

• *No response to God's chastening*

Amos has analysed the state of Israel's society ^{☞1}. Now he makes the point that this social and religious rebellion has continued despite the chastening of God.

^{☞1} 3:9 – 4:3

1. *God is able to severely chasten His church*

1. **God is able to severely chasten His church.** Israel was the equivalent of the church. It was a nation-church, a church and a nation at the same time. It was not, of course, the post-Pentecost church, yet it was the spiritual 'people of Abraham' in the form of a nation. True believers were almost entirely within Israel. Israel was a shadow of the church. It was the form that was taken by the people of God before the fuller coming of the Holy Spirit.

We must apply the lessons that Amos taught Israel to ourselves. God was able to severely chasten Israel; and He is able to severely chasten His church. Churches in one part of the world or another might go through a period of severe discipline. Those who attack God's word or resist the moving of the Spirit may find that an atmosphere of death settles upon the churches in that area. The expansion of the church in one part of the world might totally by-pass those elsewhere who are experiencing severe chastening.

God severely chastened Israel but it did no good, since the nation did not respond.

• *Famine*

God brought famine.

*"I brought famine in every city,
and lack of bread in every town –
but you have not returned to me"
Oracle of Yahweh.' ^{☞1}*

^{☞1} 4:6

• *Drought*

God brought drought.

*"I also withheld rain from you, three months
before the harvest.
I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another.
One field had rain; another had none and dried up. ^{☞1}
People from two or three cities stumbled to
another city to drink water,
but did not have their thirst quenched.
But you have not returned to Me"
Oracle of Yahweh.' ^{☞2}*

^{☞1} 4:7

^{☞2} 4:8

• *Damaged crops*

God brought damage to the crops.

*Repeatedly sent a scorching wind and brought damage
to the crops;
the locust devoured your gardens and your vineyards,
your fig trees and your olive trees.
But you have not returned to me."
Oracle of Yahweh.' ^{☞1}*

^{☞1} 4:9

• **Plague**

God brought plague and defeat.

“I sent a plague on you like the one I sent on Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, I took your horsemen away. And I made the smell of dead bodies arise in your camps. But you have not returned to me.” Oracle of Yahweh.’ ¹

¹ 4:10

• **Destruction**

God brought destruction.

“I destroyed some of you, as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were truly a scorched stick saved from the fire. But you have not returned to me.” Oracle of Yahweh.’ ¹

¹ 4:11

2. God goes on offering a way back to Him until the very last moment

2. God goes on offering a way back to Him until the very last moment. Once He ‘takes an oath’ and decides to act, nothing can stop what He intends to do. But before He finally takes action, He may give one last warning, and this is what we find in Amos 4:12–13.

“So then, this is what I have been doing to you. And because I have been doing this to you, you are to prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” ¹

¹ 4:12

• **Prepare to meet your God**

God gives Israel a final offer. The words ‘*Prepare to meet your God*’ are surely an offer of grace, not a threat of doom. There are three reasons for saying this.

• **Grace**

(i) The idea of ‘meeting God’ may refer to experiencing His grace, as well as facing His punishment. ‘*Moses brought out the people ... to meet God*’, says Exodus 19:17, but it is not referring to punishment.

• **God is still speaking**

(ii) The very fact that God is still speaking to Israel through Amos means that God is still wanting to send last-minute blessing to Israel. If God were planning only final judgement, God would not be still speaking to Israel. While God is speaking to us, final judgement has not yet come. Today if we hear His voice, we can respond to Him, for He is still speaking to us.

• **Dawn out of darkness**

(iii) It is also important to note that the Hebrew of Amos 4:13 can speak of God ‘who makes the dawn out of darkness’. It does not necessarily mean ‘who makes darkness out of dawn’ – and that is the less likely translation. It more likely speaks of hope than of doom. The power of God to create is an encouragement! So we have here a last offer. God has been chastising the people. Now He says ‘Because I have been doing this to you, you are to prepare to meet your God’. The chastening is a sign that God is still wanting to work in Israel’s life.

• **God’s power to create**

Verse 13 is a quotation from a song, maybe written by Amos, maybe quoted by Amos from someone else.

*'For behold!
The Shaper of the mountains,
and the Creator of the wind,
the One who declared his secrets to Adam,
the One who makes dawn out of darkness,
the One who treads upon the mountains of earth –
Yahweh, the Almighty God is his name.'* ¹

¹ 3:9 – 4:3

It is a song about God's power to create (*'Shaper of the mountains... Creator of the wind'*), and God's power to give fresh understanding (*'One who declared his secrets to Adam'*). We remember that after God had created the universe, and humankind as the climax of creation, then God had fellowship with Adam, as Genesis 3:8 suggests.

• God can change the darkest situation – so why not come back to Him?

Amos's song goes on to speak of God as the One who can change the darkest and gloomiest situation (*'the One who makes dawn out of darkness'*), the One who can move the most immovable obstacle (*'the One who treads upon the mountains of earth'*). His name reveals him to be the God who redeems by blood, the Redeemer-God of the Exodus (*'Yahweh'*) and the One who contains all powers within Himself (*'Almighty God'* means *'the God who is hosts'*; He contains *'hosts'* of powers within Himself).

All of this is said to encourage Israel to come back to God. If God can recreate and reveal His plans, if He can change the darkest situation – why should Israel not come back to Him?

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