

If God is Against Us... Amos 3

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[0 : 00] Good evening, everyone. You're all doing all right today. And I just want to jump into the text.

Why don't we open our Bibles in Amos chapter 3. I'm seeing a lot of new faces here. Hopefully by the end of the evening, you'll be able to figure out my accent. And then somehow you'll understand what I'm saying.

I'll try to do my best, I promise. Whether it's going to work or not, don't know. God's grace. Let's open our Bibles, Amos chapter 3. This is what the Word says.

Hear this word, people of Israel. The word of the Lord has spoken against you. Against a whole family brought up out of Egypt.

You only have chosen all the families of the earth. Therefore, I will punish you for all your sins. You two walk together unless they have agreed to do so. Does a lion roar in the ticket when he has no prey?

[1 : 16] Does he growl in his den when he has cut nothing? Does a bird swoops down to a trap on the ground when no bait is there? Does a trap spring up from the ground?

Yet he hasn't cut anything. When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?

Surely, the sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plans to his servants, the prophets. The lion has roared, who will not fear?

The sovereign Lord has spoken, who can't bad prophesy? Proclaim to the fortresses of Ashdod and to the fortresses of Egypt. Assemble yourselves in the mountains of Samaria.

See the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people. They do not know how to do right, declares the Lord, who were stored up in the fortresses, where they had plundered and looted.

[2 : 16] Therefore, this is what the sovereign Lord says. An enemy will overrun your land, pull down your strongholds, and plunder your fortresses.

This is what the Lord says. As a shepherd rescues from the lion's mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an heir, so will the Israelites living in Samaria be rescued, with only the head of the bed and a piece of fabric from the couch.

Hear this and testify against the descendants of Jacob, declares the Lord, the Lord God Almighty. On that day I punish Israel for her sins.

I will destroy the altars of Bethel. The horns of the altars will be cut off and fall to the ground. I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house.

The houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed, and the mansions will be demolished, declares the Lord. Ah, what a difficult passage it really is.

[3 : 22] Tell me about it, really. I was given this passage quite a few months ago. Originally, I actually wrote on my phone that I was preaching chapter 4.

And I was preparing myself to chapter 4. I was reading chapter 4, although I was reading a whole book, I would deny it. But I was focusing on chapter 4. And last Friday, I come to church, to the office, and go to meet John.

We were just discussing what Amos is going to be like. And suddenly he says, yeah, but, you know, 3 and 4 are always together, so it's going to be easy. I'm like, what do you mean 3 and 4? And that's when actually I realized I was not doing chapter 4, but actually doing chapter 3.

So, if you feel I'm preaching chapter 4 today, please, I apologize, you now know why. But I'm going to try to do it in chapter 3. And the first thought that I have in my head when I was reading the book of Amos, which is actually a kind of book very difficult.

Not many people really like reading Amos because they feel it's very difficult to get. Normally, when you get to Amos in the Bible, you're doing like chronologically, or you're just going through the whole book of the Bible, you just jump in.

[4 : 27] You go to the next one, next, and then you jump to that. And the first thing that came to my head was, and I'm going to be honest with this, how can God do something like this?

I was like, what can I do with this passage? And then I began to spend a lot of time in Amos. Of course, that's not the message, basically. But then I began to spend a lot of time with Amos, and I began to discover what is actually behind it, to see what the context is about.

And my thinking changed from how can God do something like this to, what horrible people, what horrible Israel were.

How can they forget what God has done for them? That is basically the whole message of Amos. God is roaring. God is crying out for them to see what they have forgotten.

They have forgotten about him. They have forgotten what he has done for them. And they are going in a way that he is not happy with. That is when the judgment comes.

[5 : 30] That is why when it feels like God is roaring, with anger, perhaps. But it's lots of love being implied in that. So I'm going to try to lead you to that, and we'll try to see it.

So I'm going to tell you a bit more about Amos. Amos is in... I need to put this one up. Yep. So Amos is a book...

Amos was a prophet who actually lived in Judah, but he spoke to Israel. And his ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah, Judah, and the king of Jerobo, Jerobo and the second of Israel, which is about 790 to 740 before Christ, for you to have a picture of what's happening there.

And basically his message was about judgment. At the beginning of his prophecy, he firstly spoke of the six nations surrounding Israel, which are... Does anybody remember? Which...

There are no six nations of Rabi, okay? That's different six nations. The six nations are Moab, Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Eden, and the Ammonites.

[6 : 34] And then he not only spoke about them, but he also spoke about Judah. And then finally... He moves to speak to Israel about Israel. Although Amos is speaking, but if God, the lion, as I describe it, he is roaring.

And he is roaring against the six surrounding nations of Israel. And Israel goes... I can imagine when Amos is beginning in chapter 1, at the beginning of chapter 1, declaring all the sins against those six nations, Amos, the people of Israel, would be like, Yes!

Keep going, Amos. Do it. Do it that way. And then the prophecy changed, and Amos goes, I'm no longer speaking about the six nations. I'm going to go and speak again Judah.

And of course, Israel and Judah weren't good friends. So I can imagine the people from Israel were like, Yes! Keep going, keep going. Bring it on. Bring it on, buddy. And then, finally, from chapter 2, from verse 6 and on, the message changed.

And then Amos is no longer speaking about the six nations. He's no longer speaking about Judah. But now he turns drastically and faces Israel and says, And now I have something for you, Israel.

[7 : 42] This is the message for you. It's actually you the main reason why I'm coming to prophesy. My whole prophecy has nothing to do with them, but it has a lot to do with you.

That's why I'm here. And basically, that is where the Israelites are in chapter 3. They went from the enjoyment of chapter 1 to the confusion of chapter 2 to the show of chapter 3 where the judgment is being revealed to them.

And precisely, Israel is actually being judged, not just despised by the fact they were privileged, but because of the fact, they were privileged.

Because of the things they were given for God, is that God has to precisely do something with them. So, once we begin to dig into the first, to the first few verses of the chapter, 3, we develop a...

I hope this one works. Okay, there we are. So, I made three different titles for this one. So, the first one is the fairness of God's judgment. You can actually see in verses 1 and 2.

[8 : 48] And this is what it says. Hear this word, people of Israel. The word of the Lord has spoken against you, against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt. You only have I chosen, but all the families of the earth.

Therefore, I will punish you for all your sins. Amos begins this chapter by reminding them that God's judgment is fair. He begins this word by saying, hear this word.

The beginning of chapter 3, the beginning of chapter 4, and the beginning of chapter 5 had a common scene, something very much in common. They all began with the same word. Hear this word.

Basically saying, Amos, listen to this. This is very, very, very important. Listen to this, and this is for you. That is how Amos started the next three chapters.

And he starts in here. And then he goes to develop the next thing. And basically, it's a reminder that Israel must listen and they must obey. But we probably will discover they wouldn't do that.

[9 : 52] So Amos draws deeply on an early scripture to show how fair and biased God's judgment is. He calls them people of Israel. When he's saying people of Israel, he's not only defying the people of that place, but it's actually defying the whole people from Israel.

Both tribes, both different nations, Judah and Israel, because they were both taken out from Egypt and brought from God to the place where he was promised.

There are two important words here to see. The first one is in verse 2, where it says, you only have a chosen. Slice of working.

Anyway. And this word chosen in this particular context describes a relationship, describes a word with God having a relationship or covenant with them.

God had chosen Israel to reveal himself, to reveal himself to them and to have a permanent relationship with them. And that's what he says, I have chosen for all the families of the year, you, Israel.

[11 : 01] And that's what I chose him to do. The first one we actually, and basically this describes the God's sovereign choice of Israel.

And basically, he's loving and showing, he's loving concern for them that he really cares and he chose them. That was the first thing, that Israel is not only a nation. Israel is the only one nation with God having a specific covenant, a relationship or covenant.

But then he goes to the next one, therefore I will punish you. And the second word I want us to look is actually punish. Generally, in some other translations of the Bible, the same word is used in a different way.

It's used as basic. So, the point that is happening here is like this, the word can also be translated as basic. And it occurs in different contexts.

If you remember, if you ever read chapter 50 of Genesis, Joseph is about to die. The Israelites are in Egypt. And he is about to go away, but he speaks to the people of Israel.

[12 : 08] And he tells them this, remember, God is going to come and come out from where you are, here in Egypt. And will come and visit you and take it.

He will take you to the land that he has promised you. That was the first time that actually this word was used in the context of basic. And now the prophet is coming to say that therefore God is going to come and punish them.

And the same word is used in a very backwards way, I would say. So now, they are in a promised land, but Amos is saying that the Lord is going to come and punish you slash visit them.

So the Lord is going to come and take them, for where they are, which is the promised land, they are going to be taken away to the exile. Do you see the contrast there?

How, because of disobedience, because of the fair judgment, that treatment of God has been reversed. This visit from God, that doesn't mean they are taken to the promised land.

[13 : 07] actually, they are being taken out from the promised land. So that therefore, here, is the word that comes very strong.

The Lord's covenant of grace includes punishment for sins, precisely because the Lord chose Israel. Therefore, He loves His people too much to let them sin.

The whole reason why God is going to take Israel away from where they are, because they have been so disobedient to Him.

And they have not behaved in the way He has chosen to. And He has to do something. So Amos is coming to say, because of what you're doing, therefore, this is what the Lord is going to do.

That is basically the fairness of this judgment. And for a moment, I want you to think. Let's just stop for a moment. I've got a question for you.

[14 : 07] I want you to answer in your head. Probably you won't tell me, but answer it. Is God right to judge Israel at this point? Is God being unfair with them?

Is God doing something that He shouldn't do? God chose His people and gave them a name. He gave them a land. He gave them victory. He rescued them.

He defeated their enemies. He gave them more and more and more and more things. And even with all they got from God, they have forgotten about Him.

He even gave them a relationship with covenant. He said, I'll, you'll be my people. And especially, the most astonishing thing, God said, and I will be your God.

And they have forgotten that. So is this fair? Yes. Sadly it is. God is being fair. Even when He sounds horrible, God is being fair.

[15:17] His treatment to Israel is fair. So the next thing we can actually see is from verses 3 to 8 is that this judgment is actually inevitable.

I will read it to you again. Amen. Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?

Does a lion run in the thicket when he has no prey? Does a growl in its den when it has caught nothing? Does a bear swoop down to a trap ground when it has no bait in there?

Does a trap spring up on the ground when it has not caught anything? Amos presents a series of rhetorical questions to emphasize that actually the judgment is not that far away that the judgment is imminent.

That the judgment is going to come and it's imminent and inevitable and it will actually come to those who don't respond. the question in verse 3 continues this theme relationship playing in the relationship between God and Israel as it is intended.

[16:32] The clear implications is that the initial call of Israel needs to be sustained by a continuous walk with God. Some seem precisely they have stopped doing it.

What it says like do two walk together unless they have agreed so? They were supposed to agree so. that's why there was the relational covenant but Israel was not doing that. Israel began to walk with God but eventually drove away his hand and didn't want to walk with God anymore.

Verse 4 and 5 the point that Amos is trying to do in verse 4 and 5 is he's trying to come across that every effect has a cause or every cause is produced by an effect.

the lion roars when he has found a prey a young lion grows when he has got something a trap needs a bait in order to work can you imagine a trap is going to work without a bait we wouldn't be that fooling out with it a trap spring doesn't shut when it's empty it has to do something basically what Amos is saying if you do this this is going to happen you take state A actually you have to take state B because that's what is actually happening so Amos is telling them this is inevitable this is going to happen and this is caused by something you have done verse 6 says that when a trumpet sounds in a city does people not tremble every time in the past when a trumpet was blown in a city people would know there was something about to happen either were calamity invasion something wrong and when the trumpet was blown everyone would shake everyone would tremble oh let's do something let's get my child let's call daycare let's do something oh let's go to

Ikea and get something we need to because we are going to be invaded let's prepare for that and people knew it and Amos is calling that and say you know that but now when I'm coming to you and telling you the message from God that God is roaring you don't even care you know how to be alert when a trumpet blows in a city but when God is blowing when he is crying out you don't do anything Amos is saying I'm coming to blow the trumpet God has spoken he is roaring you must respond you must turn to God the judgment is coming do sons in Israel but Israel is not doing anything Israel had seen God's judgment in pagan nations many times in the past but now they are about to face the same just judgment from

[19:36] God to each one of them verses 7 and 8 declares that the Lord has revealed this to Amos God has spoken now the prophet must prophesy like a lion's voice evokes fear when you hear it so thus the word of the Lord compels the prophet to prophesy Amos is saying like everything that the Lord has told me cannot be quiet I have to tell you this is the message for you Israel wake up realize what you're doing walk away from it God is roaring and he's screaming out realize it they wouldn't do it Amos can't stop this neither can Israel but although even when judgment cannot be stopped it could be easily be prepared for but since they are not doing anything they're not able to be prepared for there is always an implied call for repentance in the prophecy or judgment

God is showing in some ways his stake of laws over Israel he sent his prophet to come and speak to them it would have been easy for God to judge and right away to bring the Assyrians the next day and they would be done but God is actually showing his love given the time and saying you got this prophet he's coming to speak to you my behalf repent do something it's actually funny from the day

when the prophecy was given it took like 40 years when we actually the Assyrians came it is a long time isn't it I'm not even 40 yet so many years for them to repent so many opportunities for them to realize what God was doing they wouldn't care Amos was not speaking about God's people Amos was speaking to God's people the message was straight to them it was not about them it was to them you must depend you must change

God is telling you to do something different they wouldn't listen to people were ignoring the word of God spoken by Amos none of them were responded and I wonder how many times do we like Israel when we hear the voice of God through his word and we just ignore it we don't listen to it sometimes when even we know what the Bible says we still choose to run how similar to Israel can we actually be I don't know just a generic question that just came to my head how many times I have been in that situation where I feel like even knowing what the Bible says I do something wrong and it's fine nobody knows it's fine I got the freedom to do whatever I want this country gives me freedom so I can do whatever

I want and so many other excuses to do whatever you want even ignoring what the Bible says this is the position of Israel this is how they are they are ignoring what God has told them what to do if they don't want to do it if they don't want to have this permanent relationship with God and God has been so merciful to them he is letting them know that they are wrong giving them a chance to repent but this again they wouldn't do it do not never do not allow yourself to be like them anytime you do not ever ignore the word of God ignore what the Bible says the last thing I'll be dealing with comes from verses 9 to 15 he's not only describing the first point he was describing was the fairness of the judgment the second point he was describing that this judgment was inevitable and it's going to happen you don't respond the judgment is going to come to you and now he's describing the nature of the judgment what actually the judgment is going to involve what's going to happen with it the first thing is worth notices in verse 9 it proclaim to the fortresses

Ashdod and to the fortresses of Egypt assemble yourselves to the mountain of Samaria see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people when God has rescued Israel from slavery and when God had chosen Israel to bring them to a promised land and when God had chosen to have a permanent relationship with them the purpose was for them to reflect what God is or who God is for them to show what a godly nation should be like he had brought up Israel to show to the world what a godly nation should be and to reflect to the pagan neighbors what a nation should be like but here the prophets with big irony is called Ashdod which was a Philistine city and he's calling Egypt which was an enemy of Israel an enemy of

[25 : 44] God and he's calling these two people to come and witness against Israel how wicked Israel may have been that the prophet has to call two barbarians horrible and evil doers nations to come and witness against God holy people God the prophet is calling these two pagan nations to come and witness against Israel can you imagine if I was an Israelite at that point that may have been shocking God is so proud to show an unbeliever and say like look look how my son is not behaving the way he wants look how my people are not doing what

I want them to do and you laugh and look at them that is kind of the way he's picturing it it's irony and sadness at the same time the scene was so evident as expressed in verses nine there was oppression see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people there was materialism and violence verse 10 their fortresses are filled with wealth taken by robbery and violence even verse 10 says they do not know how to do right normal proper behavior is so far away from them and that leads to a gross materialism and violence defending a wealth and privilege so they are doing everything that God has told them not to and because of that they must be punished all these behavior will lead to evident destruction that therefore here comes very strong in verse 11 it says therefore this is what the sovereign lord says an enemy will overrun you your land pull down your strongholds and plunder your fortresses it's funny but this the beginning of this verse verse 11 with the therefore it's pretty similar to what was happening in chapter 28 when God was describing actually sorry

Deuteronomy chapter 28 when God was describing what the blessings and the curses for obedience or disobedience are going to happen and this verse here in chapter in verse 11 brings to my head a lot of that for the whole chapter of Deuteronomy as I was saying it is about the blessings for disobedience and the curses for the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience from verses 1 to 14 in chapter 28 I'm just giving you a heads up about that God is describing what a blessing they would get in their obedience but in verse 15 or 28 he says however if you are

disobedient this is what you're going to get and it's pretty similar with basically the pattern that is happening here in Amos I'm pretty sure Amos knew about chapter 28 of Deuteronomy the second thing is going to happen with them and there comes the therefore as I said so they are showing oppression they are acting in sin and God is going to come and punish them

God is going to come and do something for them two main things he's going to do the first one they're going to be defeated in battle as verse 11 and 12 says as I said before the Assyrians were going to come they're going to come and destroy them they're going to come and do something to them they're going to destroy all the greatness that they used to have they're going to attack their city their cities are going to be knocked down something is going to come it's going to come it's going to be bad keep your eye in verse 11 and listen what I'm reading from chapter 28 verse 52 of Deuteronomy find how similar the circumstances are here he says chapter 28 verse 52 but keep your eye on Amos 3 11 and listen to this they will attack your cities until all the fortified walls in your land the walls you trusted to protect you are knocked down they will attack all the towns in the land the Lord your God has given you that was from Deuteronomy chapter 28 what is what is Amos telling them in chapter 11 precisely that what he was told if you are disobedient that's going to happen Amos chapter 3 is telling them this is actually happening this will happen the other thing for them is going to be they will only be defeated in battle but there will also the places where they take false refugees the places where they take false worship the places where they take false security is going to be destroyed verses 13 to 15 describes the altar of battle the altar of battle was made by Jerobo on the first it was actually made from a golden calf and the purpose was Israel didn't want to go and worship in Jerusalem anymore because they were split so Israel decided we don't want to go there anymore so Jerobo on the first said I don't want to go there anymore so I'm going to create something here

[31 : 45] I'm going to lift it up an altar and we're going to put a golden calf here and this is going to be the altar and people are going to come here and worship because we don't want to go to the place where God told us to go which place was that Jerusalem we don't want to go there anymore we want to be here and they decided to do that that was not a godly sin that was something full of idolatry that was something full of selfishness and trying to do something against God the other thing that is actually verse 14 is telling us that the horns on the altar will be cut off something would happen in that time in that altar and somebody was looking for refuge and somebody was running away from something whenever they would get to the altar they would find the horns if they would put their hands on the horns nobody could touch them they would be able to take refuge in them but here the prophet is saying that place where you take forced refuge that place is saying it's going to be cut off even the places where you worship even the places where you take refuge will be cut off why because of your disobedience because you have forgotten who I am

I can really understand how Israel could forgotten something like what David would say remember what David said in Psalm 91 verse 2 it's a very famous psalm you might remember it he says I will save of the Lord you remember he is my refuge my fortress my God would I trust but Israel was seeking refuge in the altar seeking refuge something else do not allow yourself to take refuge in something else different than God like David did God is my refuge for Israel God was not and he had to punish them for that the last thing it says that he actually has to destroy the houses the winter houses and summer houses that has to do a lot with possession and luxury those places were only affordable by kings and they have to be very wealthy to do that these houses will fail to protect them against God the opening living in Israel has caused a terrible state they have become abusive and the rich had plunder and looted the poor in prosperity they have forgotten God remember when Amos was speaking although he's speaking about judgment the judgment is not there yet so they are still a rich nation they are still prospering they are still doing good and in all this opulency and all this greatness they are having they are forgotten about God and he's coming to say all those places where you actually go and enjoy your you give a good life are going to be cut off are going to be destroyed all of those places they will be destroyed those places won't protect you this brings to my head as well what the wise the wise Solomon would say at some point in chapter 30 of Proverbs he would say something like Lord give me nor poverty neither riches feed me with the food that is needful for me lest I be full and deny you and say who is the Lord or lest I be lest I be rich and deny you and say who is the Lord or lest I be poor and still and profane the name of the Lord and prosperity they have forgotten about God there are so many things to say that they would actually do and run and I know probably at this

point you are already depressed because either you didn't get my accent or you didn't get what I'm saying or what I'm saying is horrible that you don't want to listen anymore and generally chapter 3 is very difficult and this is a very complicated chapter but this is perhaps what I'm going to finish I can't preach a sermon on judgment but we're not talking about salvation because the same God who is offering judgment to Israel at this point through the prophet is crying out saying but you come to me I will save you you come to me

I will rescue you but Israel wouldn't do that verse 12 gives us a glance of what this is going to happen there is hope it says that a few fragments of the land rescued from the mouth of the lion meant that a tiny remnant of Israel which will survive the judgment even when the Syrians came they took to destroy everything they took the people into exile and we know later on by reading the Bible that there was a remnant who was able to come back and from that remnant like nearly 700 years later a virgin was found pregnant God God God himself decided to come to this world from that remnant only God would have chosen to save or do something with people who are worthless like the

[37 : 52] Israelites that's what he did that day and from that scene from that remnant he brought Jesus us like 700 years later and he lived a perfect life we all know he showed us the way we all know and he went to a cross we all know and he died for our sins we all know even God when he was judged in Israel he decided to save them and held them to a small remnant to come back that kind of goodness doesn't happen very often does it precisely it does because the Bible says that God himself when we were worthless when we were full of sin as Romans 5a says but God demonstrates his own love for us in this while we were still sinners

Christ died for our sins Israel wasn't worth to be saved they didn't have any reasons to be saved but even though God is going to do something for them God has shown mercy to them and there was remnant who still stand you all know what's happening in Israel nowadays but at the same time the same God decided to show the same mercy to us God at the same time is offering judgment and is offering salvation for us judgment if we don't take Christ salvation we do but it's only trusting in him that could make us not run away from salvation or from judgment but Christ takes the judgment that he deserves for us and we get what we don't deserve that was being the most difficult and complicated Amos 3 you can ever listen you can ever hear but

I promise it will get better somebody better is going to come to speak next week but at the same time the message gets better and eventually by chapter 9 Amos you'll all be excited you'll be like yes that's what we're waiting for let's pray Father we thank you that your judgment is fair it was fair for Israel and it's fair for us as well but we thank you that the judgment for Israel was inevitable but they were still given a chance to repent they wouldn't listen help us not to be like them help us to listen what the

Bible says not to ignore it when the lion's floor is roaring help us to come close to him rather than run away from him Father we thank you because you are a God who cares and you are a God who has chosen your people even from the foundation of the world and you sent Jesus for us to take the judgment that we desire and if we only trust in him he gave us this salvation and keep us away from that Father Amos 3 is very complicated maybe I made it more complicated but we are so thankful that even after Amos one day you sent Jesus and he saved us when we trusted in him in the name of your son I thank you for this time I pray for my brothers and sisters here to learn from Amos chapter 3 to be a good witness among pagan nations to be good witness in the light when we have to show light in the darkness help us to take refuge in you and not in anywhere else Father we thank you for today in the name of your son Amen