

## Message #5

## Amos 4:1-13

One of the most difficult things for us to do and also one of the wisest things that we need to do as individuals and as a church is to analyze all of the negative things that God is providentially permitting to happen so we may determine whether or not the things are happening as His divine chastening or judgment.

Now sometimes God's people are hit with negatives because they are under some form of satanic attack. That certainly happened to Job. But even when that happened, God was still sovereign and permitted it. However, sometimes God's people are hit with negatives as a direct chastening judgment from God because God is trying to get His own people to turn back to Him. When that happens we need to be able to spot that and respond to that.

The real tragedy of many people is that God hits them with a string of negatives which are designed to get them to be faithful to Him and they don't see it or get it. That is exactly what happened to Israel and that is exactly the theme of Amos 4.

**GOD DIRECTED MANY NEGATIVE CHASTENING JUDGMENTS TO COME AGAINST ISRAEL AND SHE WOULD NOT RETURN TO A PROPER FOCUS ON GOD AND HIS WORD SO GOD SAYS PREPARE TO EXPERIENCE HORRIBLE THINGS.**

**There is a phrase that shows up five times in this chapter: “yet you have not returned to me” (v. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11).** That word “return” is a key word of this chapter. The Hebrew Masoretic text uses the word “shabath” which presents the idea of ceasing and desisting from something (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 804). The Greek Septuagint uses a word (επιστρέφω) which means to turn around and start moving toward God and his Word (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 174).

So these two words present the idea that Amos was telling Israel you have not stopped your evil transgressions and turned back to God and His Word. God says nothing I have done to this point has prompted you to realize you need to refocus your attention on Me and My Word.

You have not repented of anything. In fact, instead of repenting you are persisting in your own sinful and evil ways. God says this is why I am going to cause horrible things to happen to My own people.

When we get hit with negative things, it is very wise to analyze what is happening to see if God is trying to get our attention because we are in sin. For example, the believers of Corinth (I Cor. 11:30) and the believers of Thyatira (Rev. 2:22-23), who were getting sick and some were dying, would have been very wise to ask themselves could this be a chastisement for our own sin.

Israel, to this very day, has not asked herself what Amos wanted Israel to ask herself. Modern day Israel should be asking why do so many bad things happen to us? America should be asking the same question. Why is our economy falling apart? Why is immorality flourishing? Why are we paying so much for fuel at the gas stations? Did anyone ever stop to consider God is trying to get us to turn back to Him? No, many think this way in our day and not many thought that way in the days of Amos.

Now there are five key observations we want to make from this part of the book of Amos.

**OBSERVATION #1** – God gives His assessment of some of the women of Israel. **4:1**

Now a godly woman is worth her weight in gold. But Amos uses a metaphor to describe a woman who is not given to God and His Word; he calls them “cows.” These were self-centered women who were nothing but a bunch of cows about to be slaughtered. Remember Amos is in the city and he is proclaiming this to their faces. Obviously if you start calling women a bunch of cows, you probably won’t win them over to your side. It is not the politically correct thing to do to go to a place and call the women a bunch of fat cows. But the fact is it was God calling them this.

The women were wealthy, affluent cows who were about to be judged. In fact, notice **verse 1**: He calls the “cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria.” This was known to be a very affluent and wealthy area. Bashan was a lush and plush place to live. It was an elite area and, frankly, the women who lived there were snobs.

According to **verse 1**, the women were dominating the culture and they were not leading it into a right relationship with God. The husbands were not men of God; they were hen-pecked wimps. In the **middle of verse 1**, we learn that these women were the uppity-ups who thought more about their own pleasure and country club lifestyle to the point that they even oppressed the poor and crushed the needy so they had more money to spend. What those words mean is that these women did not care what was done to poor people as long as their affluent lifestyle was supported.

At the **end of verse 1**, we see that these were women who ordered their husbands to bring them their drinks. Rather than them waiting on their husbands and serving them, they wanted their husbands to wait on them. Roles were reversed. Instead of the men being men, they were acting like a bunch of hen-pecked women.

So Amos says you are a bunch of cows. The image that Amos is presenting is that cows basically sit around and get fat until it is time to slaughter them. God was about to slaughter these women and men as well because they would not listen to Him and His Word.

There is nothing wrong with having nice things. There is nothing wrong with enjoying life, but there is something drastically wrong when a woman only thinks about her own appetites and becomes greedy rather than being humble and grateful.

**OBSERVATION #2** – God promises that He will destroy them. **4:2-3**

Keep in mind the description given in these verses is aimed at affluent women who are living the rich plush life. God says, “I am fed up with these women.” God says, “I swear by My Holiness” that you are going to be totally humiliated and totally destroyed. Notice **verse 2** says, “the days are coming.” In other words, your situation is about to be completely reversed suddenly. You are about to go from prosperity to poverty; from the lap of luxury to the life of a loser.

In **verses 2-3** He describes a brutal destruction of doom. He says the days are coming when you will be taken away with “meat hooks” and “fish hooks” and you will be pulled out through the “breaches of the walls.”

Now this may mean that God would let these rich women become slaves who literally would be fastened together by hooks and walked out of the city. Or it could mean that they would be killed and their dead bodies would be dragged by hooks out of the city.

Either way, this would be a total humbling of these arrogant, proud, wealthy women. Their classy, luxurious lifestyle would come crashing down. We are not certain where “Harmon” is located. It obviously was a place of disgraceful exile, like some concentration camp. Many assume it was to the east in Assyria someplace.

But God promises by His own holiness that this judgment would come upon these supposedly elegant women.

There are women today who strut around thinking they are God’s gift to the world. They run their husbands and they think they run the world. Well, there will come a day when they will be totally humiliated.

Can you imagine some of the rich, elite women of the world being dragged out of this world and thrown into hell? There are many women who are not disciplining themselves in the things of God; they are just a bunch of fat cows. They do not love Jesus Christ and they do not love the Word of God and one day they will be dragged from their penthouses and mansions and private jets and yachts and will be cast into eternal fire. They are heading to the judgment of God.

**OBSERVATION #3** – God challenges them to keep right on sinning at their worship. **4:4-5**

God was fed up with these women and He was fed up with their religious worship. In fact, He is so fed up that He has Amos tell them go right ahead and go to your worship services in Bethel and Gilgal and keep right on sinning because your judgment is coming.

Now two sacred spots for worship in Israel were Bethel and Gilgal. Bethel was the spot where Abraham first camped in the Promised Land and it was where Jacob had his famous dream. **This was located north of Jerusalem.**

Jeroboam had made this an alternate place of worship and Jeroboam II, who was alive during the days of Amos, had put a main shrine at this place.

Gilgal was the place where Israel first crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. **This was located in the southern part of Israel.** Both of these places became popular worship areas. They became a popular sacred spot for worship.

God says to them—go ahead and go to your sacred spots and keep right on sinning. These people had so much money they could bring their tithes every three days. They went and offered their thank offerings and they brought their freewill offerings because they loved to do all the religious stuff. In fact, they made their offerings known. They made sure everyone knew how much and how often they were giving. The women were leading the way. They liked worship.

But it is clear these people did not go to worship to hear the Word and apply the Word. In fact, you will notice that these people were offering their “thank offerings” that were leavened. According to Leviticus 7:12, the “thank offering” was to be without leaven and the “peace offering” was to be with leaven (Lev. 7:13). So what we really have happening here is a worship service invented by men that lacks a precision in understanding the Word of God.

The “thanksgiving offering” was to be without leaven because it pointed to the fact that the sacrifice that would bring one into a right relationship with God contained no sin. Of course this was the problem; these people were going to worship services steeped in sin.

Now doing these religious things was important because it was all part of the O.T. Law. Bringing their sacrifices and offerings to God was important. So it was not wrong to go to worship. **What was wrong is that they were not going to these services to hear the Word of God so they could deal with sin in their own lives.** Worship was nothing more than religious ritual. It was nothing more than dead repetition. It was a good time for all and God says I am going to pour out my severe judgment.

These people could do all of the religious stuff, but they were not really interested in understanding God’s Word so they could obey it and do God’s will.

There is no question that we need to be people who go to church to take in God’s Word. I am convinced that the vast majority of people who go to church are not interested in carefully understanding God’s Word so they may make proper application to their lives. They are going to the places where they have the bands and the big show and the big screens, but there is no interest in carefully and accurately understanding God’s precious Word so they may change. It is all a feel good, happy show featuring a bunch of cows who are heading to the chastisement of God.

**OBSERVATION #4** – God sent His judgments against His own people, but they would not turn to Him and His Word. **4:6-13**

There are five specific judgments that God says He will pour out and had poured out against His own people. There is no question that God wants people to know cosmological disasters are orchestrated by Me.

Many of these judgments will become worldwide during the Tribulation, plus they will specifically hit Israel during the last part of the Tribulation. In fact, I believe the ultimate fulfillment of these judgments is yet future for Israel. Israel refused to humble herself to the truth of God, just as in the days of Amos:

**Judgment #1** - God sent famine as a disciplinary judgment and they did not return to Him. **4:6**

The idea of clean teeth is that you do not need to floss or pick teeth because there is nothing to eat. Now most people don't want to think that God would literally send a famine against people so they would starve; but this is a judgment of God. God says I will send a famine against "all your places." No one can stop a famine. When God wants a famine to hit somewhere, no one can prevent it. We need to be warned. When God gives us plenty, we always want to keep our focus on God and His Word. We always want to praise Him and thank Him.

**Judgment #2** - God sent drought as a disciplinary judgment and they did not return to Him. **4:7-8**

Dr. S. R. Driver, a Hebrew scholar in England, who wrote a commentary on Amos back in 1897, said that he lived through a time from Christmas of 1894 until February of 1895 when there was such a drought in England that people were warned that if it did not rain soon there would be such a great lack of water that people would not even have enough to drink. God says I send drought to specific areas of judgment I target. In fact, God says, "I'll let it rain in one spot and not rain in another spot" (Amos 4:7). In fact, in **verse 8** he says people stagger to one place that has water because they don't have water.

Can you imagine these high class women having to leave their mansions and go like a beggar to another city to try to get water? That is exactly what God says He was going to do.

It is interesting that God still left some water for people to drink. Drought was one of the promised judgments of God (Deut. 28:23). People would stagger to other cities to get some water and yet they would not realize if we will turn to the Lord, He will shower us with His blessings.

**Judgment #3** - God sent vegetation destruction as a disciplinary judgment and they did not return to Him. **4:9**

God caused scorching wind and mildew and bugs like caterpillars to destroy crops. Farming is a very important occupation. Terrible heat without water causes all kinds of agricultural problems. God says you have your gardens and vineyards and fig trees and olive trees; well, I am going to target that and destroy it because you refuse to get serious about Me and My Word.

**Judgment #4** - God sent military destruction as a disciplinary judgment and they did not return to Him. **4:10**

Now it is interesting that he uses Egypt for his analogy. Egypt refused to obey God even though God sent one plague after another. The Egyptians would not humble themselves to obey God so God finally destroyed her. That is the illustration God uses against His own nation Israel. God says I will target your strong young military men and they will be killed and their horses will be captured and still you do not return to Me. God targets people to die in military conflict and when He does that, people need to turn to Him.

**Judgment #5** - God sent city destruction as a disciplinary judgment and they did not return to Him. **4:11**

God says I will literally cause you to be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. This has reference to the fact that He allowed the Assyrians to come in and burn down many of their places. God allowed His own people to be overthrown, but He still kept His people in existence by snatching you from the firebrand of judgment and you still do not return to Me.

During the Tribulation, God will literally send fire as a judgment to destroy specific places (Revelation 8:7). This judgment will destroy water and vegetation and be the worst thing Israel has ever seen. Why? Because she would not return to the God who brought her out of Egypt.

**OBSERVATION #5** – God says because you have not returned to God, prepare to meet Me. **4:12-13**

Now God says because you refuse to want to know and apply My Word and because you have not heeded my warnings, you need to prepare to “meet” your God. This will not be a positive meeting.

**Now the word “meet” (qara) is the same word used in the book of Exodus (19:17) when God came to meet with Israel to enter into a covenant relationship with her. We may recall that when God came to meet with Israel in that positive context, it was a fearful and scary thing. If it was a terrifying moment when God met with His people on a positive note, think how terrifying it would be to meet with God on a negative note with the threat of judgment.**

**In verse 13, God says I want you to realize that I am the Sovereign, Majestic Creator and controller of everything.** In other words, the God who is capable of doing all things; the God who has all power is about to use that power against His own people in judgment.

**(Reality #1)** - God formed the mountains.

**(Reality #2)** - God created the wind.

**(Reality #3)** - God declares to man his thoughts.

**(Reality #4)** - God turns dawn into darkness.

**(Reality #5)** - God treads on the high places of the earth.

**He is the LORD God of hosts.** All things and all powers on earth are under Him. Because His own people refused to listen to His Word and turn to Him, God says I am going to use My power to turn against My people in judgment.

Negative things in our world are put there by God to get us to focus more on His Word and will. If we refuse to respond to His warnings, He has all power to make us respond. But there is a warning that is for everyone: "Prepare to meet your God." Are you prepared?