

# Prepare to Meet Your Maker

A Sermon on Amos 3-4

by

Grayson Stewart Gilbert

## 1. Introduction

### 2. The Self-Deceived Believe They Are in God's Good Graces (3:1-8).

a. *Israel's unique relationship with God is the chief reason why they come under judgment (3:1-2).*

i. Israel is unique among all the people of the earth simply because God called them out to be His people. God requires more of Israel simply because of this relationship.

1. God focuses on the fact that He brought them out of bondage under the Egyptians and into the Promised Land.

a. This is really a summary statement that speaks of all of God's redemptive work in history for them at this point.

b. God is reminding them that everything they have is from His hand.

2. V. 2 continues in this theme, but this aspect speaks towards the covenant itself.

a. He says, "You only have I known among all the families of the earth," and here God is speaking to His electing love on them.

b. He is likewise reminding them of the promise made to Abraham and the fulfillment of that promise in them.

ii. In all of it, God is reminding Israel that they have enjoyed the benefits and blessings of His covenant with them in a way that no one else has.

1. In other words: He is reminding them that He has given them much—and it is for this reason that much will be demanded of them.

a. V. 2 illustrates this principle rather clearly for us.

- b. Notice God says, “You only have I known among all the families of the earth. Therefore, that is, for this reason, I will punish you for all your wrongdoing.
  - 2. Suffice it to say: the church stands in equally the same position as Israel did.
    - a. Christians as a whole enjoy a unique relationship with God that the remainder of the earth does not.
    - b. We tend to hear this truth and treat it rather flippantly, but the reality is that we have an even greater burden of responsibility on us.
- b. *The cause and effect relationship between their sin and judgment (3:3-8).*
- i. Amos then takes them on a journey to understand the nature of cause and effect.
    - 1. The prophet is going to ask them a series of rhetorical questions in the next several verses here.
    - 2. All the prophet is doing here is leading them by the hand so they can see that their own sin is the cause of God’s judgment.
  - ii. Behind each question is an implied application of God’s judgment against them.
    - 1. In v. 3: God has called Israel to walk with Him, yet they have long abandoned the path God called them to walk.
    - 2. In v. 4: God has cornered His final prey and now Israel finds herself in the inescapable clutches of that great and ferocious Lion.
    - 3. V. 5: Israel has taken the bait of sin; they are caught in the snare of judgment.
    - 4. Then in vv. 6-7, the prophet gives a series of connected events that make everything all the more frightening for Israel.
      - a. People don’t tremble in terror unless the trumpet has sounded the warning.
      - b. Evil doesn’t befall a city unless God has caused it to happen.
      - c. Then in v. 7, “Certainly, the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret plan to His servants the prophets.”

5. In all of it, he is driving towards the inextricable reality of God's judgment.
  - a. All Amos has done here is show that their sin has consequences.
  - b. They ignored every warning given to them—and so they are left with no excuse before God.
6. V. 8 then depicts Yahweh as the Lion coming to kill. And so the prophet asks one more rhetorical question: who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can do anything but prophecy?
  - a. Here Amos is speaking of himself; God sent him to a people who are on the fast-track to judgment because they presume they are in God's good graces.
  - b. All the while God has been giving them warnings that these consequences would come—yet they never think they are the ones the warnings are directed towards.

### **3. The Self-Deceived Are Blind to Their True State (3:9-15).**

- a. *Israel has become worse than Ashdod (Philistia) and Egypt, though a remnant shall be spared (3:9-12)*
  - i. Amos brings in two character witnesses against Israel: the people of Ashdod, who are the Philistines, and the Egyptians (3:9-10).
    1. There are two reasons why the Lord would call these pagan nations to stand as witnesses against Israel.
      - a. The first is that in keeping with the Law of Moses, there must be two witnesses in any legal proceeding.
      - b. The second reason they will both stand as a witness is that these pagan nations once oppressed Israel, and Israel has become worse than they.
    2. This would have shocked the Israelites to their core.
      - a. The Israelites believed they were fundamentally better than those pagan nations, but ultimately, these nations stood as character witnesses against Israel.
      - b. Now think of all the people in your own life you have watched go into incredible sin or apostasy. If you are the one who

deceives yourself, these people will stand as a witness against you.

ii. Notice in v. 11, therefore, that is, as a result of Israel looting and plundering their own people, an enemy will loot and plunder them.

1. Israel doesn't know it quite yet, but that enemy will be Assyria.

a. The judgment pronounced upon them is pretty straightforward and it reveals the principle that what you sow, so shall you also reap.

b. The passage is dripping with irony at this point, because they still don't understand what awaits them.

2. "Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, so will the sons of Israel living in Samaria be snatched away—with the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch."

a. On one hand you have an incredibly bleak picture of judgment, where Israel is seen as this bloodied and tattered mess.

b. At the same time, this is what makes this terrifying passage grotesquely beautiful because God is speaking towards a remnant that will be spared.

b. *They serve two masters, where they should serve One (3:13-15).*

i. Again, we see that Philistia and Egypt will stand as character witness against Israel, but this time for their idolatry.

1. Here the prophet uses an incredibly long, descriptive name of God.

a. He calls Him Adonai Yahweh Elohim Sabaoth, the Lord God Almighty of the heavenly armies.

b. This is the longest form of the name of God given in all of Scripture, and it only occurs here.

2. And yet the reason why Amos piles the names of God is to highlight that God is at war with Israel and uses whom He wills.

a. This is seen clearly in God's commands given to these pagan nations and the fact that they will obey.

b. They stand not only as witnesses of Israel's character, but her destruction.

- ii. Israel's idols of their hearts will be destroyed, rendering them powerless to save those who trusted in them.
  - 1. The first to be destroyed will be the houses of false worship in v. 14.
    - a. The horns being cut off are a depiction of the powerlessness of the foreign god before Yahweh.
    - b. Yet the horns of an altar were also a place where people could come and claim asylum.
  - 2. The second idol to be destroyed was their wealth, which we can see in v. 15.
    - a. They had these massive summer and winter homes filled ivory, yet these too will be destroyed by God.
    - b. In all of this you can truly see the lies they had to believe in order to think that they could hide from God in temples to foreign gods or their massive houses.

#### **4. The Self-Deceived Are Stubborn Hypocrites (4:1-11)**

- a. Amos calls out two aspects of their hypocrisy in chapter 4—he focuses first on the women of Israel and then he broadens his attention to the whole nation once again.

Take a look with me at v. 1.

- i. "Hear this you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who exploit the poor, who oppress the needy, and say to their husbands, 'Bring now, that we may drink!'"
  - 1. Bashan is this incredibly luxuriant region that's not too far from Galilee.
    - a. Amos addresses the women of Israel by essentially calling them fat cows.
    - b. The reason he does this is incredibly simple: they oppress the poor, the oppress the needy, and they treat their husbands as if they are their own personal slaves, all of it to live a life of luxury.
  - 2. God has sworn by His holiness that He will punish them.
    - a. Notice the certainty. The interesting thing is that this is grounded in God's holiness—His "set-apartness."

- b. In keeping with the metaphor of these women being cows, Amos proclaims they're going to be carried off with meat hooks like a butcher carries beef.
  - ii. Amos continues in vv. 4-5 by giving Israel a series of commands to go and make sacrifices.
    - 1. Ironically, he commands them to go and multiply their sins with their abundant offerings.
      - a. He tells them to bring their sacrifices every morning and to offer their tithes every three days.
      - b. According to the Law, their tithes were only to be offered every three years.
    - 2. Then in v. 5 he commands them to give their peace offerings and free will offerings as well.
      - a. Both of these sacrifices were designed to express gratitude to God for the blessings He has given them.
      - b. Again, he's dripping with sarcasm here to show the extent of their empty worship.
- b. *They refused to turn back to God when He disciplined them (4:6-11).*
  - i. Amos give seven different punishments that have come upon them as a result of their unfaithfulness.
    - 1. If you're caught up on the bible reading plan, you would have just read about this in Leviticus 26.
      - a. God promises Israel that He will punish them seven times over if they refuse to listen to Him.
      - b. He tells them plainly that if they fail to repent:
        - i. I will not walk with you.
        - ii. I will destroy your places of false worship and pile your dead bodies upon the lifeless idols.
        - iii. I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste to your lands.
        - iv. I will scatter you among the nations and send a sword to devour you.

- v. I will put fear into your hearts so that the stirring of the leaves in the wind causes you to take flight.
  - 2. That description in Leviticus 26 matches this one exactly.
    - a. V. 6: God gave them nothing to eat, yet they did not return to the Lord.
    - b. V. 7-8: God withheld the rain for three months right before the harvest, which would devastate the crops.
    - c. V. 9: He struck them with a scorching wind and mildew; the insects devoured all their crops—yet they did not return to the Lord.
    - d. V. 10: He sent a plague among them and gave them over to warfare—yet they did not return to the Lord.
    - e. V. 11: God overthrew them like He did with Sodom and Gomorrah—and yet they did not return to the Lord.
  - ii. The Israelites experience the discipline of God seven times over and yet they still would not repent.
    - 1. They were a stiff-necked, stubborn, and rebellious people through every single step of the way.
      - a. God sent famine, drought, pestilence, swarms of insects, plague, warfare, and even fire and brimstone—yet they would not return to the Lord.
      - b. Time after time, they saw the discipline of the Lord and even though they suffered under all these things, they continued in their deception.

#### **5. The Self-Deceived Are Not Ready to Meet Their Maker (4:12-13)**

- a. *All of the previous forms of judgment were simply warnings given to Israel of a future judgment that awaits them.*
  - i. Notice in v. 12 the prophet tells them, “Therefore—for this reason—and that reason is because they did not return to the Lord—I will do this to you.”
    - 1. There is no real clarity of what punishment awaits them at this point, which is all the more frightening.

- a. All they know is that in their failure to repent and turn to God, He has promised further judgment.
      - b. If they go and make sacrifices for their sins, all they are going to do is multiply their judgment before God.
    - 2. The only thing they can do at this point to avoid judgment is to return to the Lord, meaning they must repent.
      - a. They must agree with God and His ways; they must walk with Him once again in covenant faithfulness.
      - b. They must grapple with the fact that they will stand before their Maker.
  - ii. The problem is that those who deceive themselves always end up thinking things will be just fine.
    - 1. The deceived hear a call for repentance and every single time what comes to mind is how badly somebody else needs to hear it.
    - 2. Those who are not deceived will hear the hard words of the Lord and heed their warnings.
      - a. They will constantly examine their hearts and motives.
      - b. They will see their sin and hate it.
      - c. They will endure the discipline of the Lord and repent.
- b. Yahweh is The Sovereign Judge of All the Earth*
- i. The prophet says, “For behold! He is the One who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to a person what are His thoughts—meaning God’s own thoughts, His revealed will—He makes the dawn into darkness and walks upon the high places of the earth. The Lord God of armies is His name.”
    - 1. He has created everything in existence.
    - 2. He has power over every aspect of Creation and exercises that power however He sees fit.
    - 3. He has revealed Himself to mankind, but especially to Israel.
    - 4. He turns the hope of dawn to dread as He ushers in the night.
    - 5. He stands over all the earth and sees everything before Him. There is nothing hidden from His sight.



6. The Lord God of armies is His name; all the armies of heaven and earth are at His disposal. This is the God that Israel must prepare themselves to meet.
- ii. This is perhaps the verse that reveals the most about the one who is deceived. All other forms of deception ultimately lead here.
  1. Beloved, you can fool your spouse, your children, even your pastors—but the One you cannot fool is the One who sees all, knows all, and created all.
  2. Will you not just agree with God in His assessment of things and return to Him?

**6. Conclusion: Prove Yourselves Doers of the Word, and Not Just Hearers Who Deceive Themselves**

**Community Group Questions:**

1. How do you know if you are deceiving yourself into believing your walk with Christ is better than it truly is?
2. There were several points in the sermon for application: personal finances, your relationships with your spouse, spiritual disciplines, etc. In these categories (or others), where do you find you make the most excuses and justifications?
3. Have you considered how the events of the past you have been a witness to, stand as a witness against you if you go the same direction? Think of how Philistia and Egypt were a witness to Israel for oppressing their own people. Then think of how God said Israel was worse than these two. How does this apply with your own life in the events you've been a witness to?