

# A Sword Descending

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**Bible Text:** Amos 4:10

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I want to address a serious issue this evening. Please turn in your Bibles to Amos 4. The last time I preached on this passage I was preaching at a church down south and God began to move and tears were welling up in some eyes and there was a certain solemnity that gripped that sanctuary that night. Afterwards, the pastor approached me and said, “When I preach the people leave here smiling and talking but when you preached tonight, they left quietly and their eyes were red.” Listen friends, if you would let this message tonight sink down in your hearts and conscience, you would be crying too over the sad condition of a nation who has turned her back on God and a church that lies in a spiritual stupor.

I’m going to preach tonight on the remedial judgments of God upon his straying people but I will focus on one particular judgment which is swift and sudden and fatal. Look at Amos 4:10. Verse 10 follows a description of a series of remedial judgments from the hand of God towards his rebellious people. Those judgments began in verse 6 which speaks of a famine in the land but God says, “yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”

The next remedial judgment is more severe: it is a drought. Man can go a week or two without food but take away his water and he can’t make it more than a few days without dying. God first sent a famine in the land but the people of God did not hearken unto him so next he sent a drought but the stiff-necked people of God refused to listen and return to him as he declares, “yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”

The remedial judgments increase in severity each time. The next judgment found in verse 9 is a financial collapse: take away somebody’s money, take away their life savings and you get their attention. You mess with somebody’s money and they’ll come after you. God sends palmerworms to destroy their crops; he blights them with mildew; and their livelihoods are ruined. Yet, God is astonished as he says, “yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”

God is doing all he can to get his people’s attention, to get them to repent and return to him in a right relationship with him, to make him number one in their lives again but they refuse to do it so the next remedial judgment is even more severe than the preceding ones and it has to do with a sword. A sword represents justice and destruction. Let me read

verse 10 to you now and listen carefully, friends, to how God deals with a rebellious people who refuse to listen to him and remember this: God is no respecter of persons. Listen to the devastation God sent to his people,

“I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”

From God’s vantage point, he meted out those judgments in mercy to draw his people back to him but they had no effect so he finally brings devastation and destruction and kills off the strength of the people which are the young men. Listen, remove the young men out of a community and that community has little future. God’s loving sword of mercy becomes God’s angry sword of justice for he will defend his holy name. He is a jealous God.

I think it’s important at this juncture to tell you about the Sword of Damocles from ancient Greek legend made popular by the orator Cicero. The story goes something like this: there was a powerful king who had a courtier by the name of Damocles and this man was a people pleaser and he pandered to the king by going on and on about the king’s great power and authority and magnificence until finally the king says, “Alright, how would you like to trade places with me? Here, you sit on my throne and you be king for a while and you can taste my fortune firsthand.” Well, Damocles quickly and eagerly accepted the king’s proposal. Damocles sat down on the king’s throne surrounded by every luxury but the king arranged that a huge sword should hang above the throne, held at the pommel only by a single hair of a horse’s tail. Damocles finally begged the king that he be allowed to depart because he no longer wanted to be so fortunate, realizing that with great fortune and power come also great peril and anxiety.

So this legend of the Sword of Damocles signifies impending judgment or impending danger and I want to relate this to our nation at this hour for there is a Sword of Damocles hanging over this nation and it’s hanging by a thread. With it will come sudden destruction that will be so devastating in its loss of human life that it will make other nations of the world stare in horror and disbelief. The destruction which I speak of is a sword of divine justice upon a nation who has turned her back on God and on a church who has turned away from the God of the Bible. America is getting ready to see a side of God she is quite unfamiliar with and that’s the wrathful side of an offended Sovereign.

There is a direct correlation between the spiritual decay in the people of God and a gross immorality in the land. When one studies periods of revivals of religion, one finds that when the Spirit of God is afoot in the land in many conversions, that the evils of society diminish, that there is a correlation to the number of converted sinners to the wickedness in society. In the midst of a spiritual awakening, a great number of souls are being converted and if men are truly converted, they will lead holy lives. 1 John 3:9 declares, “He that is born of God sinneth not.” The people of God should be like salt and be a preservation from evil in the land.

In times of vital Christianity, a nation can be reformed and turn back to God. This occurred in 1858 in the great businessman's prayer revival that swept over the entire land transforming cities and towns into prayer meetings. There was a God consciousness in the land back then; God was preparing his people. He was turning their hearts back to him right before all the loss of life during the Civil War.

It is not uncommon in times of revival to see entire communities transformed: crime is decreased, taverns and bars close from lack of business and there is a restoration of stolen property. A growing godly remnant will permeate a society for good with their godly lives. Wickedness will decrease and gross immorality will be taboo and not acceptable behavior. But an unconverted generation will promote evil in society because an unconverted generation will be a corrupt generation like the Jews who make both sacrifices to God and to Baal. There is a mixture in their worship of God and in their personal lives, they have departed from the living God of the Bible.

Today, in our country, gross immorality grows in the land and society crumbles all around us. Traditional values are mocked and wickedness grows at an alarming rate. Violence has swept over the land as in the days of Noah. There are murders every day in most cities in America and lawlessness seems to be unstoppable by the local police forces and Jesus said the end times will be as in the days of Noah.

Listen friends, when the church spiritually deteriorates and departs from God, there is a direct effect upon society. When few are being converted, that means the majority are living for the devil and evil will rule as the majority principle. This is seen from the top down in government and in corporate America. A generation exists in the churches today that do not know God nor do they walk with him in holiness and this is a great sin in the land.

There is a greater sin among the people of God than in society today for if the people of God stray from God and do evil, it is an aggravated sin against the great mercy of God. When God looks at the church, he expects honor and fear and obedience from a son more than he would from pagan society. If you are a child of God, your sins more offend God than the sins of society because you've been shown favor and mercy and are under the blood of the Lamb. But if you trample that blood through willful and rebellious sins, then you bring upon you the anger of God and his chastising hand. God brings severe judgment upon the people of God for disobedience to him.

Listen to Judges 2,

“And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers which brought them out of the land of Egypt and followed other gods of the gods of the people that were round about them and bowed themselves unto them and provoked the LORD to anger and they forsook the LORD and served Baal and Ashtaroth.”

Now, listen friends to this next verse, listen very carefully:

“And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.”

Listen friends, we had better take this grave matter very seriously for, like I said, I believe America is getting ready to see a side of God we are completely unfamiliar with. The anger of God hangs over this nation as the Sword of Damocles, ready to drop in severe judgment and destruction and the people of God will not be singled out and escape this judgment for the people of God are part of the problem that is bringing this judgment upon us. A generation in the church today that lives like the world, that acts like the world, that seeks the same pleasures as the world and sins like the world will be judged with the world. Too many church members today believe they'll be raptured out before things get bad. Guess what, friends? Things are already bad and they're going from bad to worse.

But I believe if the people of God would turn back to God in humility and repentance and seek his face and turn from our wicked ways, we may alter divine justice to a divine blessing in the form of a revival. This is a call to repentance for the church of God in America today, a call to all ministers of the gospel to fall on our faces and lead our congregations in a time of solemn assembly as in the days of Joel in chapter 1:13-15 which solemnly states,

“Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD, Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.”

I look around today at my brethren in ministry and I stand and wonder why we all aren't on our faces right now before God in repentance in sackcloth and ashes, begging God for mercy, begging God to forgive us for mixing the world with our worship of him, for bringing idols into the house of God and turning the house of prayer into a place of entertainment. Why, O why, are we so blind as to our condition today? Why are we so soundly asleep as to not see the coming disaster from the hand of an offended God? Why are there jokes being told in the pulpit on Sunday morning rather than men on their faces crying out to God for forgiveness? Why aren't we all begging God for the grace and repentance to avert the coming calamity upon the land?

The word of God declares in Joel,

“The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?”

Listen friends, this is a serious call to seriousness before God and a call to avert calamity. Who knows if we repent and truly turn back to him as the Scripture has said, perhaps he will send us a revival and a spiritual awakening, blessings rather than judgment. The passage I just read speaks of a God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness if we truly turn to him in repentance and if we turn from our wicked ways, would he not leave a blessing behind? Perhaps in the form of revival that would sweep this nation from coast to coast? Surely, the Ancient of Days would rather see his people turn back to him in a right relationship to him and send them a blessing of his outpoured grace rather than have them remain a stiff-necked people who deserve judgment.

But listen brethren, this is what we must do, this is an urgent call to our duty to place a moratorium on all regular church activity and do the following before it's too late:

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.”

But will we do it? Will we do it or will we continue playing church until devastation falls upon us?

Dear friends, may a merciful God show us mercy in this sad day of spiritual declension. May our eyes be opened and may God grant us the grace of needed repentance to see our nakedness before him and our spiritual bankruptcy without him. May the great God awaken his bride out of her spiritual slumber and worldly stupor and cast off her grave clothes and seek him in fervency and importunity and humility and to do what is necessary for the sake of the land for our God is a jealous God. But are we jealous for

him? Heaven help us in these desperate days for the sword of divine justice points at the very heart of our nation.

Listen, 9/11 was a wake-up call but I fear most everybody went back to sleep. Right after 9/11 the churches were full and the whole nation was seeking answers and many were praying to God in desperation but then, after a while, the churches fell back into the status quo. Status quo means church's usual. Since that time, 13 years have passed and in that time which is a little more than a decade, this nation has deteriorated more morally than ever before in history. Society has grown more violent than ever before. It isn't safe to walk the streets any more. Somebody could take a gun and gun you down while you're standing in line or sitting at school and the sad thing is, the church has slipped into a spiritual stupor and she slumbers on her beds of comfort while people slip into hell every minute. And the people of God have become much like the Jews of old, who selfishly kept what they knew to themselves and bowed themselves to idols. Our churches today are more houses of entertainment than they are houses of prayer. The weekly prayer meeting is gone from the church in America and gone to, too, is a powerful church. The church has lost her power and influence upon society so society crumbles all around us and our nation is swiftly heading for judgment from an offended Sovereign. The sword of divine justice hangs over this vulnerable nation and it is pointed with the intent to destroy.

I will leave you with the following chilling words of God from the book of Ezekiel.

“I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied: ah! it is made bright, it is wrapped up for the slaughter.”