

# Amos 4: Chasing the Wrong

7.5.2020

Amos 4:1–13 (CSB)

**4** Listen to this message, you cows of Bashan

who are on the hill of Samaria,

women who oppress the poor

and crush the needy,

who say to their husbands,

“Bring us something to drink.”

<sup>2</sup>The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness:

Look, the days are coming

when you will be taken away with hooks,

every last one of you with fishhooks.

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>Come to Bethel and rebel;

rebel even more at Gilgal!

Bring your sacrifices every morning,

your tenths every three days.

<sup>5</sup>Offer leavened bread as a thanksgiving sacrifice,

and loudly proclaim your freewill offerings,

for that is what you Israelites love to do!

This is the declaration of the Lord God.

<sup>6</sup>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.

This is the LORD's declaration.

<sup>7</sup>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.

<sup>8</sup>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.

<sup>9</sup>I struck you with blight and mildew;  
the locust 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.

<sup>10</sup> I sent plagues like those of Egypt;  
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.

<sup>11</sup> I overthrew some of you  
as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,  
and you were like a burning stick  
snatched from a fire,  
yet you did not return to me—

This is the LORD's declaration.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Israel, that is what I will do to you,  
and since I will do that to you,  
Israel, prepare to meet your God!

<sup>13</sup> 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, is his name.

## 1. The Big picture in this passage depicts a Reversal of the Exodus.

A. Exodus was a demonstration of God's power against Egypt and on behalf of Israel.

1. God brought great plagues.
2. He defeated the power and authority of Egypt's army and military might.
3. God "plundered" the wealth of Egypt in order to bless Israel on her way out.
4. God promised to continue to do these same things against Israel's enemies as long as Israel remained faithful.
5. Yet God declared afterward that if Israel was not obedient, then God would bring the plagues of Egypt upon Israel.

B. We need to realize that, In Scripture there is always a tension:

1. If you will...then God will do this.
2. This works in both the positive and negative.
3. The terms of the Covenant declared good (blessings) for obedience to God, and bad (curses) if Israel went their own way.
4. We can cry and fuss that this is not fair, but nothing is more fair.
  - a. Any good parent, or boss, or teacher, will present the options ahead of time.
  - b. It is then up to you to make good choices:
  - c. Making choices is a huge part of the human experience.
  - d. So rejecting God is something we do knowing the consequences.
  - e. Israel had been warned for hundreds of years.
5. The Prophets tell of the cumulative result of hundreds of years of bad and sinful choices.

C. Now, in Amos, we read of God undoing and reversing the Exodus:

1. Food shortages, plagues, no rain, locust, blight, war and destruction are now the companions of Israel.
2. God intended good for them, but their choices led them in the wrong direction.
3. When your intended direction is God, anything else is the wrong direction.

2. The problem was, Israel thought she was going in the right direction.

A. She went to "Bethel" and "Gilgal" and worshipped.

1. But that wasn't where she was supposed to go.
2. The right place to worship was in Jerusalem.
3. The right God to worship was YHWH.
4. Instead, she worshipped the wrong gods.

B. She thought she was doing good by offering sacrifices and offerings and tithing.

1. Israel was religious but had no relationship with God.
2. A temptation we face in this part of the country is to be religious without relationship.
3. I can do everything right on the outside and be utterly dead on the inside.
4. My religion with God is not as important as my relationship with God. (*I didn't say religion or outward form isn't important, it just isn't the main thing*). I.E Baptism and Lord's Supper.

C. For example: Did you know that almost every religion prays?

1. The Muslims are amazing in that they pray several times a day but do not expect their god to answer.
2. Hindus pray to multiple gods with no answer.

3. Religions all over the world do good deeds, provide offerings, and even live moral lives.

4. Yet none of those elements will save them in eternity because the direction and relationships are all wrong.

D. **Some of us are doing the right things with the wrong heart.**

1. Too often, our goal in life is to do the right thing.

2. Jesus calls us one step further, and that is the hardest step:

3. He wants us to do what is right with the right heart.

4. The right heart will always be directed towards Jesus.

5. Even though Israel tithed, and gave sacrifices, and looked religious she was completely lost in her sin and delusion.

3. However, even in her worst state, God still loved her.

A. 4 times in Verse 6, 8, 9, and 10 God says "yet you did not return to me".

1. God did bring disasters and plagues upon Israel.

2. But His purpose was to get their attention and draw His people back to Himself.

3. **God demonstrated that He would do whatever necessary to save and redeem humanity.**

a. In the Old Testament, that was demonstrated in plagues and exile.

b. In the New Testament, it was best demonstrated by God sending His Son to die for our sin.

B. All God wanted was for His people to return to Him.

1. Like a jilted lover, God wanted to be with His "bride" Israel.

2. But Israel constantly would go out of her way to prostitute herself to anybody but God.

C. The New Testament refers to the Church as the Bride of Christ.

1. Do you think it is possible that God is jealous for our attention today?

2. If we were to give an honest assessment, would we say we are giving Jesus everything He desires from us or are we good at being religious?

3. God desires to know us and to be known by us, even in our day, if we will pay attention.

#### 4. How far will God go to get our attention?

A. The details in Amos and other Old Testament books tell of the great extent God will go.

1. Amos tells of people, including women, who would be led through breaches in the walls with fishhooks.

2. "There are pictures from Mesopotamia of captives being led by ropes that are threaded through rings through the captives' lips."<sup>1</sup>

3. Did God do this to them?

a. Not exactly.

b. What God did do was allow the Assyrians to invade and the Assyrians did what they always do.

c. They would kill, slaughter, rape, torture and then march the remaining few out of the land naked with leads in the mouth of the captives.

d. This was probably around a 500-mile trip.

4. God didn't do that, but when He removed His protection from them, this is what the enemy did.

a. But God takes full credit for what is getting ready to happen.

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<sup>1</sup> Hoyt, JoAnna M. *Amos, Jonah, & Micah*. Edited by H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick. Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018.

b. When you are the all-powerful God, nothing happens without your knowing.

B. If the safest place to be is in the hand of God, then the scariest place to be is outside the will and protection of God.

**1. Amos 4 ends with: Amos 4:12–13 (CSB)**

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, Israel, that is what I will do to you,  
and since I will do that to you,  
Israel, prepare to meet your God!

<sup>13</sup>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, is his name.

**2. All along, God had wanted to meet with His people.**

a. He wanted to be their God, and them His people.

b. He wanted Israel to be the recipient of His love.

c. He wanted to prosper and bless them.

d. But God is a Good Father, and a Good Parent does not enable their child's sin.

e. Last week, in Amos 3, we talked about the shepherd pulling out a piece of the flock from the mouth of the attacker as proof that the shepherd wasn't negligent.

f. *God was not going to participate in the sin of Israel by permitting their sin to last forever.*



3. So God declares, "Get ready because your God is coming and He is coming is strong."

C. Please hear me today:

1. I'm not wanting to scare you but warn you.
2. The same God that punished sin in the days of old promised to punish sin in our day as well.
3. So now is the time for us to get right with God.

Close: This is a great weekend for us to make sure things are right between us and God.

A. There is so much going on in our world.

1. Some of it is good.
2. But the bad stuff is getting all of the press.
3. Let me tell you some good opportunities that have come along our way this week:
  - a. A church and organization called me Friday asking if we wanted to get paid to help feed kids in our school district!!!
  - b. I'm working with a couple of agencies to, hopefully, receive some grants to help feed seniors in our area (and even if we don't receive grants we are pursuing opportunities to do that anyway).
  - c. I have been contacted by the school to consider an after- school program for students to have a safe place to study, be fed a meal, and other awesome opportunities.
  - d. The Big NEWS this week, and we will discuss at the end of today's message, is that we a signed contract to purchase the lot connected to us!!!
    1. We are going to need this soon because good things are happening.

2. The Lord is preparing us for day's like we have never seen before.

B. But even if we do all the right things, like feeding kids and seniors, after-school programs for kids, and owning property, if our HEARTS are not right with God then we are missing the mark.

1. The Apostle Paul told the Church in Corinth that all of their prophecy, and tongues, and spiritual expressions didn't matter if they didn't love God and each other.

2. If we don't love God and love our neighbors, then what we are doing will never be enough.

3. To paraphrase Amos 4: We can offer all the sacrifices, and give all the tithe, but if we aren't pursuing God we are pursuing the wrong things.

**C. If you are like me and find your relationship with God to be a little stale, or a little weak, or just completely absent at the moment, this morning I want us all to pray this phrase:**

God, help me want you like never before and help me chase hard after you!!!