

*Reflection*

1. God calls to us every day from His Word. How has He called you today?
2. Besides in His Word, how else does God speak to us? How can you know when He is speaking to you?
3. When is the best time to check the things you love? How can you make sure they’re what you should love?

*How miserable are those whose confidence in unscriptural observances only prove that they believe a lie! Let us see to it that our faith, hope, and worship, are warranted by the Divine word. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Amos 3.3*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 14.4-7*

Spend time in silent prayer, asking the Lord to reveal any wrong loves that may be lurking in your soul. Ask Him to renew you for increasing love for Jesus.

*Sing Psalm 14.4-7*

(St. Anne: [\*O God, Our Help in Ages Past\*](#))

None understands, none seeks the LORD; they all have turned aside.  
Deception leads them from God’s Word who have His grace denied.

The workers of iniquity consume God’s sheep like bread;  
they trust not in the LORD, and He shall fill their hearts with dread.

For Jesus with the righteous stands, though they be put to shame.  
He holds them safely in His hands who shelter in His Name.

Restore Your Church, let Zion sing; our captive hearts release,  
that we may Your salvation bring, rejoicing and in peace.

*Amos 4: Prepare to Meet Your God*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Why did Israel love worshipping false gods?
2. Does God warn us about any lingering sin in our life? How does He do that? What should we do when we sense He is warning us?
3. Actually, we should “return” to the Lord every day and throughout the day. Explain. If we’ll do that, what can we expect?
4. What are some good ways to keep in mind the greatness, majesty, power, love, and Presence of the Lord?
5. What’s the most important lesson you have learned from this section of the book of Amos?

*For Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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