

## Prayer

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for the joy of being able to share our faith. Thank You for those with whom we share our worship; thank You for the groups in which we share fellowship; thank You for the privilege of hearing the testimony of others; and thank You for all the opportunities we have to share what we believe and what this means to us. Lord Jesus, build us up in our faith, we pray: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Books

*Pray about the publishing of Bibles, and access to God's Word for poor people. Pray that God's people will support the work to translate and distribute Bibles throughout the world.*

### On-going prayers

- Give thanks for all that the Lord has been able to do through you
- Pray for Afghanistan, for the rule of law and democratic processes
- Pray about the greed and godlessness within our world today

## Meditation

Rejoice to see the day's beginning;  
See the providential power of God at work,  
Gloriously driving on the Universal Law  
Of goodness, faith, and hope and love.

Dispel the demons of today's despair;  
The menacing, destructive power of Evil,  
Driving things backwards towards unhappiness  
And leading the soul to gloom and despair.

Let the power of God reign now; let Jesus live!  
Say, 'No contest, Satan!' Liberate your soul!  
Let the Maker stamp His image on your heart  
And taste the victory He's won by faith, your faith!

---

## Bible Study - Amos 4:6-13

<sup>6</sup> 'I gave your teeth no food in all your cities, and made bread scarce everywhere you live; yet you did not return to me,' says the LORD.

<sup>7</sup> 'I also withheld the rain from you when harvest was still three months away; I sent rain on one city but not on another; one field would have rain, and another which did not would wither; <sup>8</sup> so people would stagger from one city to another just to drink water, but they could not be satisfied; yet you did not return to me,' says the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> 'I struck your many gardens and your vineyards with blight and mildew, and locusts devoured your fig trees and your olive trees; yet you did not return to me,' says the LORD.

<sup>10</sup> 'I sent plagues among you just as I did to Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword and captured your horses, and I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camp; yet you did not return to me,' says the LORD.

<sup>11</sup> 'I brought catastrophe on some of you, just as I did on Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a brand plucked from the burning; yet you did not return to me,' says the LORD. <sup>12</sup> 'Therefore this is what I will do to you, O Israel; and because I will indeed do it, O Israel, prepare to meet your God!'

<sup>13</sup> For look, He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, reveals people's hidden thoughts, creates the morning out of darkness, and treads on the highest places of the earth; the LORD, the God of hosts, this is His name!

## Review

Here, Amos appeals to his listeners to open their eyes to what the Lord had done amongst them over many years. In language that is strange to us, and using examples with which we are not familiar (we will look at all this shortly), he prophesied that the Lord was judging His people through what we call 'natural' events (4:6-10). Amos could see what God was saying to His people through these, and he concluded this round of prophecies with an unparalleled call to Israel; 'prepare to meet Your God' (4:12)! The people ignored the Lord's punishment for the evils they had done and He could no longer deal kindly with them, so God would judge His people conclusively (4:11,12). After this damning prophecy, Amos burst out into a powerful song praising the supreme power of Almighty God, the Creator of the world (4:13). He had told Israel that they could no longer disregard the God who made them; their time was up and they would be judged for their long history of disobedience and rebellion.

Each of the small and brief prophecies in verse 6, 7-8, 9, and 10, describes some calamity, which the people should have recognised as judgement from God. We must remember that the people of Israel worshipped the Ba'als alongside of their worship of the Lord God, and in general, they worshipped the Ba'als as fertility gods, and the Lord God as the God of their ancestors (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob etc.). Therefore, because the people of Israel sought the fertile effects of rain by worshipping Ba'al, God demonstrated His control of the weather by withholding rain. In verse 6, the 'teeth' with no food (sometimes translated 'cleanness of teeth') meant famine; vv7 and 8 graphically described drought, and the plagues of the next two prophecies spoke of God's judgement on Egypt (Exodus 7-12). The message is not immediately obvious to us today, but it would have been perfectly clear to the Israelites; the natural disasters should have indicated to God's people that they were worshipping the wrong gods!

The climax of this passage (4:11-13) summarises all the short prophecies Amos gave since he prophesied the destruction of Israel by war (3:9-12). If you look at any Bible, you will see from the way it is laid out that after Amos 3:12, there are eight prophecies, with each concluded by the words 'says the Lord'. This is important. In the first two chapters of Amos he delivered a complete set of seven prophecies before delivering his main message in the eighth prophecy (2:6-11). We should therefore expect Amos to use the same method here, meaning that the main message is not to be found in the details of the first seven prophecies, but in what comes after them, being verses 11 and 12. This says that the Lord would bring catastrophe on His people because their sins were like those of 'Sodom and Gomorrah', and just as Lot and his family had been saved from destruction, God awaited the opportunity to save His people 'like a brand plucked from the burning' (4:11).

However, the people of Israel would not accept the Lord's salvation and would therefore 'meet' their God in the awesome consequences of their judgement. Everything we have read in Amos so far has reached this conclusion, God intended to destroy the northern people of Israel. It was a damning message describing the ultimate consequences of apostasy and the rejection of God by His people, and it is not surprising that Amos concluded this round of prophecies with a description of the awesomeness of Almighty God (4:13).

In the recent studies of Amos, you will have followed my description of the reaction of Israelite people to Amos' message. I suspect that Amos barely managed to escape the wrath of those who first heard him deliver this damning message from the Lord, but it is likely that some would have witnessed in their hearts that what Amos said was true. Amos was far away from his home in Tekoa (1:1), and it is possible that those who could see that he was a prophet gave him hospitality (as was Elisha, in 2 Kings 4:8-10). It is my guess that some of the prophecies coming after Amos' first public speech (Amos 1,2,3), were delivered to people who gathered to hear him because they had some sympathy with his message; some were so convinced of his message that they wrote it down, which is why these words are now to be found in Scripture! Amos did not falter in his damnation of Israel, and there was more to come;

---

## Questions (for use in groups)

1. Do we believe today that God speaks to us through the natural events and disasters of the world, as Amos did?
2. Is it wise or unwise for us to explain to other people that God might be speaking to us through events in the world around us?
3. Amos spoke about God as Creator as if this fact was the most important thing about God. Do you agree?

# Discipleship

## Personal comment:

*It may be too much to imagine that Amos did on fact have a group of supporters in Israel. However, there is constant evidence within the Old Testament that although the northern tribes had their own life and religious structure, different from the people in the south, many northerners were still deeply committed to the God of the forefathers. Indeed, after the exile, the remnant of all the tribes of Israel were gathered together into the 'Jewish' people who survived both the destruction of the northern kingdom under Assyria in 721BC and the destruction of the south by Babylon in 597-587BC. The Lord has never been without His witnesses and He has always sustained them; let us be those people today.*

## Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Look at a newspaper and read through one. How many of the reports you read could be explained as God trying to send messages to us about justice, about what is right or wrong, about the judgement of the world, or something similar. The Scriptures tell us that because God has made everything, He is to be found through the world in which we live if we have eyes to see Him. Do your best to see what you can find!*
- *Pray for the people of the world who are trapped in faiths that limit their perception of the one true God and make them dependent upon superstitions about the weather and how people relate to natural features of the world.*

## Final Prayer

Help us, dear Lord, to offer ourselves to You in a true spirit of worship. We seek to be set free to worship you in 'spirit and truth'; and yet without Your presence by the Holy Spirit our efforts are meaningless. Fill us with Your Spirit, we pray, so that our worship may be a natural consequence of the lives we live for You:  
AMEN

---