



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Amos 4:1-13

“Sin in the Sanctuary, Repentance, and the Ladies of Samaria”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning to Amos chapter 4 for our Scripture reading for today and we’re reading the entire chapter of thirteen verses. Amos chapter 4 verse 1 through verse 13.

“Hear the 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 now that we may drink.’ 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. You will go out through breaches in the walls, each one straight before her, and you will be cast to Harmon,’ declares the Lord.”

It’s a little bit of a problem in that last line, “And you will be cast to Harmon declares the Lord.” No need to go into the technicalities of it, but there’s doubt over the meaning of the term Harmon and also doubt about the voice of this verse as you can tell from the marginal reading. But as one of the commentators says after discussing the difficulty he said something like this, “One thing we do know we don’t know precisely

what this verse means, but we know it’s not good. That’s evident from the sense of the whole section. Now, the next section begins with verse 4 and Amos assuming the kind of language that a priest was used to giving says.

“Enter Bethel and transgress; in Gilgal multiply transgression. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days.”

Now the Authorized Version has every three years but the original text has 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. ‘But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities and lack of bread in all your places, yet you have not returned to Me,’ declares the Lord. ‘Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you while there were still three months until harvest. Then I would send rain on one city and on another city I would not send rain; one part would be rained on, while the part not rained on would dry up. So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, but would not be satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,’ declares the Lord. ‘I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; and the caterpillar was devouring your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; yet you have not returned to Me,’ declares the LORD. ‘I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt; I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses, and I made the stench of your camp (literally camps) rise up in your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me,’ declares the Lord. ‘I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; yet you have not returned to Me,’ declares the Lord. ‘Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I shall do this to you prepare to meet your God, O Israel.’”

Those words, verse 12, when he says, “Therefore thus I will do to you,” he’s referring to the past saying he’s going to do the same thing and then the this that follows, of course, is a reference to what follows. “Because I shall do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel. For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what are His thoughts” probably that his before thoughts should be a little h not a capital h lowercase. In other words, it’s God who declares to man what are man’s thoughts. “He who makes dawn into darkness and treads on the high places of the earth, the Lord God of hosts is His name.” A very solemn section, a very searching section and a very relevant section as I hope we will see when we turn to the exposition of it.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father again we give Thee thanks for the ministry of the word of God to us. We thank Thee for the privilege of reading one of the ancient prophecies of one of the great prophets, Amos for Tacoah. And we thank Thee for the relevancy of the Scriptures over twenty-five hundred years after they have been written. How marvelous it is Lord to see how they speak to generation after generation. As we are born, live, and die. Surely testimony to the eternal character of the Lord God and his word and so today we worship Thee and praise Thy name for all of the blessings of life as set forth in the Scriptures through Jesus Christ and his saving sacrifice on Golgotha’s tree. We thank Thee for the blood of atonement, and we thank Thee for the work of the Holy Spirit who has brought us to the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal. We thank Thee for the sentiments of the Apostle Paul that he who spared not his only son but deliver him up for us all. How shall he not with him also freely give us all things. We are grateful to Thee Lord that the Lord Jesus has offered the sacrifice for his people and has guaranteed in that greatest of all gifts the giving all of the other gifts by which we have come to know and love and appreciate the grace and mercy shown to us.

“Sin in the Sanctuary, Repentance, and the Ladies of Samaria” by S. Lewis Johnson
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Lord, if there should be some in this meeting who do not know the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and through the preaching of the word bring conviction and conversion. Repentance and faith we pray. We pray for the whole church of Christ. We pray for our country. We pray for the Chapel and its ministries and for our elders and deacons and members and friends and the visitors here today, especially, we pray thy blessing upon them. We pray for the sick and for those who are troubled and for those who are concerned and have difficult decisions to make, Lord, we pray the saints of God and for those who particularly have requested our petitions, bless them richly, answer their prayers affirmatively if it should be pleasing to thee and in accordance with Thy will. Now, Lord, as we sing as we hear the word of God may we listen ultimately to the voice of God through the Holy Scriptures for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord and savior.

In whose name we pray. Amen.

[Message] I was interested in those words that Mark spoke about being old fashioned, and I was expecting him to go on to say we’re not only old fashioned, we’re old. [Laughter] But I know that as a young Christian beginning to study a number of the things in the word of God, and then reading in church history and historical theology, it was quite a thrill to me to realize as I read and pondered the word of God and studied, as I say theology and historical theology particularly, to realize that I really was part of a tradition; a tradition that began, of course, in Old Testament times but was renewed in a specific way through the apostles and then the Christians down through the years who formed what we call historical Christianity. One of the nice things about Believers Chapel is tradition is not only past its here now still living; that is, in our last days but nevertheless still living. So we welcome you. It’s true that we do love the truth as it has been historically unfolded through the prophets and the apostles and then by God’s grace

that’s what we would like to follow. We do it very feebly and failingly but that’s our goal, at least.

Now, we’re turning to the Book of Amos, one of the great interesting prophets of the Old Testament who lived in the eighth century and prophesized with Hosea and Micah and Isaiah; four great prophets, prophets who lived at approximately the same time. Amos from the south who prophesized to the north; from Tacoah ministering to the Northern Kingdom after the division that took place when Jeroboam led heretically the Northern Kingdom apart from the Southern Kingdom and Rehoboam in a very significant schism that affected a great deal of spiritual history of the chosen of Israel.

The subject for today is “Sin in the Sanctuary, Repentance and the Ladies of Samaria.” As you read chapter 4 you notice first of all that Amos continues his attack on the luxury and debauchery of urban affluence which characterized the Northern Kingdom in Israel. It found its roots in chapter 4 in the influence of certain women of self-made religion and of the lack of repentance in that society. Society as Amos sees is all organized by self for self. In fact, society in Amos’s day is very much like the society of our day. We are a great deal about self interest, and the very fact that people are critical of others for self interest, and the very fact that both political parties like to accuse the other political parties of principles and programs that minister to self interest, is evidence of the fact that even the politicians who are probably some of the blindest people in our society spiritually recognize that fact that we are a society dominated by self interest. It has also manifested itself in Christian society and so we have individuals earnest, sincere men no doubt, who preaching that the real problem of our personal life is that development of self-esteem. Consequently, everything is turned in upon ourselves rather than turned off and up toward the Lord God and the remedy that he has for our sin and lack of repentance rebellion and heresy, spiritual heresy, when it comes to the teaching of Holy Scripture.

One of the leading interpreters of the Book of Amos, J. A. Motyer, in a very hopeful little book, has said holiness is the quality which makes God what he is. We, in our society today, tend to think of God as love. If you were to ask the average person walking the streets of the United States, "What's God like?" He would almost inevitably say, "God is love." Well, of course, that's a scriptural affirmation made twice. God is love, and there's nothing wrong with saying, "God is love," unless we mean by that and this it seems is essentially what is meant that God is characterized primarily sometimes even only as love. The Scripture actually affirms even more significantly that God is holy.

In fact, that's the one attribute of God that is thrice or tripled in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. The same sentiment picked up by the last book of the Bible in Revelation chapter 4, holiness. God is holy. In fact, holiness, ultimately, is what makes him God because holiness means different, other. We sometimes say holiness is a term that means separate. That raises the question separate from what? Different, different from what? Well, strictly speaking there's a lot of truth from that. He is separate, and he is different but that's his essential characteristic. He's just different. He is just separate. He is of another breed. He is holy. No other person is holy as God is holy.

Now, you might say well the Scriptures say be you holy as I am holy and, of course, that is a proper exhortation but in the ultimate sense only he is eternally everlastingly holy and that's why he calls himself the holy one. So when we speak about holiness we are speaking about a God who is different from us. In fact, to enter into the presence of the Holy God is instant death the Old Testament says more than once, instant death. An unholy being cannot abide the presence of the Holy God. And so he is holy.

Now, it's not a comparative adjective then it expresses uniqueness. It's a positive specialty which is the ground of all actual differences, though we might say a positive specialty. With our God holiness, therefore, is a moral attribute. He's different in things that touch morals. That's evident if you remember that in the tabernacle, in the tabernacle

itself there were two divisions. There was the holy place and then the holy of holiest. And then the holy of holiest there was the ark of the covenant and on the mercy seat was where God dwelt between the cherubim, and the blood was put there as the satisfaction of the holiness and justice of the eternal God but inside the ark was law of God. As if to say, plainly as possible that the God of the ark, the God of the Mercy seat, the God of the holy of holiest is a God who cannot possibly be satisfied by sin. He always reacts against sin.

Adam lived in the Garden of Eden in a happy way for some time. How long we don't really know but we know that when he sinned fear came. And when the Lord God came into the Garden of Eden after the fall Adam and his wife hid themselves, fear because of sin. That's the feeling that every individual is born with since Adam. It's the feeling that we have of the presence of God and his holiness. That's why it's so difficult to bring the gospel to men, to us first and to others. We don't like the presence of God naturally because he's holy and we're unholy. The very fact that we feel that sense of the presence of God is evidence of the fact that we are unholy and need repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. If you have question about whether you are a sinner or not and even when you rebel against the idea, ask yourself, do I like to enter the presence of God as he is set forth in Scripture? And if you feel that fear, that's one of the evidences, of course, of your sin.

Now, Amos has some very un-twentieth century things to say. And the first body of people that he attacks in the 4th chapter marks him out as different from us because he turns his attention to the ladies of Samaria. Now, everyone knows that that is something that you do not do in the twentieth century. You do not criticize the woman, or else you're a male chauvinist pig. Well, if that's what you want to call him call him that. Amos, at least in these three verses, falls into that popular kind of critique of some of them but, of course, in this case it was true. Women are sinners too. There's no discrimination in sin. Men are sinners. Women are sinners. And so in Samaria some of

the women were very prominent, very influential, and Amos turns his attention to them. What he does actually in the fourth chapter is narrow down what he’s done in the third chapter.

Last week we looked at the declension that Amos describes. He describes it, remember, as social declension, as personal declension and then religious declension. And so now he just narrows his inquiry and he turns to the women, the trendsetters in society and often the guardians of the standards of morals and of relationships to individuals. And, of course, as you read what he says about them it’s obvious they were the pampered darlings of the society of the Northern Kingdom. Listen to him. He doesn’t mince words. “Hear this you cows of Basham.” What an unlovely thing to say. You’d never say that in Charleston. [Laughter] You might out in Odessa or Fort Worth but not in Charleston. You wouldn’t call any lady a cow of Basham but you know it’s a good Texas expression. What it is -- they’re just like so many prime head of cattle because you read the Old Testament and you discover that the cattle from Basham were particularly highly regarded. They were strong and healthy and also the Old Testament suggests they were very ferocious.

So listen, hear this word, you cows of Basham who are on the mountain of Samaria you might want to say at least they were handsome and ferocious cows but yet yes that’s true, but still they’re cows. No woman would like to be complimented by saying your eyes remind me of the eyes of a cow and a codfish because he goes on to say, “When they go off to judgment they will be taken off with meat hooks and the last of you fish hooks.” So they’re cows and they’re fish. It doesn’t say codfish. I just said that because I read somebody who said something like that. But at any rate here Amos is speaking and I’m sure he didn’t give this lecture to the Mount Garrison garden club in his days.

There are two kinds of women. There are women who are sinners just as men and sometimes devious sinners. There are feminine characteristics that manifest

themselves in feminine sinners just as there are male characteristics that manifest themselves in male sinners. One can be a great influence as a Christian woman or one can be a terrible influence. Think of Monica who was the influence that led to the conversion of Augustine and many other women down through the years in the tradition which we are speaking who have been responsible for the conversion of men who’ve greatly influenced society but on the other hand think of a Jezebel. So on the one hand there is a Monica and on the other hand there is a Jezebel. On the one hand there is a Jezebel and on the other there is a mother of the Wesley’s children and so on down through the years. So, “You cows of Basham.” Well, we live in days in which there’s a lot of evil committed by women just as a lot of evil committed by men. I think that one of the greatest of the evils of today is the evil of smothering children in the womb.

Now, I don’t want to engage in the intricacies and the fine points of the issue of abortion. In the first place, I’m probably not qualified to do that. But I do know this, it doesn’t take much study of that issue to realize that there’s hardly any justification for such an action. Perhaps in some special cases, but as an action the smothering of life is something that so far as I can tell is very wrong. And, consequently, in our society we have many who are committing acts of immorality and often arguing for them. In fact, you know we can say it’s perfectly all right for us to do anything with our body.

Our body is our body, so far as I can tell, an infant is not our body speaking for women, but at any rate, we can do anything that we want to do with our body and at the same time make religious professions and that’s called in the twentieth century progress. I don’t call that progress. To my mind that’s departure from the word of God. We need to rethink a lot of these things. Amos spoke of these women and abortion is not the point here. He says of them they oppress the poor, they crush the needy, they say to their husbands, “Honey when you come home tonight be sure and bring some wine or bring some hard liquor.” That’s what’s meant. They oppress the poor. They crush the needy. They say to their husbands bring now that we may drink. They’re the trendsetters

of the society. They are individuals who are pampered darlings and prima donnas and they want money and position and success and money. And the husbands are expected to bring it home, and if they don’t bring it home they’re unhappy.

And don’t think for one moment that we’re not talking about evangelicals. We’re talking about evangelicals. We’re talking about the kind of life that takes place in churches in which the word of God is held forth as being the word of God. But we’re in such a materialistic society, we’re not able to provide that which is in harmony with the life about us, then the thing to do is to be separated and find someone who can provide us with what we want. So what is also striking about this is the word translated “your husbands” in the New American Standard Bible in the Hebrew text is “your lords.” In other words, the very term that is designed to express the place of authority in the home is obviously just a term it doesn’t mean anything. They say to their lords remember Sarah called Abraham her lord and Peter uses that as one of the reasons why submission should characterize the wife, equality but submission, submission in equality. And so it’s obvious who wears the pants in these families. So they say to their husbands bring now that we may drink.

And we read in the 2nd verse, “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.’” And when he says that he swears by his holiness don’t misunderstand. This is not an opinion. He’s swearing by his character. He’s swearing by the fact that he is an immutable God and because he’s an immutable and eternal God when he says that he swears by his holiness he’s swearing by himself and what he says he will do he will do. And so the time will come when, “They will be taken away with meat hooks and the very last one of them with fishhooks.” It’s a very serious thing for both men and women to have to deal with the Lord God of Israel.

I’m sure as you can tell from the verse that follow that they attended upon the religious festivals and services of the day. In fact, no doubt they looked very religious

and they were religious. In fact, God hates religion. God hates religion when it’s simply religion. In other words, as religion he hates it and so that’s the situation about which Amos is speaking a whole lot of hypocrisy, a whole lot of evil and immorality, which was offensive to the God of heaven.

There’s a very interesting story of Charles Wesley, John Wesley’s brother, the great hymn writer whose hymns we often sing. Mr. Wesley was once approached by a lady. She came to him. She wanted some of his attention. She asked him to pray for her because she said, “I’m a great sinner.” And she added, “I’m a Christian but sometimes I fail so dreadfully. Please pray for me.” Well, Mr. Wesley suspected that much of this was hypocrisy from the attitude, and so he looked at her rather sternly and used her own words against her. He said, “Madam I will pray for you because you are such a great sinner,” and she was aghast. She answered, “What do you mean. I’ve never done anything very wrong.” [Laughter]

They have lots of people like that, you know. I catch myself doing that too. Pray for me. I’m a great sinner. Its kind of a word we play with you know. We say it because it’s a nice thing to say in evangelicalism, “I’m a great sinner.” But so far as really believing we are a great sinner, and really as Luther used to say, “Every day is a brand new day and thou beginneth with repentance.” That’s a good attitude. That’s one of the reasons he was such a great man. It’s a good way to begin the day. Get out of bed fall on your knees or at least look to the Lord God from your reclining position if you wake up and ask God to forgive you for the past and may today be a day of repentance because we need it constantly. It’s not something that happens simply in the past although it did and brought us repentance and faith and salvation. It’s like reforming. The reformation is never a true reformation unless there is always reforming to take place.

Now, then having said that about the ladies, Amos turns to the sanctuary and here he talks about sin in the sanctuary and remember the words that we said last week about the division of the Northern Kingdom. Jeroboam the first, setting up sanctuaries in the

north and in the south of the Northern Kingdom in order to be sure that individuals in the Northern Kingdom did not develop the habit again of going up to Jerusalem and offering their sacrifices. Where they were to offer them according to the word of God, for he knew that would ultimately attach them to the southern kingdom rather than the Northern Kingdom, so he continued his apostasy and set up heretical places of worship but they were places of worship.

In other words, they were to carry out the sacrifices. In fact, he mentioned specific sacrifices. He mentions sacrifices every morning. He mentions tithes. He mentions fake offerings. He mentions even free will offerings. No mention of the sin offering, incidentally, I don’t know whether that is significant or not but it could be. And so as a result of this the Northern Kingdom was in apostasy. Everything that they did was religious but wrong. That’s what takes place in a church in which we have every profession of Christianity. The “first so and so church” and the meetings of the church and all of the other things that characterize church life when the word of God and the cross of Jesus Christ is not made central in the life of that church. It’s another Northern Kingdom. It’s a heretical kingdom. It’s an apostate kingdom and in Amos’s day Israel loved to have it so. Today many of us love to have it so. So Amos has a word for them and he turns to this Bethelite heresy, this self made religion. They’ve even invented the use of leaven for offerings, which they were not supposed to have in their offerings. And inviting sarcasm he assumes the style of priestly exaltation in his ecclesiastical parody of what was happening in the Northern Kingdom.

Do you think that Amos was popular in the north? It’s amazing that he managed to survive, and we’ll read about his problems in the seventh chapter. But anyway, he stands up and in the crowd in the city of Samaria, he calls out, “Go to Bethel.” And instead of saying, “Go to Bethel and worship God, he says, “Go to Bethel and sin, transgress.” In Gilgal, another of the sacred cities because of its past with reference to the

history of Israel, in Gilgal multiply your transgression by all of the sacrifices that you offer. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days.

Incidentally the Hebrew text says days not years. "Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened, proclaim freewill offerings, make them known" boast about it. Make them known. Tell them what you're doing. Tell them how spiritual you are. Tell them what you do in your church. The spirit of Amos is with us. That is the spirit he attributes to Israel. That spirit is with us. Boast about it. Tell us all the things that you've done for the Lord but don't hold to the word of God. Don't hold to the atonement for Jesus Christ. Don't stand for the things that Scripture sets forth concerning Scripture. "Boast about it for so you love to do," the irony of Amos. "For so you love to do you sons of Israel declares the Lord God."

Someone has suggested that the pilgrim's song as they came to Bethel was "Come to Bethel." It's the hymn that we sing. We don't have one in our book but it would be nice if we had again, "Come to Bethel." We might make one up sometimes Mark and treat the tradition of the past. Come to Bethel and offer your sacrifices in sin. They thought their sacrifices gave them atonement. Amos says, "They were sin." Can you not imagine the arguments that took place on the corner in the streets of Samaria? We worship. You worship. God accepts worship. We sacrifice. You sacrifice. God accepts sacrifices. "Surely, Amos you're not saying your way is the only way." "Yes," Amos would say "My way is the only way. It's the only way grounded in the word of God." Give me some justification for our sacrifices in Samaria. In Bethel or Dan or Gusheper or whatever you do in Gilgal. Find it in the word of God. I can see now the headlines in the newspaper from Samaria, "The Fundamentalist is Back in Town."

Now, fundamentalists can be a very ornery lot and often they can be very contrary to the word of God today. But as fundamentalists, ideally, should be one who sticks to the fundamentals of the faith. We live in a day in which one can never really be sure of that. But Amos was a true believer in the fundamentals of the faith. That is, he went to

the word of God. He was an orthodox man, and he was a bold and courageous man and the people who were wrong were not this prophet who was so unpleasant in the minds and in the life of the influential of the Northern Kingdom. They were wrong. He was right and so they thought their sacrifices gave them atonement. He said they are sin because they are violations of the word of God. They are rebellion against him. And further, he says “Pre-proclaim your free will offering.” Ostentatious parading of piety and of themselves and the sacred sacrifices and the festivals that were characteristics of the word of God all done wrongly, all done in wrong places, all in rebellion against the word of God.

And, finally, here in verse 6 through verse 13, Amos goes on to talk about God’s salvation, history, and repentance. These words are very interesting because they tell us a great deal about the Lord God in heaven and those who name his name. Listen to what Amos says giving the words of God. As a matter of fact, he says, “There are three movements: The Lord’s acts against Israel, then he speaks of his intention in verse 12, and finally of his majesty and judgment.” Five distinct sayings by the Lord God.

Now, Amos says you’ve been busy. You’ve been busy going to Bethel and you’ve been busy sacrificing, you’ve been busy in your religion but all the time God’s been busy too. Listen. Listen to what God’s been doing. You’ll see how blind they are. Verse 6.

“I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities and lack of bread in all your places, yet you have not returned to Me,’ declares the Lord.”

Notice that “but I” in contrast to your dizziness, I’ve been busy, but I’ve been busy to try to bring you to repentance. Secondly, verse 7.

“And, furthermore, I withheld the rain from you while there were still three months until harvest. Then I would send rain on one city and on another city, I would

not send rain; one part would be rained on, while the part not rained on would dry up. So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, yet you have not returned to Me.”

Incidentally, he didn’t say yet you’ve not returned to religion. He didn’t say in our language yet you’ve not returned to church, but you’ve not returned to me. There’s a whole lot of difference between going to church and having fellowship with the God of Scripture a whole lot of difference. Further, he says.

“I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; and the caterpillar was devouring your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; yet you have not returned to Me.”

Can you not imagine the conversations that went on as they looked at the gardens? There’s a blight on the figs. What’s the matter? Call for the horticulturists. He comes and he says, “Well there’s this problem, that problem and Neil Sperry says, “So and so.” But, actually, the problem was beyond Neil Sperry. The problem was beyond nature. The problem was in heaven. He continues.

“I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt; I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses (war), I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me. I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; yet you have not returned to Me.”

The Lord was busy all the time that they were busy in their rebellion against him. And note the stress, my Christian friend, on the sovereignty of the Lord God in heaven.

Sovereign in famine in drought in war in blight, all of these things caused by him; our emotions tend to rebel against that. In fact, some of us feel kind of sick. We love our beloved freedom of human causation. We love that. We cannot abide the giving up of our beloved freedom of human causation, theologically, our human free will. We cannot give that up. It’s so difficult. We love it so much but God’s word marches on. He doesn’t pay any attention to our rebellion so far as changing the eternal word of God. Turn back a chapter, chapter 3 verse 6. This is not something unusual. This is the teaching of the word of God.

“If a trumpet is blow in a city” chapter 3, verse 6, “will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?”

Oh and turn back a few pages, “After all Dr. Johnson, you’re just picking out little verses here. There you picked out a couple. Maybe they can be explained in different ways.” Verse 7 of Isaiah chapter 45, “The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.” Matthew chapter 10, verse 29, the Lord Jesus speaking himself. Listen to this, “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.” Isn’t it Paul who says, “Of him, through him, for him, are all things.”

My friend God controls the affairs of every human being’s life. He controls the affairs of cities of states of countries of nations. And when we do not respond to the ultimate causation of God, we are failing in our Christian life. We cannot help but fail in our Christian life. So, the stress on the sovereignty of the Lord God.

The problem that Israel had was not the Assyrian. They thought it might be Assyrian. Listen, our problems are not those Soviets over there. That’s not our problem. Our problem is God. That’s our problem. It’s the Assyrian. It’s not nature. It’s not some other sovereign. It’s the Lord God and the recognition of his sovereignty. And, you

know, there are people who just so rebel against that they cannot stand it. Let me tell you this. I love it. Do you know why? Because it’s this same God who has made certain promises of redemption to me in Jesus Christ. He has said very simply this that the Lord Jesus Christ has offered an atoning sacrifice on Calvary’s cross and he has invited sinners to come and to receive as a free gift eternal life by leaning upon Christ in his merits. And he has assured us that as we come to him that it’s eternal life that we receive.

And if he’s the sovereign of this universe and controls all of this universe and controls the countries and controls nature and controls all of the affairs, I know that when I rest myself in him I have security. That’s why I love the sovereignty of God. It isn’t I love the sovereignty of God because I see some of you upset by it. Some people think I do. They say he just tries to upset us. No, it’s not that. It’s a matter of your view of God, ultimately. That’s what it, ultimately, comes down to, how big your God is. And I’ll tell you I need a big God to save a big sinner like me. And I am grateful for what Scripture says. It says he is that big God and I can be saved. Sinner thou I am, big sinner thou I am, I can trust him for now and for eternity.

So Amos, Amos has given us something to really enjoy. And finally in the 12th verse he comes to the divine judgment. He says, “Therefore thus while I do to you O Israel I’m going to do just I have been doing. And because I shall do this to you prepare to meet your God. O Israel.” That’s an expression, if you’ve studied the Old Testament, that has to do with an encounter with the being whom to encounter is to die. “No man can see the face of the Lord God and live,” the Old Testament repeats more than once. In other words, we cannot enter into the presence of the Lord God, the bare presence, the essence of the eternal God and survive. We are sinners. Holiness is like fire. It’s only through the Lord Jesus Christ and his mediation that we’re able to approach the Lord God. “So prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”

I used a rather long in Alabama with my father when I was just a little kid about 7 or 8, 9, 10 years of age when he was traveling the state of Alabama as a state agent for

an insurance company and then as a general agent for Alabama and Mississippi. And I can still remember on those roads and I would see this sign “Prepare to meet thy God” all over the south. There were individuals who understood the Bible. As an occasional interpreter today who likes to tell us that’s really good news prepare to meet your God because he’s going to exercise such grace and mercy to you. I don’t think that could stand the test of exegesis. Prepare to meet your God because this is the kind of judgment that you may expect if you have not repented as he had been speaking in the preceding context. And if you wonder about the kind of God you’re going to have to meet look at that last verse.

Mr. Prier is having to open the door because it’s getting warm in here and I don’t know whether its because I’m getting warm or whether because its because you’re getting warm because of what I’m saying to you. [Laughter] But at any rate, we all are to get warm because these are important words.

And finally, he says, if you have any doubt about the person you, ultimately, have to do every one of you sitting in this audience listen to who he is.

“For behold, he who forms mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what are (man’s thought) his thoughts, He who makes dawn into darkness.”

That seems strange doesn’t it, but if you’ve ever seen a day arise when its beautiful light and clear and then suddenly some dark clouds come and within half an hour you have to turn on the lights again. That’s what he’s talking about.

“He’s the one who makes dawn into darkness and treads on the high places of the earth Yahweh, God of hosts, is his name.”

So the figure is of the approaching violent frontal thunderstorm with awesome lightening wind and early morning light becoming eerie darkness and who appears Yahweh the Lord God of hosts. The inescapable asides before which all sinners, we're all sinners, all sinners must appear for judgment. Saints may escape that judgment or individuals may escape it through faith in Christ alone. Otherwise, we face this God. So I say to you today. Prepare to meet your God O people. Prepare. How to prepare? God's made preparation. He's been busy. He's been working. He's brought Christ to the sacrifice of Calvary's cross. He's offered the atoning sacrifice sufficient for the sins of sinners flee to him, acknowledge your sin receive the forgiveness through the saving sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in the atoning blood and merits of our magnificent savior. And then enjoy the comfort of a sovereign God who controls the affairs of this universe.

If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ we invite you to come to him as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus. I invite you. Invite you for the elders. Invite you for the saints. Invite you as the Scripture says to believe in Christ. Trust in him. No better time then right now. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the ministry of the prophet Amos to us. We give Thee thanks. We give Thee praise. We worship Thee for the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered the sacrifice for sinners, for such we are. We with the ladies of Samaria and the men of Samaria and the men and women who have followed down through the centuries, Lord extend mercy to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. If there should be someone who's never believed in him who has never come to repentance in faith may at this very moment they lift their hearts to Thee and say, "I need this savior." I receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal savior trusting in him now and forever. May grace, mercy, and peace go with us as we part

For Jesus' sake. Amen.