

TURN TO GOD

AMOS 4:1-13

(Prepared by Gene Thompson)

1. What comes to your mind when you think of a courtroom?

A courtroom is a place of accountability, and most of us believe people need to be held accountable for their actions. So, a better title for this lesson might be “Held Accountable.”

2. Why does our court system allow for evidence to be presented before a verdict is determined? (To ascertain the truth!)

3. How would you describe the role of the judge? (To apply the law in the issue at hand justly for all parties.)

4. On a scale of zero to ten, how important is accountability in deterring bad behavior? (It depends on the individual. I know people who think they are smarter than the police and that they can get by without being caught.)

It is impossible to have justice without accountability!

In today’s study, we will examine the evidence against Israel and learn the consequences they faced due to their continued disobedience. We will see the character of God revealed as both redeemer and judge.

Amos chapter 3 begins a new section of the book where Amos brought a series of three messages introduced by the phrase, “Listen to this message” in 3:1; 4:1; and 5:1. The message in chapter 3 lays the foundation for the remainder of the book. Israel had the privilege of being God’s chosen people out of all the nations—called to be a blessing to those nations. With much privilege comes much responsibility and with much responsibility comes much accountability.

INDULGE! Read Amos 4:1-3

1. What evidence does Amos present against them? (“They oppress the poor and crush the needy.” They demand their husbands meet their every desire. The indication is they want their every desire met no matter who gets run over to get it.)

2. Why did Amos compare them to the “cows of Bashan?” (Bashan, just east of the Sea of Galilee, was very fertile and had the best livestock in all the land. They fed on lush, green vegetation.)

These oracles of judgment were words of grace, for the Lord could have brought His wrath to bear on the Israelites without any advance notice!

3. What is the verdict God issued for the oppression of others while indulging self? (Amos called out the women of Samaria, pointing to their personal indulgence at the expense of others. They had broken the law in Deut. 10:18; 24:10-15. James 1:27. They had oppressed the poor. The Judge was right in His guilty verdict.)

4. What was their punishment for their sin?

5. How does a person’s treatment of others, especially those in need, indicate their spiritual condition? (One’s heart is revealed by the way we treat others. A heart full of gratitude and thankfulness toward God for His blessings will be gracious and generous to others.)

Amos recounted numerous different ways God sought to get the Israelites’ attention so they would return to Him. But they refused and they would be held accountable.

WORSHIP! Read Amos 4:4-5

Amos sarcastically condemned the sin of religious hypocrisy in Israel by inviting the people to enter Bethel, not to worship, but to transgress the law! “Come to Bethel and rebel.”

1. Were the people attending worship gatherings? (Yes! BUT they had broken the law concerning worship. See Deut. 14:28-29.)
2. For whose glory were they offering their sacrifices and offerings? (For themselves, to be seen by others.)

They even offered leavened bread, which was against God's instructions. Leaven represented sin.

3. Why was Gilgal an important location for the Israelites? (It was Joshua's first camp in the new land and a monument was erected there to commemorate the crossing of the Jordan. Samuel anointed Saul as King there and Saul committed his great sin of disobeying God there.)
4. How can the self-indulgent practices of people like those mentioned in verses 1-3, also affect the way they worship in verses 4-5? (The highest expression of worship is obedience. The only prayer God will hear from a wayward heart is one of repentance.)

Offerings, sacrifices, and tithes were good things, but the boastfulness of the worshipers in doing those things was the issue.

5. How can a person's worship practices be a cover-up for their sins? (They are simply play acting.)
6. Is it better for someone to attend worship services for the wrong reasons or not attend at all? Amos recounted numerous different ways God sought to get the Israelites' attention so they would return to Him. But they refused.

REFUSE! Read Amos 4:6-11

1. What generally keeps us from confessing our sin and turning back to God? (Pride; a stubborn and rebellious heart.)
2. Why might two people experience the same sets of calamities and one turn to God while the other refuses to turn to God? (It is the condition of the heart. My favorite Bible character is Job. His heart was right with God while his wife and friends urged him to curse God and die. Job made some mistakes, but his heart was clean before God.)

There is no such thing as pain without a purpose in the life of a believer. Every expression of discipline has as its intended end conformity to the likeness of Christ.

3. What calamities, over the last two years, have we experienced as a nation? (Compare the following verses: v. 6—not as extreme but shortages we never thought would happen. V. 7 drought and crop failure while some are flooded. V. 8 the capital city of Mississippi having to ship bottled water into its people. V. 9 crops ruined in the field or eaten by insects. V. 10 COVID 19 with hundreds of thousands dying. V. 11 fires burning thousands of square miles and hundreds of homes.)

And yet our nation shows no repentance.

Amos challenged the Israelites to prepare to meet God to give an accounting. The prophet reminded the people of God's power and sovereignty to emphasize the seriousness of this message!

PREPARE! Read Amos 4:12-13

1. What key word stands out to you in these verses? Why?
2. What kind of God could Israel expect to meet? (The God who created the universe and their Maker.)
3. How does a person's understanding of God impact how a person lives his or her life? (If God was their Creator, He was the One to hold them—and us—accountable.)

He had revealed Himself through His Law and He would soon reveal Himself through Jesus Christ the Living Word and through the Bible, the written word. Israel had no excuse for not knowing God and loving Him.

The Israelites failed to recognize God's loving discipline and the verdict of guilty was confirmed as Amos presented the evidence. As we examine our lives, we must recognize the sovereignty of God. He will hold all believers accountable for their actions.

CHALLENGE!

It may be easy to be critical of the Israelites without examining our own lives against the same charges.

Evaluate your attitudes toward people with need, toward the oppressed, and toward worship.

1. How does your attitude in these areas compare with the attitudes Amos addressed?
2. What adjustments do you need to make in these areas to align more with God's desires?

Pray we will allow God to search our hearts for any hidden sin and confess it with repentance.