

Commentary on Amos 3&4, by Chuck Smith 3.20.24

Pastor John Donovan, cell phone 508-380-0471

Pastor Terry Gerlarneau, cell phone 603-455-4399

Web site todbc.org email us at opendoorbiblechurch@todbc.org

March memory verse Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV) Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

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Chapter 3

Hear this word [Amos said] that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, and against the whole family (Amo 3:1)

So that would include Judah also.

which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying (Amo 3:1),

God now is talking to His people, and it's almost a lamentation. For God said,

You only have I known of all of the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for your iniquities (Amo 3:2).

A nation that had special privileges is also a nation that has great responsibilities. "To whom much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48). Israel had been given so much by God. "What advantage then," Paul said, "hath the Jew?" His answer to his own question is, "Much and in every way, for unto them are committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2). Unto them were the fathers, unto them were the statutes and the judgments given. He speaks of the tremendous advantages that they had because God had dealt with them as a nation, as a people. But that only increases their responsibility to God.

We look at the United States, again, a nation that was nurtured by God, blessed by God. "America, America, God shed His grace on thee." But the fact that we have been so blessed by God only gives us a greater moral obligation to commit ourselves to God, and to represent God before the earth. But even as Israel failed, so are we failing. And when God's people fail in their responsibility, then God punishes them. God said, "I will punish you for your iniquity."

And now some rhetorical type of questions that the Lord asked the people. Number one being: Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amo 3:3)

Can you walk in harmony? Can you walk in unity unless there's an agreement? Of course the answer is, no. Now how can you walk with God if you're not in agreement with God? How can you walk with God and continue in iniquity, and in unrighteousness, and in sin? The answer is, you can't. You cannot walk with a holy God in a state of iniquity. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

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Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? (Amo 3:4)

No, he roars when he has conquered the prey, when he has destroyed it, when he stands above it. will the young lions cry out of his den, if he has taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where there's been no trap set for him? (Amo 3:4-5)

No, a bird doesn't fall except there is a trap. shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? (Amo 3:5-6)

Putting it more into modern terminology, "Can the air raid sirens go off and people not be afraid?" I will never forget when we were in Bat Yam outside of Tel Aviv during the 1967 war. As we were there in the hotel just twenty minutes from Egypt by jet, and the Egyptians, of course, were across the Suez Canal and fighting in the Sinai. In the middle of the night about one, two o'clock in the morning, the old air raid sirens began to wail. Now we were the first major building along the Mediterranean from Egypt, and all of our group... Of course, it was a blackout and we all made our way to the basement where there was the air raid shelter. We had some unique experiences getting there in the dark, roused out of the sleep. Some ladies were wanting their husbands to wait for them while they put on their makeup. Crazy things that you'll do. But I'll tell you, there is something that is quite terrifying in the darkness of the night, hearing those sirens wail. And knowing that it's quite possible that bombs will be falling in that very area.

Now, in ancient Israel the sound of the trumpet was the sound of the alarm, "The enemy is coming!" When the trumpets would begin to sound, the fear would grip the hearts of the people. So the question, "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid?"

shall there be an evil in the city and the LORD hath not done it? (Amo 3:6)

That is, the evil, and in this sense, as it is so often in the Old Testament, the evil of judgment. People are confused because in Isaiah God said, "Have not I created evil?" They say, "Ooh! How is it that a holy God created evil?" The word evil is used in the sense of having brought judgment which affect is always evil upon the people for whom the judgment came. So, "Can there be the evil of judgment and God has not brought it?"

Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets (Amo 3:7).

Interesting that he is saying that, "God is not gonna work, God is not gonna move, God is not gonna judge, except He reveals it to His prophets." So before the judgment came, the prophets were warning the people that God was going to judge.

The lion hath roared, and who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, and who can but prophesy? (Amo 3:8)

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I mean, as Jeremiah, when he was prophesying, they told him to shut up. He wouldn't do it so they threw him in the dungeon. There he got a case of the "poor me's" and he began to complain to God about the treatment that God gave to His servant the prophet. He said, "I was determined. I wasn't gonna speak anymore in the name of the Lord. I've had it! You know, this is it. They're gonna treat me like this, I'm just not gonna tell them God's word again. I'm not gonna speak anymore in the name of the Lord." He said, "But His word was like fire in my bones, and I became weary trying to keep quiet." I mean, it's just something, I... You know, as Peter said when he was commanded not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, he said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. We're not gonna obey your commands. We can't help it. We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Paul speaks of the constraining love of Christ. The Lord has spoken, how can you be silent?

who can but prophesy? So publish in the palaces of Ashdod [the Philistine city on the coast], the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch. Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts (Amo 3:8-13),

Now remember this guy is a shepherd, a herdsman, and in those days there were lions in the land of Israel. You remember that David when he was telling king Saul his qualifications to go out against the giant, he said, "One day I was watching my dad's sheep and a lion came out and grabbed one of the sheep and started dragging it away. I took and I killed the lion. Then a bear grabbed one of the sheep and I killed the bear. The God who delivered the lion and the bear into my hand is able to deliver this uncircumcised Philistine. I'm ready to go." You remember with Sampson on the road down to Timnah the lion came out and jumped him.

So the shepherds, one of the problems that the shepherds had to deal with were the lions who would take the sheep. So as a shepherd he had had the experience of catching a lion, but it had already devoured the sheep until there were just a couple of legs left, or just a piece of an ear. And you have that disappointing experience of getting there too late to rescue the sheep.

So it is interesting how that being a shepherd, he is weaving in talk of the nature. The shepherds living out as they did, conscious of the heavens, conscious of the nature, and things of nature. So he speaks to the people in allegories with very natural references.

"Hear ye and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts."

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That, in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel (Amo 3:14):

Now Bethel is where they had established the worship of the cow, the calf worship in Israel. As Jeroboam had set up the calf in Bethel, and in Dan, and the places for false gods in Gilgal and all, and the people were idolatrous and worshipping these other gods, so now God is speaking out against the altars they had built at Bethel. "In the day that I visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel."

and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish (Amo 3:14-15),

Actually, there in Samaria king Ahab had built a beautiful palace, furnished it with ivory, and it was one of the great wonders, really, of glory and splendor and wealth, the house of ivory. But the prophet speaks out against the house of ivory.

and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD (Amo 3:15).

Chapter 4

Then the Lord says, Hear this word, ye cows of Bashan (Amo 4:1),

They worshiped the calf so God calls them a bunch of cows. But because they worshiped the calf, He speaks disdainfully concerning them.

which are on the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor (Amo 4:1),

Again, the oppression of the poor must have been great because God makes continual reference to it.

who crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink (Amo 4:1).

So there is that disparity between the very wealthy and the extreme poor. That kind of disparity that is a curse and a plague to many nations where they really do not take care of the poor with whom God is very interested.

The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks (Amo 4:2).

This literally happened. The Assyrians were extremely cruel people. They were so cruel that history does record of many cities when surrounded by the Assyrian army, the inhabitants would commit mass suicide much as Masada, rather than to be captured by the Assyrians, because they feared them. Because the Assyrians were accustomed to mutilating their captives: cutting off their ears, mutilating their bodies, mutilating their faces. One of the things the Assyrians did with their captives is that they would put

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fishhooks through their lips to drag them back to Assyria, or through their noses, or through their ears, so that you'd have to keep marching. You try to slow down and that thing begins to pull on your nose, or on your lip or on your ear. And here is the prophecy, "You're gonna be led away with fishhooks." So it was. The Assyrians, when they captured Samaria, attached to the people these fishhooks and drug them away, or led them away captive to Assyria. "The Lord God hath sworn by His holiness, that lo, the day shall come upon you that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks."

And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD. Come to Bethel (Amo 4:3-4),

This place where Jacob first met God and called it Bethel, the house of God. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." But they had made it a place of idolatrous worship, the center of their idolatrous worship in the Northern Kingdom. "Come to Bethel,"

and transgress; at Gilgal [another place of pagan worship] multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD (Amo 4:4-5).

Now God here speaks of the judgment that He had brought against them, and the purpose of these judgments was to cause them to turn to God. God oftentimes uses what we call judgments or chastisements, in order to turn us from our path of destruction. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6).

Now, as long as you're a child you don't understand that. It's not until you become a parent that you understand it. I thought my dad was just feeding me the biggest line when he would say, "Son, this hurts me more than it hurts you." I did not believe that. I thought my dad was just putting me on, until I became a dad and I understood exactly what he meant. The hurt that you feel when it is necessary to punish your child, but you know you must for their own sake and for their own good chastise them, or else they could destroy themselves. But you don't want to inflict pain, but you know that you've got to somehow teach them the danger of their activities. So you are forced to chastise them, though it is an extremely painful thing to do. God, for our benefit, chastises us, and for Him it's a painful process. God says, "Turn! I don't want to meet you in judgment. I would rather meet you in mercy. I delight in mercy, not in judgment." I know that as a parent. I always look for any excuse not to spank them. "Say you're sorry, please say you're sorry." I was a softie. I would let them talk me out of it, with a very stern warning, "Next time..." And God doesn't enjoy chastising His children, but it is for our benefit and our good in order that we might turn to Him.

So God brought various chastisements against the land. Oh, how we misunderstand God. Whenever a chastisement or judgment comes, somehow in our minds we picture God is angry with us, as I often pictured my dad angry with me, because I did not

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understand him. After being chastised, I would often go in my room and I'd begin to cry, "Nobody loves me. I don't even think my dog loves me anymore. Nobody loves me." Then I'd wish I were dead, because they would all feel sorry then if I were dead, you know. So you think about them standing around your casket crying like everything. The emotional traumas of a child.

When in the Garden of Eden after Adam had sinned and the Lord came down in the cool of the day to walk with him, Adam hid himself from the presence of the Lord, for he realized that he was naked. God said, "Adam, where art thou?" That was not the cry of an arresting policeman, but the sob of a heartbroken Father. But so many times we read it and we think, "Oh man, here he is. Gonna wring his neck, 'Where are you!'" No. You've got to read that and hear the sob in the voice, "Adam, what have you done?" As God could see the effect of Adam's transgression upon the whole human race, you and me included. What we have suffered, and what mankind has suffered for the action of Adam. "Adam, where are you?" Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and the purpose is always to turn us to God from the path of self-destruction. God knows to continue that path is to destroy ourselves. So God speaks of those things.

I've given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, want of bread in all of your places: and yet you did not return to me ([Amo 4:6](#)),

He had allowed food shortages to develop, yet the people wouldn't turn.

So I withheld the rain ([Amo 4:7](#)), He began erratic weather patterns.

when there was yet three months until harvest: I caused it to rain on one city, and not to rain upon another: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereon it did not rain withered. There were two or three cities wandering into one city, looking for water; but they were not satisfied: [A drought in the land.] and yet [God said] you didn't return to me. So I have smitten you then with a blasting mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, then the palmerworm [the locusts] devoured them ([Amo 4:7-9](#)):

The Medfly, the white fly, and yet the Lord said, "You have not returned unto Me."

So I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt [that is, the viral infections and all]: and your young men I have slain with the sword, and I've taken away your horses; and I've made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: and yet you have not returned unto me, saith the LORD. So I've overthrown some of you, even as Sodom and Gomorrah, [fire, earthquakes] the firebrand plucked out of the burning: and yet you have not returned unto me, saith the LORD. Therefore ([Amo 4:10-12](#))

Because they had not hearkened to these warning judgments of God, because they had not turned away from their evil deeds.

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Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel (Amo 4:12).

This is not meeting God in friendly terms, but meeting God to face His judgment. Heavy, heavy duty. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." It is necessary and important that each of us make preparation, because each of us ultimately, one day are gonna stand before God. "And I saw all of the dead small and great standing before the great white throne judgment of God" (Revelation 20:11-12). All of the dead. Death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them. And every man was judged according to the things which were written in the book. "For it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). No one can escape it. Inevitably, inescapably, one day each of you are gonna stand before God, and that will be a very awesome experience, because you'll be standing before the very Creator of the universe.

For, lo, he that formed the mountains (Amo 4:13), God said, "Let the dry land appear." and created the wind, and declared unto man what is his thoughts, and makes the morning darkness, and treads upon the high places of the earth, Yahweh, The God of hosts, is his name (Amo 4:13).

Prepare to meet Yahweh, the God of hosts, the Creator of the universe.