

Prepare to Meet Your God: Amos 1:1-4:13

Introduction

- At work I am asked to talk to customers some times. Our products are fiber optic networking products that can be changed remotely and fulfill a number of different customer scenarios. I sometimes go out on sales calls and sometimes I have to support them when they have problems with our products. This can be a hard and tough process. Sometimes it is a misunderstanding. Sometimes it a product failure. Sometimes it is a wrong expectation. Sometimes it is a cultural or language difference. Sometimes the customer can't follow instructions.
- A conversation typically starts off with the customer saying something like, "I have a problem with your product, what's wrong?"
- I then I have to ask a number of questions in order to understand what is wrong. "What are you trying to do? How is the product configured? Was it working and now isn't? What has changed since the last time you used it? How is it connected in the network? Etc.
- When we approach God's Word we also have to understand many things. We have to ask ourselves many questions to understand the intent of the author, what is the meaning of the text, and what impact does this have on our lives. What other parts of Scripture can help us understand the passage before us?
- Let's turn to our passage for today with these thoughts in mind...

Lesson

- **Point #1:** Don't mess with God's message (1:1-2)
 - Before us today is the first part of the book of Amos. Anytime that we approach a portion of God's word you have to answer several key questions before you can truly understand God's Word and what it means.
 - (1) Who wrote the book? Amos.
 - **Amos 1:1a** *The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa...*
 - **Amos 7:14** *Then Amos replied to Amaziah, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.*
 - That's about all we know about Amos. He was a shepherd and a grower of sycamore figs. He was not from an influential family, nor from a priestly family, nor from a family of prophets.
 - He was from Tekoa, a rugged region, which lay 12 miles southeast of Jerusalem, and hence he was from the kingdom of Judah.
 - (2) When was the book written?
 - **Amos 1:1b** *...which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.*
 - It was written during the reign of Uzziah king of Judah and the reign of Jeroboam II king of Israel. History tells us that this was between 760-755 B.C. This book's message was only a few years before the Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.
 - (3) To whom was the book written?
 - Amos' prophecy and vision was directed to the northern kingdom Israel. Though Amos was from Judah his message was to Israel.
 - **Amos 1:1** *The words of Amos...which he saw concerning Israel*
 - **Amos 1:2** *He said, "The Lord roars from Zion and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; and the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, and the summit of Carmel dries up."*
 - (4) Why was the book written?

- The time of Amos' ministry was a time of prosperity for the Kingdom of Israel, but it was a time of great moral decay. In Charles Feinberg's commentary on the Minor Prophets he wrote:
- *The period was one of great wealth, luxury, arrogance, carnal security, oppression of the poor, moral decay, and formal worship. The moral declension and spiritual degradation of the people were appalling.*
□ - **Feinberg**
- (5) What is the theme of the book?
- The book of Amos was a part of Scripture that is called the "Minor Prophets". Minor is a term applied to books that are shorter length in contrast to books that are called "Major Prophets" of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, which were much longer.
- The prophets were sent by God to present a message about God: His person and standards and His plans for the future. They generally were written to call God's people back to Him. The message of Amos can be summarized:
- *Amos sets forth the majesty and uncompromising righteousness of God against sinners. His prophetic messages and visions are (with the exception of the last) of a threatening nature. They are directed against the low moral condition of the people and especially against their apostasy from the Lord to the worship of idols.* - **Feinberg**
- The first point then is that God has a message that needs to be heeded and an action that needs to be taken. We are called to pay attention and we are not to ignore it. To ignore God's message has a consequence for action. So the first point? Don't mess with God's message – don't ignore it, don't demean it, don't reject, or deny it.
- **Point #2: Don't mess with God's people (1:3 – 2:5)**
 - I am amazed what has happened in the nation of Israel in our day and age. The day after the creation of Israel, May 15, 1948, they were attacked by Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syrian, and Iraq. Israel won. In 1956 they were attacked again and they won. In June 1967 Israel made a preemptive strike against Egypt and Jordan and defeated them in six days. Oct. 6 1973 on Yom Kippur, Israel's holiest day, they attacked. My boss at work was in the Israeli air force at the time and the nation only had a couple hours warning of the attack and they only had a skeleton of their military at their bases. My boss told me it was probably the worst day for attack and I said it must have been since it was on a holy holiday. He said that's not what he meant. I said what do you mean? He said during Yom Kippur everyone was at home and the roads were empty. (If it would have been on Rosh Hashanah, everyone would have been gone on holiday and the roads would have been clogged with traffic.) Once the call went out the army immediately mobilized and bases were manned within a few hours, though full mobilization wasn't achieved for three days. I read a book a while ago that said Syria was poised to descend from the Golan Heights and enter the populated valley area, but they stopped. In fact, there was one working tank that held off the whole Syrian tank force. Luck? Chance? Skill? No, it was the hand of God. This leads us to our second point: Don't mess with God's people.
 - From Amos 1:3 – 2:5 there is a list of God's judgments on the nations that surrounded the Kingdom of Israel.
 - (1) Judgment of Syria (1:3-5)
 - The phrase "*for three transgressions and for four...*" is seen over and over again and indicates the incalculable number of sins made against the nation of Israel.
 - *The expression means the measure of iniquity is full and wrath must fall upon the wicked. The punishment cannot be turned away: it is inevitable; it is irrevocable.* □ - **Feinberg**
 - **Sin: Amos 1:3** "*...they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron*". They came and hurt the people God, abusing them and killing them.
 - **Judgment: Amos 1:4** "*So I will send fire*" – an indication that war and destruction was coming upon the nation of Syria. They were under God's judgment for abusing God's people. This was fulfilled by the invasion of Assyria within a few years.
 - (2) Judgment of Philistia (1:6-8)

- **Sin: Amos 1:6** *“Because they deported an entire population to deliver it up to Edom”*. They sold God’s people into slavery and profited by it harming God’s people
- **Judgment: Amos 1:7,8** *“So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza...and the remnant of the Philistines will perish”*. Once again war and destruction was coming and the perishing of their nation.
- (3) Judgment of Phoenicia (1:9-10)
- **Sin: Amos 1:9** *“Because they delivered up an entire population to Edom”*. They sold the prisoners of war as slaves. In fact, this was even worse than the Philistines, for there was never a time when Israel invaded or attacked Phoenicia. They were friends and allies, and yet they also attacked God’s people.
- **Judgment: Amos 1:10** *“So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre and it will consume her citadels”*. This occurred during the conquest by the Babylonians.
- (4) Judgment of Edom (1:11-12)
- **Sin: Amos 1:11** *“Because he pursued his brother with the sword, while he stifled his compassion”*. They had no compassion for God’s people, no forgiveness, even though closely related through genealogy and treaty.
- **Judgment: Amos 1:12** *“So I will send fire”*. War and destruction was their future.
- (5) Judgment of Ammon (1:13-15)
- **Sin: Amos 1:13** *“Because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their borders”*. They harmed and killed those in Israel even pregnant women. Their motivation? To grow their nation larger.
- **Judgment: Amos 1:14-15** *“So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah...their king will go into exile”*. War and destruction and captivity was their punishment.
- (6) Judgment of Moab (2:1-3)
- **Sin: Amos 2:1** *“Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.”* They were a violent and vindictive people, even desecrating those who were already dead.
- **Judgment: Amos 2:2-3** *“So I will send fire...and slay all her princes”*. War, destruction, and death. From the capture by the Babylonians the nation of Moab has never existed.
- (7) Judgment of Judah (2:4-5)
- **Sin: Amos 2:4** *“Because they rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept His statutes”*. Notice the change in the sin listed: It was against God, His law and obedience. It wasn’t specifically against the Kingdom of Israel. Judah who should have been an example of how God’s people are supposed to act was not much different than Israel.
- **Judgment: Amos 2:5** *“So I will send fire upon Judah”*. War and destruction was also coming upon Judah. Even among God’s people God is not impartial to them and they will be punished when they are guilty.
- *They had what the heathen nations never had—the Law of the Lord in the commandments of Moses. But they paid no heed to it and cast it from them, failing utterly to keep the righteous statutes given therein.*
☐ - **Feinberg**
- The second point then is: those who were set against God’s people, who rejected them, and attacked them, were judged by God. Israel’s is still God’s chosen people and we would do well to pay attention for God is not done with Israel yet.
- **Point #3: Don’t mess with God (2:6 – 4:11)**
 - I grew up in a family that was marginally Christian. My mom I believe was a Christian but we never went to church and never talked about God at all. When I was in fourth grade I went to Sunday school a few times. All I remember is talking about the construction of the Tabernacle for what seemed like weeks. Not exactly something to excite me. I next went to stockade for a couple of months, listened to the gospel,

made a seeming commitment, but there was no growth. When I was in sixth or seventh grade I asked God to answer my prayer, I have no idea what I asked for. I give Him an ultimatum – answer my prayer or I don't think you exist. No answer, no God. My life went on. When I was a senior in High School a friend asked me to go to Young Life. They had a contest that night shoving marshmallows into their mouth and saying “Cubby Bunny” and swallowing gold fish live. I must admit I thought it all pretty silly. But God wasn't done yet. A few weeks later the same friend asked me to go to a Bible Study and amazingly I went. During the next weeks I went every time and I finally saw the reality of God and God living in people. It wasn't to long after that I made a commitment to God and placed my faith in Him for my salvation. God continues to pursue us until we finally accept Him or it becomes too late.

- Our attention now turns the kingdom of Israel: their sins and their punishment. The list of sins against Israel is long, but we should heed its warnings and message for us today. God wanted them to turn back to Him but they continued to dismiss the warnings and continued in their sin.
- The sins that Israel was guilty of could also be sins of which we are guilty. When we approach God's Word always ask yourself what it says, what it means, and how does it impact my life. Read, Understand, and Apply. All of God's word is important to us:
- **2 Tim. 3:16** *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*
- (1) They were greedy and oppressed the helpless (2:6-8)
- **Amos 2:6** *Because they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals.*
- They believed they deserved whatever they wanted, even if it led to the abusing and stealing from others. They forgot what God's Word says:
- **Prov. 14:31** *He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.*
- (2) They forgot to acknowledge God's work in their own lives (2:9-16)
- **Amos 2:9-10** *Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them... It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt and I led you in the wilderness forty years*
- God is sovereign and works in our lives everyday. We can accomplish little without the hand of God upon us. We are called acknowledge what He has done for us. We can't let our own pride blind us and forget how God has worked.
- *God had done all to provide for their instruction in the truth and in His will and for the maintenance of purity and holiness of life in the nation.* □ - **Feinberg**
- (3) They took God's choice of them as His people for granted (3:2)
- **Amos 3:2** *You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*
- God had chosen them among all the nations of the world, not because of what they had done, but because of who God is. God had chosen Israel to show himself to the world and it was their responsibility to show forth and bring glory to God, not themselves.
- God had chosen to reveal Himself to Israel and Judah alone. We may have expected that God's revelation of Himself would cause Him to ignore and dismiss their sins. This is not true and furthest from reality.
- *The Word of God states the opposite of man's inferences: because God has taken Israel into a place of intimacy with Himself, He will all the more assuredly visit upon her head all her iniquities. Nowhere in the Bible is a more vital and basic principle enunciated. The prophet is saying that punishment is commensurate with privilege. Of the one to whom much is given, much is expected.* □ □ - **Feinberg**
- We have heard that “**With great power comes great responsibility**”, but in the Biblical version of this is “**With great spiritual knowledge comes great responsibility.**”
- Jesus said a very similar thing and it is applicable to us, **Luke 12:47-48** “*And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes. but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who*

has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”

- Peter states the same principle in a similar way: **1 Pet. 4:17** *For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*
- We need to respond to God’s Word and do God’s Word. It is not enough to know what it says. We need to obey God’s Word.
- (4) They refused to worship the true God (3:14)
- **Amos 3:14** *For on the day that I punish Israel’s transgressions, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and they will fall to the ground.*
- When Israel split from Judah they set up false centers of worship to lead the people away from the worship of the one true God. They set up false idols and altars to worship the golden calf. They refused to give these up and turn back to God. They instead served an image...
- **Rom. 1:22,23** *Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*
- (5) They refused to see the judgment that was coming (4:2)
- **Amos 4:2** *The 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.*
- The nation of Israel had been warned many times to turn back to God. They have been warned again and yet they refused to acknowledge what was going to happen, and more importantly they refused to confess their sins and turn back to God. Very soon they were going to be conquered and led away into slavery.
- (6) They believed their worship was without problem (4:4-5)
- **Amos 4:4-5** *Enter Bethel and transgress; in Gilgal multiply transgression! Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days. 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.*
- They did religious things, and thought they were doing the right things by bringing tithes and offerings, but they were worshiping an idol. They followed the letter of the law, but they sinned through their calf-worship. They were meticulous in the details of their worship, but their goal was to please themselves and not God.
- The Ten Commandments had told them in **Ex. 20:3-4** *You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.*
- (7) They refused to turn back to God (4:6)
- **Amos 4:7, 8, 9, 10, 11** *Yet you have not returned to me*
- This phrase is repeated five times in this passage. God over and over again brought devastations and calamities in their lives to turn them back to God, to trust in Him, to acknowledge their sins, to put their faith in him, and yet they refused to accept any of the things listed to turn to back to God: lack of food, lack of rain, scorching winds, insect attacks, plagues, and even defeat in war. God loved them and desired that they would repent and turn to Him. They refused.
- **Point #4:** Don’t mess with the warnings (4:12-13)
 - Israel had refused to obey God. They had refused to listen to and obey the prophets. They had refused to acknowledge the calamities were a work of God to drive them back to God. They had seen God’s hand throughout their existence, his providence, his mercy, and his grace.

- It was now time for them to see God face-to face:
- **Amos 4:12** *Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.*
- This is the last warning that they got. The end has come. God is patient but there is a time when his patience runs out.
- *They had better get ready to meet God Himself, not His judgments, and give Him an answer for their impenitence.* □ □ - **Feinberg**
- What do we learn about God in the last two verses?
- (1) God is omnipotent or all powerful: **Amos 4:13a** *For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind*
- God has made the world. He holds it together. He can do as He pleases and He has the means and capabilities to enforce His will. He is creator and sustainer of the universe.
- (2) God is omniscience or all knowing: **Amos 4:13b** *And declares to man what are His thoughts*
- God knows our thoughts. God knows all things. There is nothing that we can hide from Him. He has all knowledge and understands how everything works and how everyone truly is, including their innermost most private secret thoughts.
- (3) God is sovereign and rules over all: **Amos 4:13c** *He who makes dawn into darkness and treads on the high places of the earth*
- God has the right to do as He pleases. He is in control of the whole universe. We are called to serve Him, to do what He wants, and to be in subjection to Him. He is God and we are not. Hallelujah!
- **Application:** How is my life changed through this passage?
 - We have read the passage before us. We have briefly looked at its meaning and intent. Now it is time to look at how we can apply it to our lives. Remember: Read, Understand, Apply.
 - (1) I must treat Israel with respect and remember that they are still God's people. The Book of Romans tells us that God's dealing with Israel is not finished. They still have a part in God's plan.
 - **Rom 11:1-5** *I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.*
 - (2) I must pray that Jews all over the world would find their true Messiah and give their lives to Jesus.
 - The book of Revelation tells us that time is coming: **Rev 7:4** *And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel*
 - The ministry of the 144,000 will lead to a great outpouring of God's Spirit and many Jews will finally understand that Jesus is their Messiah.
 - (3) I must treat the downtrodden with respect and care. I must not mistreat or abuse them.
 - **Isa 1:17** *Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.*
 - **James 1:27** *Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*
 - (4) I must acknowledge God's work and operation in my life and give thanks to Him everyday. Turn to Him and give thanks and praise to Him.
 - **Phil. 4:6-7** *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

- (5) I must worship the true God fully and truly, seeking who He is and worship Him accurately and consistently.
- **John 4:24** *God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*
- (6) I must examine my inward motivations and outward actions in order to become the person God wants me to be.
- **Prov 16:1-3** *The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives. Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.*
- (7) I must acknowledge my sins and confess them to God, repenting of my actions and thoughts, and not being complacent with who I am or how I act.
- **1 John 1:8-10** *If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*
- Let's pray...