

Amos 4:1-13

Amos 4:1-3:

4:1 - **“Hear 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, that we may drink!’**

4:2 – **“The Lord God has sworn by his holiness
that, behold, the days are coming upon you,
when they shall take you away with hooks,
even the last of you with fishhooks.**

4:3 – **“And you shall go out through the breaches,
each one straight ahead;
and you shall be cast out into Harmon,”
declares the Lord.**

- Women of Samaria are addressed metaphorically to the fat cows living across the Jordan in the fertile fields of Bashan.
 - Isaiah also addresses the vain, arrogant, complacent women of Jerusalem a few years later in Isaiah 3:16-4:1
- These women are failing God’s directives in two areas:
 - Mistreating their inferiors: oppress the poor and crush the needy
 - Misaligned with their superiors: “Masters” means “husbands”. The women have forsaken their normal social responsibility and position in the home to lounge and drink wine while commanding their husbands. These cows of Bashan are dominating their families as well as the poor and needy
- The end of these women will be brutal:
 - Their dead bodies will be in the streets
 - Picked up like dead flesh with hooks
 - Small, separated body parts will be picked up like litter with a spiked stick
 - Taken out to the dump through an opening in the broken down wall
 - Others left alive will be deported
- OR, a better interpretation of verses 4:2-3:
 - The meaning of “hooks” and “fishhooks” may better be interpreted as “baskets” and “pots”
 - This is because:
 - the more common method of catching fish was with baskets, not hooks.
 - The metaphor of captives being placed in baskets is found in prophetic texts from Mari when the god Dagan said through his prophet, “I, Dagan, will make the Benjaminite sheiks wriggle/writhe in a fisherman’s basket and deliver them in front of you.”
 - This image is picked up in:
 - Jeremiah 16:16 – “But now I will send for many fishermen,” declares the Lord, “and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters...”

- Habakkuk 1:14 – “You have made people like the fish in the sea, like the sea creatures that have no ruler. “
 - This translation would read: “And you will be transported in baskets, and the very last one of you, in fishermen’s pots.”
- The meaning of, “you shall go out through the breaches, each one straight ahead” is that since the destruction of the walls of Samaria will be so torn down every captive will be taken straight out of the city over the collapsed wall instead of through the city gates or one of the few breaches in the wall.
 - Joshua 6:5 and 6:20 – “When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in... the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.”

Amos 4:4-13

Outline:

1. Sarcastic Call to Illicit Worship (4:4-5)
2. Identification of Curses Already Sent (Obvious) as Warnings, but Missed by Israel
 - a. 4:6 – Famine
 - b. 4:7-8 – Drought
 - c. 4:9 – Agricultural (Economic) Disaster
 - d. 4:10 – Pestilence and War
3. Historical Example of the Fifth Cycle of Judgment; God’s Judgment is Consistent (4:11)
4. Promise the Fifth Cycle of Judgment is Coming (4:12)
5. Written Record of an Old Hymn from Samaria’s Past Culture that Recognizes the True God (4:13)

Review Leviticus 26

Sarcastic Call to Illicit Worship (4:4-5)

Amos 4:4-5 – “Come to Bethel, and transgress; Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days; offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel!” declares the Lord God.”

- Bethel is 10 miles north of Jerusalem.
- Samaria was dedicated to devotions and religious ritual instead of devotion to God and morality.
- The sacrifices and tithes are called “YOUR sacrifices...YOUR tithes”. These were not prescribed by the Lord. These rituals impressed the people, but not the Lord.
- The “three days” that the tithes were offered may be:
 - Sarcastically an extreme amount of tithes ridiculously frequent...yet useless.
 - Hypothetically the tithes may have been brought on the third day after arriving.
 - POINT: Amos is urging them to be even more precise and dedicated to the meaningless rituals they have established
- Note the heptad of seven imperative verbs in 4:4-5:
 - Come

- Transgress
- Multiply
- Bring
- Offer
- Proclaim
- Publish
- Amos is mocking them by encouraging them to “proclaim” and “publish” all these fulfilled rituals that they love...but, the Lord calls them sin.
- This pseudo dedication to a false system which was intended to bring them blessing and protection will do just the opposite in God’s reality which is introduced in 4:6-10. Amos is telling the Israelites they are going to receive from the Lord exactly the opposite of what they expected.

Identification of Curses Sent as Obvious Warnings, but Missed by Israel

Amos 4:6-10 – “I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord.

4:7 – “I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither;

4:8 – “so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord.

4:9 – “I struck you with blight and mildew; your many gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord.

4:10 – “I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses, and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils; yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord.

- Since Israel did not know the Lord and his ways these disasters only served to motivate the Israelites to go further into their false religious system of rituals.
- Israel’s soul could not perceive and respond correctly to these warning signs.
- 4:6 – cleanness of teeth means there was no food to make their teeth dirty.
- 4:7 – “send rain on one city...send no rain on another city” which means this was clearly a divine manifestation of selective raining. It was not natural. People should have took notice.
- 4:8 – due to the lack of rain in certain cities their wells and cisterns dried up. But, even the cities that received rain did not receive enough for the other towns. Dehydration made the people weak so “wandering” means “to reel, to stagger”.
- 4:9 – blight and mildew on what did grow
- 4:10 – pestilence and sword resulted in dead bodies and not enough energy, resources or concern for proper funerals.

Historical Example of the Fifth Cycle of Judgment; God’s Judgment is Consistent (4:11)

Amos 4:11 – **“I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord.**

- This may refer to the famous earthquake of 760 BC (or, around 760 BC)

Promise the Fifth Cycle of Judgment is Coming (4:12)

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!”**

- “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” is not a call to repentance, but instead a declaration of
- The imperative used here is only used in Ezekiel 38:7 where it is a summons to a final battle (Gog)
- Since none of the alternative calls for repentance could be understood by Israel the only thing left is total overthrow.

Written Record of an Old Hymn from Samaria’s Past Culture that Recognizes the True God (4:13)

Amos 4:13 – **“For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!**

- This can be seen as a contrast with the false worship in 4:4-5 that took place at Bethel and Gilgal.
- The cadence of the Hebrew leads many scholars to see 4:13 as an ancient Hebrew hymn.
- The words of this hymn attest to the true God of Israel and may serve to remind Israel of the old truths they have rejected and who they are about to face in judgment.
- The true god(s) are not Israel’s current religious system, but Yahweh.
- Yahweh is described here as:
 - Shaper
 - Creator
 - Revealer
 - Maker
 - Walker (or, treader)
- Yahweh is the owner and controller of everything. Creation answers to Yahweh.
- Yahweh is even the ruler of the armies of heaven which include all the evil powers (Eph. 6:12)
 - “treads on the heights of the earth” – the high places, the air,
 - “the Lord, the God of hosts” means:
 - Yahweh God of the Armies
 - Armies being angelic armies
 - The contrast between Israel’s current religion and that of Yahweh cannot be greater.
 - POINT: Israel is in trouble!!