

Amos 4:1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that *are* in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

The Hebrew for the word *kine* is specific to the female gender, the heifer, the female cow. This is obviously a reference to the wealthy, self-absorbed women of Israel. They have absolutely no compassion for the poor and needy; in fact, they take advantage of them to their own benefit. They evidently have great influence over their husbands as well. It seems obvious that their homes are not examples of God's established order for the family.

Amos 4:2 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.

Amos 4:3 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.

These are strong verses. YHWH is swearing by His holiness—a sure guarantee—that their future is one of painful captivity in other lands.

Amos 4:4 Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, *and* your tithes after three years:

Amos 4:5 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.

Bethel and Gilgal were places where the children of Israel went through the rituals of seeming compliance with God's law even as they worshipped idols. Bethel had been specifically established by Jeroboam as the worship center in the Northern Kingdom to keep the people from going to Jerusalem. The people were very proud and boastful of their religious activities.

I'm afraid that the picture of America today is quite similar. We like to brag about our "Christian" acts of compassion and charity before God when we are actually gratifying self in the process with no heart toward glorifying God at all.

Amos 4:6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

This next section of verses is quite thought-provoking. The Lord lists many actions He took in an effort to get the people to repent of their wicked ways and turn back to serving Him as LORD. These are all things that we would normally attribute to "mother nature" or natural disasters. When you consider these types of events during our time, you can't help but wonder how many of these are specifically initiated by God in an effort to get people of today to repent of their sinful, wicked ways and turn to Him in faith and obedience.

The first action God mentions is causing a shortage of food, as referenced by the idiom "cleanness of teeth."

Amos 4:7 And also I have withholden the rain from you, when *there were* yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it

not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

Amos 4:8 So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

The next action God mentions is withholding rain during the crucial three months before harvest. This would obviously go hand-in-hand with a shortage of food. He evidently was very specific in determining the cities in which rain would fall and those from whom it would be withheld. This also produced a shortage in drinking water.

I think it is important to note that with every action, the LORD is careful to note the refusal of the people to repent and return to Him.

Amos 4:9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

The third action the Lord took was to cause blasting and mildew accompanied by a palmerworm infestation. The Hebrew for *blasting* is a reference to blight, any influence that destroys or causes failure. *Mildew* is a reference to a fungus found on decaying things. The *palmerworm* is a kind of locust that destroys crops.

Still the sad refrain—"yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."

Amos 4:10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

The Lord continues His list of actions. He had sent pestilence or plague to afflict them similar to those with which He afflicted Egypt in accomplishing their deliverance. He had also caused events that had resulted in the deaths of their soldiers and horses to such an extent that you could smell the stink of death in the air.

Still the sad refrain—"yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."

Amos 4:11 I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Evidently, God had supernaturally destroyed some cities by fire similar to His actions against Sodom and Gomorrah.

Still the sad refrain—"yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."

These are all actions that we would tend to classify as evil and unloving. As God carefully notes each time, His motive is one of love. He is trying to get His people to repent of their rebellious ways and return to Him. I think that is the point that people miss today. Whenever any religious leader speaks out to

identify disastrous events as possible judgments from God, the public response is one of ridicule and rejection. God states unequivocally in scripture that He is always the same; His character never changes.

Mal. 3:6 For I *am* the LORD, I change not....

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

In consideration of His dealings with Israel, I think there is validity to that assertion. God's ways are not like our ways.

Is. 55:8-9 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The most obvious proof of that is His decision to send His only Son, Jesus, to provide for the redemption of mankind through His sacrificial death on the cross. If He chose to act so radically to save us, why would He not act radically to encourage as many as possible to avail themselves of that salvation? I'm trying to learn to see things from God's perspective. It's almost impossible, but sometimes I feel I get a glimpse and a connection to His heart. More often than not my first response now to the terrible events that cross our newswires is one of prayer that there will be those that come to know the Lord as Savior and those who repent of their ways to serve Him once again. I also pray for those in the body of Christ to take advantage of the opportunity those times afford them to share God's love and glorify Him as they serve others.

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

Amos 4:13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what *is* his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, *is* his name.

As the prophet continues to declare God's message, He states that because they have refused to repent in response to His actions in the past, they now face destruction and captivity. Verse 13 emphasizes the truth that these aren't the words of an impotent, lifeless idol. They are the words of YHWH, the Creator, the One who formed the mountains and created the winds. The One who declares His truth to man through His prophets. (Some commentators think this is a reference to God knowing the thoughts of man. As far as I'm concerned, both understandings are true.) The One who established day and night and is sovereign over the whole earth. These are the words of God, the one and only, who has the power to do what He says He will do.

"prepare to meet thy God" – These should be words to thrill the soul with excitement and anticipation. Sadly, the context is one that should provoke fear.