

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet | Amos

Prepare to Meet Your God

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Before we get into the book, I want to make a comment regarding this recurring theme of warning and judgment and destruction in the Prophets. My guess is that some of us are getting tired of this message. You're thinking to yourself, "*I feel like this is the exact same message that all of the prophets are preaching: warning, judgment is coming! Warning, judgment is coming! Warning... Ugh. I wish that God was happier.*"

If you feel something like that as you read through the Old Testament (and especially the prophets), here are two biblical truths that I think will be helpful for you to store up in your heart:

1. **God is happy all the time** (Psalm 16:11; Matt 25:23; 1 Tim 1:10–11),¹ **AND** God is **angry** all the time (Ps 7:11)

As humans, we have a really hard time experiencing and embracing opposite emotions simultaneously (like happiness and anger).

- **III.** I remember a day in high school when my basketball team won the championship game of the biggest tournament of the year, and then I got home and learned that my dog had been killed. *One minute* I was celebrating our championship victory; *the next minute* I was mourning the death of my dog. I was really happy about one thing, and I was really sad about another thing; but in my humanness, I was only able to focus on one emotion at a time.

God isn't like you and me. Yes, He is **angry** with those who reject Him and choose to live in rebellion against God does (and this anger comes out a lot in the prophets), but He is also **infinitely happy**: happy in Himself, happy in His people, happy in His plans for His people.

2. The judgment & destruction in the prophets isn't primarily a reflection of God's heart; it's **a reflection of our hearts**.

As the prophet Jeremiah is mourning the destruction of Jerusalem (in **Lam 3:33**) he tells us that God does not afflict "*willingly*", and in the original language, this word literally means "*from his heart*."²

- God does not afflict "from His heart"
- God's heart is not bent toward judgment.
- His heart is bent toward love and mercy and grace and forgiveness.

The judgment (*that we hear about over and over again in the prophets*) is a reflection of the hearts of the people who refuse to turn to God and repent of their rebellion. In **Amos 4**, there is a phrase that God says over and over again: "*Yet you have not returned to Me*" (**4:6, 8–11**).

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-happy-god>

² מִלִּבּוֹ

The prophets aren't giving their warnings and speaking of judgment because it's a topic they just really enjoy...nor because it's a topic that God really enjoys. Rather, they continue to give their warnings because God's people refuse to turn to Him.

Our God is an infinitely happy God who loves mercy and grace and forgiveness, but when His people continue to rebel against Him, judgment becomes the necessary theme.

CONTEXT

- Amos was a shepherd & a farmer from the rural area of Tekoa in the Southern Kingdom of Judah (**1:1; 7:14**). He spent his days caring for his trees and tending to his flock. And then God calls Amos to bring the unpopular message of judgment to God's people in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (just like Hosea). Not only was the message going to be unpopular, but it was going to be even more unpopular because it was coming from an outsider. Amos's name means "Burden-bearer" which was appropriate because of the ministry that God was calling him to.
- He went to Bethel (which is where the king of Israel lived, and it was the center of idolatry in Israel), and there in Bethel he confronted the people about their greed and injustice and self-righteousness and fake worship and pride...and Amos quickly became the most unpopular person in the land...as he carried this heavy message that God had given him.

The **theme** of Amos's **message** comes in **3:1-2**

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you,
O children of Israel,
Against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying:
You only have I known of all the families of the earth;
Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.
~ **Amos 3:1-2**

In other words: God's people are precious to Him, and so He is going to fight against their sin in order to restore them into a right relationship with Him.

There is coming a day, very soon, when Israel would stand before their Maker, and it was clear (as Amos looked at the widespread wickedness across the land) that Israel was not ready for that day. They talked about the coming "Day of the Lord" as if they were excited for that day, but Amos tells them that they shouldn't be excited for that day because they aren't ready for it.

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!
For what good is the day of the Lord to you?
It will be darkness, and not light.
It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him;
Or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.
Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light?
Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?
~ **Amos 5:18-20**

The long-awaited Messiah is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (**Gen 49:9; Rev 5:5**). And when the Lion comes, it will not be a happy day for those who rejected Him. This is the very first image that comes from the lips of Amos (1:2)³

And he said:
The Lord **ROARS** from Zion,
And utters His voice from Jerusalem;
The pastures of the shepherds mourn,
And the top of Carmel withers.
~ **Amos 1:2**

A lion has **ROARED!**
Who will not fear?
The Lord God has spoken!
Who can but prophesy?
~ **Amos 3:8**

There is coming a day when the Lion of Judah will come to His people, and He will make all things right. The question is, will you be ready when that day comes?

So, as Amos stands before a nation full of fake believers (idolatrous worshipers)⁴ and he gives one of the most bone-chilling warnings in the entire Bible:

Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!
~ **Amos 4:12**

The message is just as relevant for us today as it was for the children of Israel back in Amos's day:

- Someday, Jesus is coming back – not as a suffering servant but as a conquering King...
- Someday, Jesus is coming back – not as a sacrificial lamb but as a roaring Lion...
 - On that day, you will meet your God face to face. **Will you be ready?**

Q. How do you prepare to meet your God?

A. By getting to know Him now. By coming to Him now. By entering into a relationship with Him now.

This is Amos's call to the people of Israel...

For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel:
Seek Me and live;
But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over to Beersheba;
For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing.
Seek the Lord and live...⁵
~ **Amos 5:4–6**

³ See also Joel 3:16

⁴ Amos 4:4–5; 5:21–24; 8:4–6

⁵ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-does-it-mean-to-seek-the-lord>

This was the call to God's people then, and it is the call to God's people now.

If then you were raised with Christ,
Seek those things which are above, where Christ is,
Sitting at the right hand of God.
Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
~ **Colossians 3:1-2**

What does it look like for God's people to seek Him?
How do we as Christians set our minds on Christ?

1. God has made Himself known in **His Word**.⁶ So, spend time getting to know Him in His Word. This is where we listen to God.

III. Me: "I wish I knew how to paint." My friend **Isaiah**: "No, you don't"

- "Do you have any paint brushes? Do you have any paint? Do you have an easel? Do you have any canvasses? Have you taken any classes or purchased any books on painting?"
- "If you really wanted to know how to paint, there would be evidence in your life."
- "You like the idea of being able to paint, but you don't really want to learn how to paint."

That's the way many people are when it comes to knowing God.

They hear Pastor Stan preach, and they say, "*Man, I wish I knew God like that.*"

- But then they go home, turn on the television, click on their social media account...and they may never once open their Bible throughout the week.
- They don't come to Sunday School. They don't come to Bible Study. They don't open their Bibles during the Sunday morning message.

Christian, if that's you, then I think my friend Isaiah would say, "*You don't really want to know God. You just like the idea of knowing God.*"

Church, God has revealed Himself in the pages of His Word, and if you want to know Him, **this** is where you will find Him.

2. Set aside time every day for **prayer**. Make a reminder in your phone. Block it off on your calendar.

As you read the story of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, the first thing that happened when Jesus gave up His life on the cross was God ripping the veil of the Temple in two.⁷ The wall that separated sinners from entering into the holy presence of God was destroyed – which means that we can come to God in prayer any time we want to.⁸ **This** is where we talk to God.

⁶ Luke 24:27, 44–45; John 5:39; 2 Pet 1:16–19.

⁷ Matt 27:51.

⁸ Heb 4:16; 6:19.

3. Prioritize time with His body, **the church**.⁹ The church is the body of Christ on earth, and so one of the most significant ways we can seek God is by spending quality time with His body (His people, His church). The Sunday morning gathering is an important part of that, but it shouldn't be the only part. There are so many ways to spend your life in community with the local church, and I am really excited for the plans that are currently being made that will open up many more opportunities for us as a church body to seek God through community together. *We will let you know about those plans in just a couple weeks, so stay tuned for that.*

One final comment about seeking God. Amos reminds us to seek God now because there is coming a day when it will be too late.

Or, as the prophet **Isaiah** said...

Seek the Lord while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
~ **Isaiah 55:6**

Some of you have this mindset that you can wait to get serious with God until sometime later in the future.

- I'm too young to get serious with God.
- I'm too busy...
- I'm too broken...
- I'm too successful...

Israel was experiencing massive economic success during Amos's day, and so there was no sense of urgency when it came to seeking God. "*Amos, you keep talking about sin and judgment and warning and getting right with God, but look at us, man: life is good. So, you can take your message and go back to wherever you came from; we don't want you, and we don't want your warnings.*"

That's pretty much exactly what they tell him:

Then Amaziah said to Amos:
Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah.
There eat bread, and there prophesy.
But never again prophesy at Bethel...
~ **Amos 7:12-13**

We don't need you. We don't want you. And we don't want your message...
And Amos says, "You have no idea what's coming."

There is coming a day when it will be too late to seek a relationship with God.

⁹ 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 5:23; Col 1:24; c.f., Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 10:17; Eph 4:12; Heb 13:3.

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord God
That I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the Lord.
They shall wander from seas to sea, and from north to east;
They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it.¹⁰
~ **Amos 8:11-12**

This is the greatest famine in the history of the universe. It's one thing to die without food or water, but it's another thing to die without the Word of the Lord. If you read through the book of **Hosea** (who was also preaching to the Northern Kingdom) you heard him say the same thing...

With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find Him;
He has withdrawn Himself from them.
~ **Hosea 5:6**

This is how the story ends for those who think they can live their lives however they want and put God off until some unknown day in the future. Our world (including the world inside our church buildings) is full of people who refuse to turn to God and who think they can put off a relationship with God until someday in the future, and the message of Amos is that, one day, it will be too late to seek the Lord, and they will meet their God as a roaring lion.

But, for those who hear the message of Amos and heed his warnings, the story has a very different ending.

On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down,
And repair its damages;
I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old;
That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,
Says the Lord who does this thing.

...
I will bring back the captives of My people Israel;
They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them;
They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.
I will plant them in their land,
And no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,
Says the Lord your God.
~ **Amos 9:11-15**

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD!

- Those who **rebel** will meet the **Lion** who **roars**.
- But the **remnant** who **return** will meet the **Lord** who **restores**.

¹⁰ See also Amos 6:3.