

Amos
The Sin Amos Confronted
Refusal to Repent

Introduction: In the New Testament, we are told that calamity comes to all. The Bible makes it clear that calamity is part of living in a world under the curse of sin that separates us and all of creation from fellowship with God and the experience of His life. It's why, in getting His disciples ready for what was coming, Jesus said,

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

When you live in a curse, you will experience the consequence of the curse, just like if you are in a pool, you can't keep from getting wet. Knowing how to swim allows you to have a much better experience in the pool, but you are still in the pool, and your experience is shaped by the fact that you are in one! Similarly, you can't live in South Florida without experiencing miserable heat, nor live in northern Canada without experiencing excruciatingly cold temperatures. Even as one who is a fully favored, redeemed child of God and filled with the Holy Spirit, you can't live in the curse of sin and not experience the calamity of that curse.

Therefore, we should not make the mistake of Job's friends and assume calamity in the life of a believer means there is some kind of secret, sinful rebellion going on in our lives that God is punishing. God certainly disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6), but He also prunes the vine of those who are faithful (John 15:2), so that we can grow and bear more fruit.

However, God has also made it abundantly clear that the laws of the harvest are not negated by the blood of Jesus, so much so that, apart from the mercy of God to pluck out the harvest of the seeds of the sin we have sown in this life, we will all reap what we sow! It's why Paul wrote,

7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8).

Now, when it came to the Jews living under the Covenant God made with them through Moses, the context of this reality within that specific covenant was explicitly spelled out in tremendous detail! It's all over the Old Testament, but nowhere is it any clearer than Deuteronomy 28 and 29. The first 15 verses teach that if the Jews obey God's commandments, they will reap incredible blessings from Him. But then the tone and focus abruptly change. Moses preaches an unmistakably fiery sermon about the absolute terror of God that they will reap against them if they refuse to repent and obey! For example,

58 "If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the Lord your God, 59 then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. (Deuteronomy 28:58-59)

18 Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, 19 one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. 20 The Lord will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven. 21 And the Lord will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law. (Deuteronomy 29:18-21)

Starting in Deuteronomy 28:15 all the way to verse 68, you read one curse after the next that God promised He would inflict on the Jewish people if they refused to repent. It continues in the next chapter, all the way to verse 28! After 15 verses of blessing, there are 81 consecutive verses of blunt, straightforward horror promised to Israel if they ignore God's commandments and refuse to repent. Yet when Amos appeared in the northern Kingdom of Israel and told them to repent, they refused. They were not only ignoring the obvious commandments of God but also the signs God had already sent them to warn them of the much more severe promised consequences if they continued to refuse to repent!

Proposition: In Amos 4:6-11, we see five different signs that the Jews ignored that God gave them to repent.

The first sign was that,

(1) They ignored the famine God sent. (4:6)

- A. 6 "I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.**
- B. As a reminder, Moses told them that if they obeyed God,**
- C. 5 Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. (Deuteronomy 28:5)**
- D. The fact that this was in ALL of their cities and places means this was not a random, isolated event. It was big and obvious, and was the exact opposite of what God PROMISED them if they obeyed Him. It was a flashing red light to stop and turn around! If God had promised them that if they obeyed Him, they would**

never lack food, then the sudden, unexplainable lack of food should have immediately caused them to repent, but they didn't!

- E. **“cleanness of teeth’** The Hebrew text uses an idiom meaning “empty teeth” as a metaphor for famine. The people had no food to stick to their teeth.”¹
- F. “God was using national calamities to bring about their true commitment to him. Famines are documented during the reign of Ahab (1 Kgs 17:12) and his son Jehoram (2 Kgs 4:38; 8:1). The famine mentioned by Amos, however, is probably an unrecorded one. In spite of this blow, Israel did not return unto Yahweh (4:6).”²
- G. “God had given them **empty stomachs** (lit., “cleanness of teeth,” i.e., nothing to chew on). Hunger and famine had afflicted the whole land—**every city** and **every town**. But the people did not turn to God.”³

The second sign was that,

(2) They ignored the drought God sent. (4:7-8)

- A. 7 "I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither; 8 so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.
- B. “Yahweh had withheld the so-called latter or spring rain ‘when there yet remained three months before harvest,’ which occurred in May or June.”⁴
- C. The famine in verse 6 could have been a direct result of the drought in verses 7-8. The first rains helped the crops germinate and sprout, but the later rains were essential for them to mature and produce. These later rains were very dependable and sufficient not only for proper crop growth but also to replenish their cisterns and wells for personal consumption.
- D. What’s even more interesting is that in a relatively small region, the drought was still selective. It would rain in one place and not in another. People would then migrate to where it was raining, and it would stop there, causing the people who

¹Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Whitehead, M. M., Grigoni, M. R., & Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Am 4:6). Lexham Press.

² Smith, J. E. (1994). [The Minor Prophets](#) (p. 163). College Press.

³ Sunukjian, D. R. (1985). [Amos](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1437). Victor Books.

⁴ Smith, J. E. (1994). [The Minor Prophets](#) (p. 163). College Press.

wandered there, as well as the ones in the city they wandered to, to leave and go somewhere else reporting rain, only for the rain to end there soon as well!

- E. Again, God promised this would happen if they disobeyed him.
- F. **24 The Lord will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed. (Deuteronomy 28:24)**
- G. So, despite the obvious wake-up call concerning their OBVIOUS sin, they still refused to repent. And remember, we aren't talking about some kind of secret rebellion that they didn't even realize they were living in. We're talking about the most blatant and obvious sin a Jew could commit—worshiping idols, oppressing the poor, and sexual immorality!
- H. "Such famines were often caused by a prior drought, as God would withhold the spring **rain** so essential to the summer **harvest**. This discipline was often selective, so that **one town** had **rain** while **another** did not, **one field** was rained on but **another** was not. As the wells and cisterns in some localities **dried up** and its **people staggered** exhausted **from town to town** in search of limited drinking **water**, the contrast between their judgment and another town's favor should have caused them to ponder God's action. But they did not consider."⁵

The third sign was that,

(3) They ignored the crop destruction God sent. (4:9)

- A. **9 "I struck you with blight and mildew; your many gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.**
- B. Again, the Lord had made it clear what would happen if they disobeyed Him!
- C. **22 The Lord will strike you ... with drought and with blight and with mildew. ... 38 You shall carry much seed into the field and shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it. 39 You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. (Deuteronomy 28:22, 38-39)**
- D. "4:9 'blight and with mildew' Both were damaging to the crops. ... The culture of the biblical world was thoroughly agrarian. Grapes, figs, and olives were primary

⁵ Sunukjian, D. R. (1985). [Amos](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1437). Victor Books.

crops (compare Joel 2:19–24; Hab 3:17). Drought, disease (blight), and locusts were the main dangers to the agricultural economy of Israel.”⁶

The fourth sign was that,

(4) They ignored the plague God sent. (4:10a)

- A. 10 "I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
- B. Once again, God PROMISED this would happen if they ignored His commandments and refused to repent.
- C. 27 The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed. (Deuteronomy 28:27)
- D. "Plague in the manner of Egypt" is a plague as severe as the pestilence sent upon Pharaoh (Exod 9:3ff.). Egypt was notorious for its plagues in the ancient world (cf. Deut 7:15; 28:27, 60)."⁷
- E. This one should have been obvious! God used this exact thing before to get Pharaoh to repent from keeping Israel as slaves and set them free! His refusal to ignore the obvious signs eventually led God to kill the firstborn of every family in Egypt!
- F. "4:10. Wars brought **plagues** and death to the nation. As populations were crowded into walled cities or assembled in camps, contagious diseases broke out and spread. The mention of **Egypt** has caused some to think that the "plagues" are similar to those that struck Egypt's livestock at the time of the Exodus (cf. Ex. 9:1–7). But because of the military scenes mentioned in Amos 4:10, and because the word "plague" can denote an epidemic pestilence among humans (cf. Ex. 5:3; 9:15; Lev. 26:25; Jer. 14:12; 21:7, 9; Ezek. 5:17; 14:19), the most likely one is the bubonic plague which spreads from rats to people by fleas. The mention of Egypt is best interpreted as "like those that happen in Egypt," a reference to the notorious human plagues which periodically swept that country (cf. Deut. 7:15; 28:27, 60)."⁸

The fifth sign was that,

(5) They ignored the military defeats God sent. (4:10b)

⁶ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Whitehead, M. M., Grigoni, M. R., & Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Am 4:9). Lexham Press.

⁷ Smith, J. E. (1994). *The Minor Prophets* (pp. 163–164). College Press.

⁸ Sunukjian, D. R. (1985). *Amos*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1437). Victor Books.

- A. God made an unequivocal promise about how their battles with other nations would go if they lived in submission to Him.
- B. **7 “The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. (Deuteronomy 28:7)**
- C. However, even though the northern Kingdom had expanded its territory and won some significant battles, they had not won them in the way the Lord promised if they were obedient to Him! Therefore, Amos wrote,
- D. **I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses, and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils; yet you did not return to me, declares the LORD. 11 “I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me,” declares the LORD. (4:10b-11)**
 - 1. “Israel’s young men were slain by the sword. Probably the reference is to the repeated wars with the Arameans, which characterized the latter half of the ninth century. While the soldiers were slain, their war horses were captured. Decaying human flesh caused a stench throughout the land. Yet Israel did not return unto Yahweh (4:10).”⁹
 - 2. “4:11. Finally, God totally **overthrew some of** their cities with the same burning devastation He had wreaked on **Sodom and Gomorrah** (cf. Gen. 19:23–29; Deut. 29:22–23). So thorough had been the destruction from a military siege that certain cities had ceased to exist. The whole nation had come perilously close to obliteration, barely escaping **like a burning stick snatched from the fire**. But this too had proved futile.”¹⁰
 - 3. “The reminder of the well-known story of the destruction of the cities of the plain—Sodom and Gomorrah—ought to have served as a warning against those who persisted in wickedness. Not even ten righteous people had been found in those cities (Gen. 18:16–33) so God destroyed them, and only righteous Lot (see 2 Peter 2:6–7) and his children were saved. Their deliverance was ‘like a burning stick snatched from the fire’.”¹¹
- E. Some of you are thinking, “I thought things were going great in the northern Kingdom, which is why they were so arrogant?” Well, they were going great,

⁹ Smith, J. E. (1994). *The Minor Prophets* (p. 164). College Press.

¹⁰ Sunukjian, D. R. (1985). *Amos*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1437). Victor Books.

¹¹ Bentley, M. (2006). *Opening up Amos* (p. 58). Day One Publications.

kind of. The situation in the northern Kingdom was kind of like people who get a big inheritance but squander it. They have a ton of fun while they foolishly spend everything they inherited. However, because they didn't invest or spend it wisely, they not only ran out of money but also lost everything they'd purchased because they couldn't afford to keep it.

- F. In a similar fashion, a major part of Israel's success wasn't because they made wise decisions and did things right, but rather because of the demise of the Kingdoms around them. It wasn't necessarily because Israel was so great, but partly because, for various reasons, the once proud and powerful nations around them had become weak and defeatable, and even in that, Israel was still losing far more soldiers in battle, and even some of their cities. Therefore, even their victories were defeats in that the cost of victory was devastating! **"I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils."**
- G. Furthermore, it was the elite who were unethically taking all the prophets of the land. In the midst of wins that smelled like defeats, crop failures, and all kinds of other problems, those with power and influence left the rest of Israel living in abject poverty. At the same time, they unjustly used the "justice" system to rob and steal from the poor in order to continue their extravagant lifestyles!
- H. The fact that only "some" were affected by this highlights the events of Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot and his family were rescued (although Lot's wife disobeyed and died after leaving). So this event points to both God's punishment for sin and the offer of redemption, but both were ignored.

Despite all these blatant signs, the Jews refused to repent or even consider the preaching of God's Word that made it clear they needed to repent! Amos wrote,

16 Now therefore hear the word of the LORD. "You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.' (7:16)

The consequence of their refusal was devastating because God was going to do what He said He would do if they continued not to repent. In the last chapter of Amos, we read,

10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.' (9:10)

Now, let's fast forward in time to the New Testament. Many of the Jewish people of Jesus' day had the same problem as those in the northern Kingdom. When faced with an obvious call to repent, they refused! In the book of Matthew, we read,

20 Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more

bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.” (Matthew 11:20-24)

Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were in the area where Jesus performed most of His miracles, meaning no one had seen more evidence of Christ's supernatural power and Deity than they had. Nobody had seen a more explicit testimony of God's incredible love and graciousness to do amazing things for people who had done nothing for Him (grace!). Nobody had more reason to repent and believe in Jesus than the people in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, yet they didn't! And here is where Jesus's words really cut. He says the Jews in these cities, the very people with the testimonies of God's faithfulness through the generations; the very ones the God had chosen to show His glory to for over a millennium and was now doing it again were in worse spiritual shape than the people of Sodom that were so ate up in sin that God sent fire and brimstone to consume them! Jesus said if the people in Sodom had seen and heard what they had seen and heard, then even those low-down, dirty, rotten, disgusting, evil sinners would have repented, but you didn't! He then drives the knife deeper when he tells the Jews, the very people who consider themselves to be righteous and in no need of repentance, that it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the flat-out grossly evil people of Sodom than it will be for them!

The writer of Hebrews captured the same theme in Hebrews 10. Some think this passage means that you can lose your salvation. The rest of the New Testament, and everything in the book of Hebrews before this, teaches the opposite; therefore, we cannot logically conclude that the New Testament is suddenly inventing a contradictory doctrine!

Jesus spoke of the different soils in which the Gospel can be planted. Only one of the soils produces the intended outcome: a plant that actually bears fruit, even though two others initially appeared to be headed in that direction! In the same way, Hebrews 10:26-31 is about those who hear the Gospel and “claim” to be a Christian, even though they have never repented of their loyalty to sin and have not actually turned their lives over to Jesus. With that in mind, the writer of Hebrews wrote,

26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-31)

Verses 28 and 29 draw on the book of Hebrews' consistent comparison between the lesser mediator, sacrifice, and covenant (Moses, animals, and the Mosaic Law) and the greater mediator, sacrifice, and covenant (Christ and the New Covenant). Like Jesus in Matthew 11, the writer of Hebrews says if there was no appeals process or mercy shown to a person who committed a capital offense under the lesser covenant made with a lesser mediator and sacrifice, how much more will wrath be shown to those who act as if they are Christians all while refusing to actually repent and surrender to the eternal spotless lamb of God who spilled His blood out all over the place for them! A great man didn't mediate the New Covenant, but the Godman. The New Covenant wasn't purchased through the death of a sheep, but through the penal substitutionary death of the eternal, righteous Son of God! Finally, the New Covenant isn't a promise of land, influence, and wealth that falls apart and fades away, but of eternal life that never does!

The point is that there could be no greater sign of repentance than the sign of the eternal God in a manger, the spotless lamb on the cross, an empty tomb with a tunic, and a risen Savior walking with His disciples, who then ascended into heaven! The Gospel is the most significant sign you can ever receive to repent and believe in Him!

Challenge:

To those who have never given their life to Christ,

38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

To those who have wandered away,

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. (Revelation 2:5)