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C0916 – April 22, 2009 – Amos 4:1-13 – Prepare To Meet Your God

Alright, tonight we turn to Amos 4, the second Covenant Lawsuit out of three, which reminds us of the structure of the book. Chapters 1-2 contain eight Oracles of Doom, chapters 3, 4 and 5 contain three Covenant Lawsuits and chapters 7, 8 and 9 contain five visions. So that's our structure, eight, three and five. That will help you organize the book as you read. We're in chapter 4, the second Covenant Lawsuit the Lord God is filing against the nation Israel.

Last week we finished the first Covenant Lawsuit. These are disciplinary truths; they do not have to do with eternal salvation. Of the nation God says, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth," which is an expression of sovereign, elective, intimate, covenant love. It's an expression of relationship. Israel alone of all the nations has this relationship with God. That's not my word, that's the word of God. It has been that way since Abraham and it will always be that way. We may not like it. We may not think that it is fair. But it is true. We said why does God love Israel in this way? Because He loves Israel in this way. It has nothing to do with who or what Israel is; it has everything to do with who or what God is. That's a truth you can transfer to the individual believer of the NT. Why does God love you? Because He loves you and it's not because of who you are, if it was then it would be a system based on human merit, but it's not a system of human merit, it's a system of grace. God's gracious love. He didn't have to do that, He didn't look down and say, "Oh, look how wonderful Jeremy is." No, I'm a dirty rotten sinner saved by the grace of God. But don't think because we now hold this standing by grace that we can now spit on that grace without coming under discipline. With great privilege comes great responsibility. That responsibility for Israel was defined in the Mosaic Covenant, a Covenant they had violated and violated and violated. It was a terrible state of affairs in the

northern kingdom. They had strayed farther and farther away from the Lord their God. So these are disciplinary truths. God is like a Father disciplining His children. In fact, in chapter 3 we found that God was their enemy. That's a sobering thought, God our enemy! I thought God was my friend? I thought God was a nice little fairy sitting on my shoulder. Well, you thought wrong. When we do not believe His word, when we sin against Him and we are hardened to the point of autonomous rebellion where we shake our fists at God, eventually it trickles down to immorality. And then God becomes our Enemy. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. He disciplines those whom He loves. Otherwise we are not His children. So, we need to take seriously the apostasy that had been set in the northern kingdom because the church faces the same apostasy in its progression.

¹Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria,

Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,

Who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!"

²The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness,

"Behold, the days are coming upon you

When they will take you away with meat hooks,

And the last of you with fish hooks.

³"You will go out *through breaches in the walls,*

Each one straight before her,

And you will be cast to Harmon," declares the LORD.

⁴"Enter Bethel and transgress;

In Gilgal multiply transgression!

Bring your sacrifices every morning,

Your tithes every three days.

⁵"Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened,

And proclaim freewill offerings, make them known.

For so you love *to do*, you sons of Israel," Declares the Lord GOD.

⁶"But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities

And lack of bread in all your places,

Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD.

⁷"Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you

While *there were* still three months until harvest.
Then I would send rain on one city And on another city I would
not send rain;
One part would be rained on, While the part not rained on
would dry up.
8“So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink
water,
But would not be satisfied;
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.
9“I smote you with scorching *wind* and mildew;
And the caterpillar was devouring
Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees;
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.
10“I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt;
I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured
horses,
And I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils;
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.
11“I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze;
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.
12“Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel;
Because I will do this to you,
Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”
13For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind
And declares to man what are His thoughts,
He who makes dawn into darkness
And treads on the high places of the earth,
The LORD God of hosts is His name.

¹ **Hear this word.** These are the opening words of a Covenant Lawsuit. We saw them in 3:1, we will see them again in 5:1. The Covenant Lawsuit is the case the Lord brings against His people who have violated the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. That Covenant was made at Mt Sinai with the nation Israel while they were a united nation. Now that the kingdom is divided and the Lord is dealing primarily with the northern kingdom, He brings a Covenant Lawsuit against v 1, **the cows of Bashan.** Now, Amos has some very politically incorrect things to say. The first group of people he attacks

are the women of Samaria. Of course, if you criticize women today you will be labeled a male chauvinist pig. But Amos was not concerned with political correctness. Women are sinners too, just like men. There is no discrimination here, both sides are sinners. And so he calls these women **cows of Bashan**. Now I don't know about you but I think this is one of the last things I would call a woman. And there's probably not a woman in here who would say, well, if I'm a cow then you're an ant and I'm going to crush you. Now, in all sobriety, Amos is very straightforward here in his description of the women of Samaria. Bashan was across the Jordan River and it was known for its luxurious pastures and the finest cattle, they were top picks and even in the OT, ferocious cattle. It's a description of the upper class women who are the pampered darlings of society, the trendsetters, the progressives and he summons them in a very interesting way, **Hear this word** is masculine, but **cows of Bashan** is feminine. This is a disagreement in the Hebrew language. Why does Amos address the women as men? Because they've reversed roles. The word of God has a lot to say about biblical manhood and womanhood. Men and women are equal in essence but distinct in role. God made men for certain roles and He made women for different roles. Basically a man's role is to go out and subdue nature, go out and make progress, work the fields, bring the world outside of man into productivity. The role of the woman is basically in the home, to home make, to rear children, to train children, to provide clothing and so forth. That is the way men and women were made, these are roles by virtue of Creation and not due to the Fall. And yet the women of Samaria were reversing the created norm. The man by creation is the head of the woman for the woman was made out of the man. And they've reversed all that, they've rejected Gen 1-2. You can see it clearly from the end of v 1, the commandeering attitude of the women "Who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!" That's not submission to authority, that's taking the reigns and exerting authority. They're lazy, bring me a drink. That's what they should be doing for their husbands. They're like fine cattle, they are indolent, they sit around in high society and tell their husbands, "Do this and do that." We have the same problems today, there's hardly a week goes by I don't get one more piece of literature that argues for mutual submission in marriage. Mutual submission. I find no such thing in the word of God, I find no such thing in the OT or the NT. Paul says it holds in 1 Tim 2, yet today, in the church, feminism is running rampant, and it doesn't stop there. After you've erased male/female distinctions then it starts bleeding over into our Christology. When Jesus says I don't do anything but

that which the father commands and He submitted to the Father in all things, and then the feminists come along and say, well, submission implies inferiority, so Jesus must be less than God. It doesn't stop there, then it goes on into the Father and we've got God the Father as bi-sexual, He's male and female. It just catapults through your theology if you give it enough time to develop, think about it long enough. Ideas have consequences. And so it is we have a very serious problem in the church today with role reversal. And it's all because of the influx of feminism into the church. It's devastating to watch the women step into roles they were never designed for, serving as elders, serving as teachers of men; they're not serving anything but their own ego. It's a blasphemy to the word of God. Of course, the arguments, "Well if the men won't do it somebody has to." Well, you won't be doing it God's way, so just know its sinful rebellion. Just like the modern women who give in to their sin nature and act like a man, doing the things men do; running their husbands, commanding them to do this, do that, chiding them, you didn't do that right, you didn't do this right, and I think we all know the type. Often Christian women, just as often as non-Christians, yap, yap, yap and nag, nag, nag. It's a real turn off.

And then the Indictment, **Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,** the **poor and the needy** are a common word pair but poor and needy don't mean the same thing. A person who's poor is needy but a person who's needy isn't necessarily poor. The needy are without money occasionally, the poor without it continually. That's the difference. But the upper class women **oppress the poor**, they continue to hold them down, and they **crush the needy**. That is, when they have a need they don't provide. These are greedy, self-centered women. And they're not going to give to anyone, they're taking from them.

Then the second Indictment we've already mentioned, **Who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!"** But we can elaborate because the word **husbands** is "lords," the husband is actually the lord or master of the marriage and the woman is to take care of her lord, but the role reversal is obvious. They command their husbands to do what they should do because they're lazy and selfish. If you want your marriage to work follow the word of God. You're going to look like misfits in society but that's because society is screwed up. The bottom line is that God gave the 2nd divine institution of marriage. And by divine institution we mean a structure that

God built into the universe so that if it's violated there's a price to pay, there's a disturbance. There is a form and a function. When we function within the form then there is freedom. When we function outside the form there is slavery. It's that simple. The hard thing is doing it. The hard thing is day in and day out men, going out and making a living, leading our wives in a loving way, cherishing them, nourishing them spiritually, being the spiritual leader, living with them in an understanding way as the weaker vessel. Women, the hard thing is submitting to your husbands, walking with fear around them, treading lightly, respecting them and their authority. He has the authority, respect him, honor him. Don't be a cow of Bashan. It's detestable to the Lord. And guys, you're just as much, if not more at fault if your wife is out of control like this. You have a spiritual responsibility to bring her into line. Be a leader. Be a man. And by that I don't mean crush her. Crushing isn't leading, crushing is domineering. The word of God says you lead with gentleness, you woo her to follow you, and you don't force her to follow you.

Alright, in verse 2, we have the Plaintiff and Judge introduced, it is **The Lord GOD. the Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness**, He's making a solemn oath here, everything that follows is a foregone conclusion. The oath is made on the basis of His attribute of **holiness**, *quadesh*. This attribute has been pointed out by theologians as being 'the essential quality of God.' I'm not advanced enough to know if that's an accurate statement or not, but it is often stated in systematic theologies that holiness is the quality that makes God what He is. I know it doesn't seem right to say one attribute is more essential than any other but if any one attribute is emphasized more than others in the word of God then it is "holiness," particularly in the OT but also in the NT. The Trinity is often referred to not as the Loving Trinity but as the Holy Trinity and the word of God is referred to not as the Sovereign Bible but as the Holy Bible or God's Holy Word. In the OT, the Tabernacle had two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies. The priests were known as the Holy Priesthood. The land of Israel is known as the Holy Land. Three times in Isaiah the ascription is made, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.

Holiness is very defining as to who and what God is. What does it mean? What is the idea of holiness? Holiness in its root form means "to cut," "to separate." What it's saying is that God is different. God is not like you, God is

not like me, and God is not like an angel. Theologically the uses can be broken out into two categories. First, His *majestic holiness*. By that term we're referring to His whole nature, His essence. God's holiness is injected in every other attribute making Him separate from His creation. To say God is holy is to say He is the Creator and He is separate from His creation. That's the main thing about that word that you have to catch. It's this idea of separation. That's what most people miss because most people are thinking of the second aspect, *ethical holiness*. What this means is that God is not associated with evil. This is the ethical dimension of God's holiness. That's why you read commands like "Be ye holy for I am holy." Obviously that can't be referring to God's majestic holiness. If it were it would be saying that we have to become Him. But that's not possible. The creature can never become the Creator. He is and forever will be separate from us in that respect. So there must be differences between God's majestic holiness and the holiness we are called to imitate. For one, God is eternally holy. We could never be eternally holy, we're created. So the command be holy isn't referring to His majestic holiness but His ethical holiness. Be ye separate from the world system as I am separate from the world system. Be ye separate from evil as I am separate from evil. Of course, we never perfectly reach that ethical perfection as He does, and that's the other side of His ethical holiness, not only is He separate from evil and sin but He exercises perfect moral excellence.

So when we speak of the holiness of God, first we speak of His *majestic holiness*, his 'utter inapproachability.' Some have called it his 'awful majesty' and it awakens in each one of us a creature-consciousness, it cuts man down to size. Secondly, we speak of His *ethical holiness*. The negative side is He's completely detached from sin and evil; the positive side is He exercises perfect moral excellence. And when we contemplate this there is complete awe, as one author said, we need shelter from the 'tremendum.' In both senses we find throughout the OT that if a sinful person were to ever see God in all of His fullness he'd be struck dead. To go into His presence is instant death.

Now, we emphasize this because the text emphasizes this. But we do so also because of the prevalence of people talking about God's love. Holiness is often dismissed in favor of love. And while it's true that God is love what people usually mean by God is love is that God's holy standard is relaxed. For them

love means laxity on God's holiness. That's a wrong notion. God's holiness is never relaxed, the standard of God's holiness is absolutely rigid, and it never relaxes. When His holiness sees sin it must judge, now or later, but it must judge. In an eternal sense God's holiness is a standard that He Himself meets in His own Son. Now, this is the grace of God. No sinful human being ever lived up to the standard of God's holiness. It's impossible. So if there's going to be any salvation at all it has to meet the ethical holiness of God and God Himself met it in His Son. Then after a person has believed in Him we can talk about "be ye holy as I am holy." In a temporal sense believers are to live a holy lifestyle, be obedient. So we can be ye holy for two purposes. Can we say to the unbeliever have you been holy as God is holy? Obviously they have not. But Jesus Christ has. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved. The other way we can use it is for believers to stimulate ethical loyalty to Him, loyalty to His commandments, in the NT the Law of Christ, in the OT the Law of Moses.

And obviously in our verses they had failed to meet that OT standard, so on the basis of His ethical holiness He swears the judgments that follow.

Behold, the days are coming upon you When the and literally it is Him, the Lord God is their enemy, singular masculine, **days are coming upon you When He**, the Lord God **will take you away with meat hooks, And the last of you with fish hooks.** Now he's referring to the women as fish. Lovely metaphors; cows and fish. What's he saying? He's predicting their exile; the wealthy, selfish women will be taken away from their luxurious dwellings. The Assyrian's have reliefs which picture slaves being pierced through the lip going into exile, that's probably what this is talking about. Verse 3, **"You will go out through breaches in the walls, Each one straight before her,"** the walls of the city of Samaria will be breached by the enemy and the women will be marched out of the city. **And you will be cast to Harmon,"** There's a difficulty in the Hebrew text with the word **Harmon.** Some think it was a place that we don't know about from any other source, others translators say it means "a palace," others, the Jews in the LXX, translated it as the "mountain of Rimman," and still others think it's a misspelling of Mt Hermon, to the north of Israel. We don't know exactly what it refers to; this is the only place it's ever used. As one commentator said, "What we do know is that whatever it's saying it's not good."

So the women of Samaria are the subject of vv 1-3, vv 4-5 we turn to some more of the religious corruption, much of which is the religious syncretism of their day that came from the time of Jeroboam I. When the kingdom divided in 931BC he ruled the northern kingdom while Rehoboam ruled in the south. And you'll recall that He set up the false worship system in the north at Dan and in the south at Bethel. This was to consolidate his kingdom. He set up the system of worship combining elements of primarily Egyptian and Jewish religion. He set up the golden calves; he set up a non-Levitical priesthood, wrong feast days, and wrong places of worship. All in the name of YHWH, of course, but with all these foreign elements tacked on. And so as we read, v 4, we find something very interesting: a series of commands, **Enter Bethel and transgress**; He doesn't say, Enter Bethel and destroy this idolatrous shrine, but **Enter Bethel and transgress**, sin more, **In Gilgal multiply transgression**. Fill up your sins. "Verse 4 is a parody of a priest's summons to pilgrims. The usual invitation was to "come into the sanctuary to worship" (Pss. 95:6; 96:8-9; 100:2-4). But with biting sarcasm Amos exhorted Israel to **go to Bethel and to Gilgal in order to sin.**"¹ We said **Bethel** had significance in Gen 28. It was the place Jacob saw his vision of the Angels going up and down the Ladder into heaven. Bethel had great historical significance for Israeli's. It means "the house of God," and Jacob called it "the gateway of heaven." **Gilgal** is a new place mentioned here and **Gilgal** also has historical significance. When the Israeli's crossed the Jordan River at the Conquest under Joshua, they camped at **Gilgal**. This was their base camp as they went up against Jericho, Ai and so forth. Another very historical city. They'd also set up religious worship there at **Gilgal**. **In Gilgal multiply transgression!** They go to Bethel to worship, they go to Gilgal to worship. But the Lord says go to sin! They're not worshipping Him. They think they worship Him. If you asked one of them, "What are you doing here? They'd probably answer, "I've come to worship the Lord God. Look at the things we do here; we offer **sacrifices**, we **tithe**, we offer **thank offerings**, we even have **freewill offerings**. We do all this for YHWH." They were a very religious people. By the way, there is no mention of "sin offerings." I don't know how significant that is, but it might be very telling. In any case the northern kingdom was in apostasy. They were a deeply religious people, they worshipped every morning, but it was sinful.

To detail it out, verse 4, **Bring your sacrifices every morning.** In chapter 4 He says bring them, in chapter 5 He says I won't accept them, I can't even look at them.

Bring...Your tithes every three days, some versions say every three years, the original says **three days**, they were supposed to take taxes every three years, they were doing it every three days, so is the nature of corrupt religion. It always places an unnecessary financial burden on the worshippers. It's always been that way; it will always be that way.

Verse 5, **Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened, And proclaim freewill offerings, make them known. For so you love to do, you sons of Israel,**” They loved their religion, they loved their denomination, they loved their priests, they did not love the Lord God. You can have all the religion in the world but if you do not have the Lord God it's sinful. You can be sincere, you can tell people all the things you've done for God, you can tell everyone how spiritual you are, you can boast in what your church does, you can tell everybody how much money you give. But that's all false religion!

What is God saying through Amos in vv 4-5, “You worship, you offer sacrifice, you tithe,” Amos would say, “I worship too, I offer sacrifice, I tithe.” “Surely Amos you're not saying that your way is the only way? Surely you're not being a fundamentalist?” Yes, that's what I'm saying. There's only one way to worship, the word of God way and all other ways are sinful. They are not accepted by God. Today the Church faces the onslaught of religious pluralism, the basic premise of which is all truth is relative, relative to the individual. This is the way individual A worships God and this is the way individual B worships and they're both equally pleasing ways to worship God. Amos says, “No, that's wrong!”

How do you think Amos was received? You think people liked Amos? Read chapter 7 and you'll find out. You go and tell someone the way they're worshipping God is wrong. What do you think is going to happen if you say that? The person who stands up for the truth of the word of God will always be maligned. It comes with the territory. The flesh is opposed to God, it does not submit to God, nor is it able to. There's open conflict between the person that stands up for the word of God, who is fundamental in his beliefs and

holds to them firmly and the fleshly believer. The fundamentalist will always be called a legalist, will always be called hateful, will always be labeled as arrogant, and will always be resisted.

It's a hard position to be in. Imagine trying to stand in Amos' shoes. Amos is an orthodox man. He's a bold man. He's a courageous man and the people who were wrong didn't like him too much. They thought their sacrifices were for atonement. They were not, they were sin. They didn't follow the word of God. Wrong priesthood, wrong location, wrong feast months, they were wrong, wrong, wrong. God didn't accept their worship despite their sincerity of heart.

Now, vv 6-11 while they had been busy developing this false religion, God had been busy too. He'd been busy trying to bring them to repentance. Notice the end of v 6, **Yet you have not returned to Me**, verse 8, **Yet you have not returned to Me**, verse 9, **Yet you have not returned to Me**, verse 10, **Yet you have not returned to Me**, verse 11, **Yet you have not returned to Me**. Count the attempts by God to bring them to repentance. There are five. Five times and they did not repent. Five times the Lord disciplined them to try to wake them up and smell the coffee and they did not. Notice what He did not say, "Yet you have not returned to church." These people went to worship all the time. There's a very big difference between returning to church and returning to God. Sometimes if a person doesn't come to church for awhile they will tell me what they think I want to hear, "Oh, I know we need to get back to church." Well that's not what I want to hear. I want to hear that a person returns to God. That's a very big difference. The local church is important, we should not neglect gathering together for worship, but in the final analysis the issue is not returning to church, the issue is returning to God. Some people go to church all their life. They are consistently there and yet they are in rebellion against the Lord. Returning to church isn't necessarily going to do a thing. Returning to God will.

So these verses outline the discipline God sent so they would return to Him. Verse 6 describes hunger, verse 7-8 describes thirst, verse 9, agricultural destruction, verse 10 military defeat, verse 11 sudden, supernatural catastrophe. You can see it's a step by step increase in the discipline. God turns the heat up. What are we seeing here? We're seeing the five degrees of cursing from Lev 26 and Deut 28 that the northern kingdom went through.

They were supposed to know that spiritual rebellion would result in God's discipline. It was very easy to see, it was manifested in the physical world, every one in the nation had to face it and nobody liked it. The prophets came to warn about it, they wouldn't listen, they even outlawed the prophets. And so let's see in v 6 how the Lord disciplined them so they would return.

But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities And lack of bread in all your places, both expressions of hunger. There was famine in the land. Deut 28:47-48 God warned them of famine for spiritual disobedience. The result: did they go positive volition? **Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD.** If they had returned God would have blessed them, but they did not so in verse 7 He increases the discipline.

This, by the way, is a model for parental discipline of a child. If they don't respond, turn it up a notch until they do. Here's our model, God the Father ratcheting up the discipline. **"Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you While there were still three months until harvest.** What that did was to totally destroy the crops, there would be nothing. **Then I would send rain on one city And on another city I would not send rain;** so now he goes into selective discipline, **One part would be rained on, While the part not rained on would dry up.** But the point is there would be a water shortage, they would have drought. **So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, But would not be satisfied;** There wasn't enough water to go around in the northern kingdom. Response: Did they get it? **Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD,** negative volition. When God disciplines you, you should respond. He spansks you because He loves you. If He doesn't spank you then you are not His child. But if He does and you don't respond positively then He spansks harder. Some of your children respond better to discipline, others are worse, it's the same in the spiritual realm.

Verse 9, **I smote you with scorching wind** actually that's "blight," blight **and mildew; And the caterpillar,** that's the locust, one of the earlier stages of the locust, **And the locust was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees;** usually locusts don't attack olive trees unless everything else is consumed, so this is total agricultural devastation which causes hunger and eventually economic distress. Response: how did they respond to this discipline? **Yet you have not**

returned to Me,” declares the LORD. So God cranks it up another notch. See, you don't just say as a parent, “Well, what the Bible says doesn't work with my child. I've got a unique child. No one in the human race ever had a child like mine.” Yeah, actually they did. God had one right here. Crank up the heat.

Verse 10, **“I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt; How do you like that one, you're as bad as Egypt so I send a plague on you like Egypt. Egypt was ruined by the plagues to the point when it was all said and done the Hyksos marched in and took it, Josephus says, without a battle. And along with this plague, He says, I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses, And I made the stench of your camp (literally camps) rise up in your nostrils; Beautiful portrait, great smell, dead flesh right up in the nostrils. How do you like that Israel? Now do you want to come back to me? Did I get through? Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.**

Israel's just doing a fine job here, real fine job responding to discipline. So verse 11, **“I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,”** try this one on for size. My hand overthrowing some of your cities in total devastation. **And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze;** The Lord did this but He did not allow it to be total, He did not let the catastrophe spread to all the cities, he snatched them from the blaze, and how did they respond? **Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.**

Therefore, verse 12, and this is the shift. Because they did not respond positively to His escalation of discipline, **Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”** The phrase, **Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel,** means they're going to have to go through vv 6-11 again in the final destruction, but this time they're not going to be judgments spread out over 150 years, they're going to come in one year. They're all going to be compacted together in one big fat judgment that is not going to feel very nice. You're going to face hunger, thirst, agricultural devastation, military defeat and supernatural catastrophe all in one year, how do you like that. A devastating pronouncement. **Because I will do this to you. Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.** Now that is not a nice idea. You do not want to go head to head with God. Some people, “Oh wouldn't it be nice to meet God.” No, this is

an expression that means to encounter a being whom to encounter is to die. He's the God of holiness. And his holiness is like fire. The NT parallel is like going to the judgment seat to stand before Jesus Christ and you've been living a rebellious Christian existence. Nothing you ever faced in this life, none of the discipline you ever faced is going to equal that moment. It's not going to be very nice to meet Jesus Christ at that judgment for rebellious believers (1 Cor 3). It's not going to be pretty for every believer. Some people think it's the day they're going to get to stand there and Jesus is going to give them a trophy. Well, maybe not! Paul says some people are going to "suffer loss," that you're going to be recompensed for the "bad works" and John says when Jesus Christ appears some believers are going to be ashamed. So don't take the discipline of the Lord lightly. It's not to be taken lightly. We're called to respond to His discipline so we can grow up and mature as believers. The northern kingdom didn't grow up, they went apostate and now the whole thing of vv 6-11 was about to rain down on them. They would go into exile. They would be spewed out of the land, taken north into captivity, lovely sight, broken families, dead fathers, dead children, destroyed businesses, broken marriages, raped wives, you think this was fun; this was a bloody, sickening mess.

And v 13, just in case you've forgotten, Israel, just who it is you are about to meet, let me remind you, He's the sovereign of the universe. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. **behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind And declares to man what are His,** little 'h' there, not capital 'h' he declares man's thoughts to him. **He who makes dawn into darkness And treads on the high places of the earth, The LORD God of armies [hosts] is His name.** Notice the things here that are said about who God is. **He forms mountains**, most of the mountains were formed in the Noahic Flood and the post-Noahic Flood as the earth settled down. He forms the mountains, tremendous geophysical catastrophe. He who **creates the wind**, that's meteorological, God can bring those forces against them. **And declares to man what are his thoughts**, He's also the heart reader, he can read our thoughts, Ps 139; Heb 4:12, "all things are open and laid bare before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." **He makes...dawn into darkness**, whether you're a geocentrist or a heliocentrist, He is the one who makes the sun go down such that darkness covers His earth. **And treads on the high places of the earth**, that's an expression of one whose feet step from high place to high place, one who has

dominion. **The Lord God of armies is His name.** *Adon YHWH.* Prepare to meet your God. Not a pleasant thought for a kingdom of apostates. Not a pleasant thought for any of us that have rejected the Lord's discipline.

Alright, what have we seen. We've seen in vv 1-3 the women of Samaria, selfish to the point they have reversed roles with their lords, they command them to oppress and crush the poor so they can live an indolent and luxurious lifestyle at the expense of others. They are full of greed and selfishness. In vv 4-5 the religious syncretism, they didn't stop going to worship, they didn't worship insincerely, what they did was worship contrary to the word of God. God hates that. And while they were developing their false religious system God was disciplining them in stages; stage one, v 6, stage 2, vv 7-8, stage 3, v 9, stage 4, v10, and stage 5, v 11. In v 12 they are to prepare to meet their God because all of these things will come upon them in one year. If they were so apostate they had forgotten who God was, v 13 explains. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Commander of Armies. If this is you in part or in whole then prepare to meet your God and His hot disciplinary wrath.

ⁱ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:1436.

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