

Turn to God

AMOS 4:1-13

¹ Listen to this message, you **cows of Bashan** **A** who are on **the hill of Samaria**, **B** women who **oppress** **C** the poor and crush the needy, who say to their husbands, “Bring us something to drink.” ² The Lord GOD has sworn by his **holiness**: **D** Look, the days are coming when you will be taken away with hooks, every last one of you with fishhooks.

³ You will go through breaches in the wall, each woman straight ahead, and you will be driven along toward Harmon. This is the LORD’s declaration. ⁴ Come to Bethel and **rebel**; **E** rebel even more at Gilgal!

Bring your **sacrifices every morning, your tenths every three days**. **F** ⁵ Offer leavened bread as a thanksgiving sacrifice, and **loudly proclaim your freewill offerings**, **G** for that is what you Israelites love to do!

This is the declaration of the Lord GOD. ⁶ I gave you absolutely nothing to eat in all your cities, a shortage of food in all your communities, yet **you did not return to me**. **H** This is the LORD’s declaration.

⁷ I also withheld the rain from you while there were still three months until harvest. I sent rain on one city but no rain on another. One field received rain while a field with no rain withered. ⁸ Two or three cities staggered to another city to drink water but were not satisfied, yet you did not return to me. This is the LORD’s declaration. ⁹ I struck you with **blight and mildew**; **I** the **locust** **J** devoured your many gardens and vineyards, your fig trees and olive trees, yet you did not return to me. This is the LORD’s declaration. ¹⁰ I sent **plagues like those of Egypt**; **K**

I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I caused the stench of your camp to fill your nostrils, yet you did not return to me. This is the LORD’s declaration. ¹¹ I overthrew some of you as I overthrew **Sodom and Gomorrah**, **L** and you were like a burning stick snatched from a fire, yet you did not return to me — This is the LORD’s declaration. ¹² Therefore, Israel, that is what I will do to you, and since I will do that to you, **Israel, prepare to meet your God!** **M** ¹³ He is here: the one who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, the one who makes the dawn out of darkness and strides on the heights of the earth. The LORD, **the God of Armies**, **N** is his name.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- A** “Women of Samaria, who grow fat like the well-fed cows of Bashan” (GNT). The poor were exploited to satisfy the women’s self-serving, insatiable desires.
- B** King Omri of Israel bought Samaria for his royal residence.
- C** “Exploit” (NASB).
- D** God is perfectly and completely holy (Isa. 43:15).
- E** God was describing their hearts; no matter the place, they were inclined to “multiply transgression” (ESV, NKJV) or “sin” (NIV).
- F** The issue was the heart and attitude of the worshiper. They believed doing the rituals was enough and that faithfulness to God in their lives was optional.
- G** “Brag about the extra offerings you bring!” (GNT). Jesus warned against such practices (Matt. 6:1-18).
- H** God lovingly disciplines His covenant people so they will repent and walk in faithfulness (Prov. 3:11-12).
- I** Diseases that affect the health and growth of crops.
- J** Insects common in the Middle East that devour all vegetation.
- K** A reference to the ten plagues that God sent upon Pharaoh and Egypt in Exodus. God was now punishing Israel in a similar way as he did Egypt, showing how far Israel had fallen in their covenant faithfulness.
- L** Towns God destroyed due to their sins (Gen. 19).
- M** “Get ready to face my judgment!” (GNT).
- N** God commands His heavenly hosts (angels). It was the Lord who once aided Israel in their conquest of Jericho (Josh. 5), and now He would strike Israel.

1. INDULGE (AMOS 4:1-3)

- Amos called out the women of Samaria, pointing to their personal indulgence at the expense of others. He declared that God would exact punishment on these women.

2. WORSHIP (AMOS 4:4-5)

- Amos mocked the worship of the Israelites at the sites they considered to be places for worship.
- In doing so, Amos was declaring that God detested their insincere sacrifices and false worship.

3. REFUSE (AMOS 4:6-11)

- Amos recounted numerous ways God sought to get His people's attention so that they would return to Him.
- Instead, the Israelites refused to turn to God.

4. PREPARE (AMOS 4:12-13)

- Amos challenged the Israelites to prepare to meet God to give an accounting. The prophet reminded the people of God's power and sovereignty to emphasize the seriousness of this meeting.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

God seeks His people, holding them accountable for how they respond to Him.

- Believers are to be champions of the poor and oppressed, not oppressors of them.
- Believers are to worship God with humility and repentance.
- Believers should look to God in repentance when facing His discipline.
- All believers should live knowing that God will hold them accountable.

MEMORY VERSE

Amos 4:12

KEY DOCTRINE

The Christian and Social Order

We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. (See Deut. 10:18; Jas. 1:27.)



ENGAGE

On a scale of zero to ten, how important is accountability in deterring bad behavior? Is it possible to have justice without accountability? Explain. (PSG, p. 19)

- Courtrooms can be intimidating places. They are places of accountability, and most of us believe people need to be held accountable for their actions.
- Amos spoke to Israel as one who was witnessing Israel's consequences for their actions. God seeks His people, and there are consequences for how they respond to Him— both in the present and in the future.

EXPLORE

1. INDULGE (AMOS 4:1-3)

Bonus: How does failure to listen create problems?

How does a person's treatment of others, especially those in need, indicate their spiritual condition? (PSG, p. 22)

- Amos saw the corruption of a society that was insensitive to the plight of the poor and needy. Those with the power and authority to change that plight cared little about the ones being oppressed.
- God called this indulgent society to accountability for its sins against Him and against one another. He had desired that they be the champions of the oppressed, not their oppressors.

2. WORSHIP (AMOS 4:4-5)

How can the self-indulgent practices of people like those mentioned in verses 1-3 also affect the way that they worship in verses 4-5? How can a person's worship practices be a cover up for their sins? (PSG, p. 23)

- Not only did Israel fail in the way they treated one another, but they also neglected to demonstrate love for God through worship in the way He prescribed (Matt. 22:34-40).
- Offerings, sacrifices, and tithes were good things, but the boastfulness of the worshipers in doing those things was the issue. The outward motions of worship were not enough to please God.
- Even today, without the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross, we have no right to come before God in worship (Heb. 9:22).

3. REFUSE (AMOS 4:6-11)

Bonus: What keeps a person from confessing their sin and turning back to God?

Why might two people experience the same sets of calamities and one turn to God while the other refuses to turn to God? (PSG, p. 25)

- In these verses, Amos listed five calamities that should have turned the hearts of Israel back to God but did not.
- God's involvement in the events of verses 6-11 was redemptive in nature. He orchestrated the events in Israel to give them the opportunity to repent, but they refused.

4. PREPARE (AMOS 4:12-13)

How should the promise of standing before God impact how one lives? (PSG, p. 26)

- The time of accountability had come. The God who was a consuming fire and a jealous God was prepared to bring the nation to accountability.
- Israel had relied on themselves and their religious performances. Their unwillingness to return to God would result in Him coming to them in judgment.
- All who are outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ can expect that they will one day be called to accountability for their refusal to repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

How does a person's understanding of God impact how a person lives his or her life? (PSG, p. 26)

- If God was their Creator, He was the One to hold them accountable.
- He had revealed Himself through the Law, and He would soon reveal Himself through Jesus Christ the living Word and through the Bible, the written Word. Israel had no excuse for not knowing God and Loving Him.
- The God that Israel faced was formidable, and He alone had the power to bring judgment against them for their rejection of His grace.

CHALLENGE

Discuss as a group ways of reminding each other of your accountability to God.

How can this be done with humility and transparency? What principles from today's study should the group follow in holding each other accountable? (PSG, p. 27)

Encourage individuals to reflect on this question in response to the group time:

Evaluate your attitudes toward people with need, toward the oppressed, and toward worship. How does your attitude in these areas compare with the attitudes Amos addressed? What adjustments do you need to make in these areas to align more with God's desires? (PSG, p. 27)



BONUS IDEAS

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, p. 26)

Use a Bible dictionary to better understand a word.

Read articles about “judgment” in a Bible dictionary. Review Bible passages identified in the articles. What was the significance of God’s pronouncement of judgment on Israel through His prophet Amos? How do these pronouncements of God’s judgment help us understand what God did for us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross?

To conclude the Explore portion of the group time, lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 26). Provide Bible dictionaries and invite volunteers to read aloud the articles found or to present a summary of the articles. You may want to pre-enlist a person prior to the group time to present a summary of the articles.

OPTION: DISCUSSION

Emphasize the Key Doctrine: *The Christian and Social Order*. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick (PSG, p. 22). Create teams of two to four persons. Instruct each team to read together Deuteronomy 10:18 and James 1:27 and discuss: *How does a person’s treatment of others, especially those in need, indicate their spiritual condition?* Guide the group to focus their hearts on God’s desire for us to be the champions of the oppressed. If time permits, have each team share key points from their discussions.



DIG DEEPER

GOD’S DISCIPLINE

In this text, we see that God had tried repeatedly to bring Israel to a place where they recognized their sin and turned from it. God had caused a shortage of food, a drought, crop disease, plagues, war, and disasters, but in all of these difficulties and warnings, the Israelites did not turn back to God (v. 11). While many instances of a natural disaster, disease, drought, or food shortage are not due to God’s punishment for sin, in this series of events, that was the cause. Why was God disciplining Israel in this way? The writer of Hebrews tells us,

My son, do not take the Lord’s discipline lightly or lose heart when you are reprov’d by him, for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives. Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn’t we submit

even more to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness. No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:5b-11).

God disciplines out of love, with the goal and hope of His children repenting of sin and growing in righteousness. God’s deep love for Israel (Mal. 1:2) drove His discipline. God knew their sin would result in their ruin. Their religious rituals would not save them (vv. 4-5) because they lacked genuine faith. The Lord desired for them to return to Him. As Ezekiel 33:11 says,

Tell them, “As I live—this is the declaration of the Lord God—I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked person should turn from his way and live. Repent, repent of your evil ways! Why will you die, house of Israel?”