

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD

TEXT: AMOS 4:1-13

1. Wednesday night at prayer meeting I told our members something that a pastor friend said after Hurricane Irene left town. He said, "I wish we preachers were as effective in warning and scaring sinners about hell as Mayor Bloomberg and the news reporters were in warning people about the hurricane."
2. People were terrified about the hurricane, but sadly they give little thought to spending eternity weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth in hell.
3. Amos 4:12 says, "Prepare to meet thy God." This warning was addressed to the nation Israel, but we can apply it to American in 2011 -- "Prepare to meet thy God, America!"
4. Furthermore, it is personal in its application. Each and every one of us needs to be ready to meet God.
5. My wife and I were traveling down south when we first heard reports about hurricane Irene. The reports coming over the radio were saying it would be the worst hurricane to hit New York in over 100 years.
6. My wife mentioned to me that this historic hurricane was coming right after Governor Cuomo passed his so-called "gay marriage bill."
7. Maybe they should have named the hurricane Cuomo instead of Irene!
8. Presidential candidate Michele Bachmann was in Florida recently and she said, "I don't know how much God has to do to get the attention of the politicians. We've had an earthquake; we've had a hurricane. He said, 'Are you going to start listening to me here?'"
9. She was criticized for those comments, but the fact is God does send earthquakes and hurricanes, and famine and drought, and pestilence and other catastrophes to get sinners to repent (Amos 4:6-12).
10. Regrettably, oftentimes sinners refuse to repent (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11).
11. Soon God will send great catastrophic judgments to this world -- far, far greater than hurricane Irene. The book of Revelation describes them in vivid detail in chapters 4 through 19.
12. And in Revelation 9:20, 21, and 16:8-11, we see that men will still refuse to repent.
13. The Bible describes impenitent sinners as stiffnecked and hardhearted.

I. WE NEED TO LISTEN TO GOD (4:1)

1. Over and over, the prophet Amos warned the people to hear God's word (4:1; cf. 3:1; 5:1).
2. The LIRR Far Rockaway train runs right behind my house. Around the corner is a crossing with a big crossing gate, a flashing light, and a warning sign. Furthermore, whenever the train approaches the crossing, the engineer blares the train's whistle so loudly it can be heard from a great distance.
3. It is this way by most railroad crossings.
4. But nevertheless, every now and then some one tries to cross the tracks and gets killed by the train.
5. Why? Because they ignore the warnings. They are not listening.
6. Many years ago the Grand Trunk Railroad Line offered to give \$2,500 to the person who would send in the three best words to be chosen by judges for railroad crossings.
7. The person who won the \$2,500 prize sent in these three words: "Stop. Look. Listen."
8. But those three words haven't benefited many people who have been killed on railroad crossings, because they didn't stop, because they didn't look, and because they didn't listen.
9. The LORD says in Amos 4:1, "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink."
10. They are compared to the kine (fat cows). They sat around and said, "Let us drink" (4:1).
11. I saw in the newspapers that most stores and businesses closed down during the hurricane, but many bars and liquor stores stayed open. I saw a picture of people waiting on a long line to buy alcohol.
12. We need to listen to God. God says in Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (cf. Pro. 23:29-35).
13. I read in the newspaper the other day about a policeman who raped a woman in Manhattan. His lawyer said he was drunk.
14. Many sex crimes occur because of drinking alcohol.
15. We need to listen to the Lord Jesus Christ, who says in Luke 13:3 and 5, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
16. Most Americans today -- even many professed Christians -- are not listening to God. They are not reading the Bible.
17. Researcher George Gallup has been doing surveys and polls for many years. Regarding a recent survey he said this, "Americans revere the

- Bible -- but, by and large, they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates."
18. Gallup's poll revealed that fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels.
 19. George Barna, the director of the Barna Research Group said, "Sixty percent of Americans can't name even five of the Ten Commandments...No wonder people break the Ten Commandments all the time. They don't know what they are...Increasingly, America is biblically illiterate."
 20. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."
 21. Albert Mohler, the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary wrote an article entitled, "The Scandal of Biblical Illiteracy: It's Our Problem."
 22. In this perceptive article, Dr. Mohler refers to a recent survey of graduating high school seniors which revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife!
 23. Dr. Mohler then says, "How can a generation be biblically shaped in its understanding of human sexuality when it believes Sodom and Gomorrah to be a married couple? No wonder Christians show a growing tendency to compromise on the issue of homosexuality."
 24. There is no doubt about it. America's acceptance of homosexuality will surely bring down the wrath of God.

II. WE NEED TO RESPOND WHEN GOD CHASTENS US

1. Israel was "hooked on sin" and so God would have to hook them in judgment (4:2b).
2. Many people today are hooked on alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. I am amazed at all the people today who are addicted to prescription drugs.
3. People are hooked on pornography and gambling and all sorts of destructive vices. Recently a congressman here in Queens had to resign in disgrace because he was hooked on sending dirty text messages.
4. Amos 4:2 says, "The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks."
5. God sent many warnings but in each case they ignored the warnings and continued in their sin. The repetition (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11) indicates their persistent opposition to God; their willful disobedience, and stiff-necked refusal to repent.

6. God sent them famine – "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities..." (4:6).
7. God withheld the rain for the three months before harvest time (4:7, 8).
8. In the Bible, drought always represents the judgment of God (cf. Deut. 11:16, 17; 28:15, 23, 24).
9. Elijah the prophet was praying according to the Word of God and the will of God, and that is how he was able to stand boldly before wicked King Ahab and say, "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1).
10. We often think we could never learn to pray like Elijah, but James 5:17 says, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months."
11. God smote Israel with "blasting and mildew" (Amos 4:9). Again, this was unmistakably God's judgment upon them, because Deuteronomy 28:22 says, "The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish."
12. Furthermore, God sent them the pestilence (4:10). In Matthew 24:7, our Lord said these would be the signs of His second coming: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."
13. The World Health Organization says there are now many new bacterial infections that are able to outsmart even the newest antibiotics.
14. The situation has reached a critical point. The WHO says, "Without a concerted effort, people could be dealing with the "nightmare scenario" of a worldwide spread of untreatable infections."
15. Federal health officials say that more than one million people here in the USA have HIV, but one in five are unaware they are infected.
16. Several people have died this year because of the new "brain-eating amoeba." This deadly amoeba infection is killing swimmers. You can keep an eye out for alligators, but it is impossible to watch out for these "brain-eating amoeba."
17. There has recently been a rapid spread of the deadly disease tuberculosis. Health officials are alarmed that TB is making a

- comeback. The increase in TB in the developed world has been attributed to HIV, immigration, and alcoholism.
18. There are more TB cases in the world today than ever before in history - 14 million. It is also a major cause of infertility in women.
 19. Some scientists believe a new flu epidemic may be imminent and could be triggered by bird flu.
 20. In addition to sending "pestilence," God slew their young men in war (4:10b).
 21. So many young men died that the putrid stink of the rotting corpses rose up into their nostrils. Yet they still would not repent (4:10c).
 22. When we think of Iraq, Afghanistan, and all of the other places our soldiers are dying we should consider Amos 4:10 says, "Your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."
 23. God's wrath was so severe that He compares it to the time He overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah (4:11). The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is frequently mentioned in the Bible as an example of how God deals with this terrible sin (cf. Gen. 18:20; 19:24, 25; Deut. 29:23, 24; II Peter 2:6; Jude 7).
 24. On April 18, 1906 a terrible earthquake hit San Francisco and the city was destroyed. The great preacher, Harry Ironside, was there at the time and wrote that he "was an eyewitness to its horrors. Not the least solemn thing noticed was the persistent efforts of the preachers of all denominations to quiet the fears of the populace by assuring them that *God* had no part in the calamitous events that had taken place. Natural causes explained everything! This the Christless were only too ready to believe; and thus were their partially awakened consciences lulled to rest and their ears closed against the voice of Him who through Amos said, 'I have overthrown some of you!'"
 25. Ironside warned people that the earthquake was sent from God, preaching throughout the city, using Amos 4:11, 12 as his text. Many sinners repented and souls were saved.
 26. That was over 100 years ago. San Francisco and NYC are far worse today than they were back then. But our message remains the same: "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12).

III. WE NEED TO BE READY TO MEET GOD (4:12)

1. J. Wilbur Chapman told the story of a teacher in a Chicago school who was trying to illustrate point, so he drew an eye on the

blackboard. It was so perfectly drawn, that the children in different parts of the room thought that the eye was looking straight at them. The children were becoming so nervous that the School Board insisted that the eye should be erased.

2. Can you imagine that? Being nervous over an eye drawn with a piece of chalk!
3. Second Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth."
4. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
5. The apostle John saw the Lord Jesus Christ on the isle of Patmos, and John wrote in Revelation 1:14, "His eyes were as a flame of fire."
6. Amos 4:12 says, "Prepare to meet thy God."
7. Later on, in the book of Revelation, John wrote in chapter 20 and verse number 12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."
8. I saw a card one day: "You may tie your shoes this morning, but the undertaker may untie them tonight. Prepare to meet thy God!"
9. In Daniel chapter 5, we read about King Belshazzar's big drinking party. He had a thousand of his friends with him and they were all drinking wine and praising the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.
10. But Daniel 5:5 and 6 says, "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."
11. None of the king's astrologers and soothsayers were able to interpret the writing. So they brought in Daniel the prophet, who gave the king the correct interpretation: "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."
12. Then King Belshazzar was killed by the Medes and the Persians. He was not prepared to meet God. The Johnstown Flood occurred on May 31, 1889.

13. I preached about it one night on the radio (WMCA) and a lady called up and spoke to my wife. She said she grew up in Johnstown, and when she was a child people talked about this great flood all the time.
14. After several days of extremely heavy rain, the dam broke, unleashing a torrent of 20 million tons of water (4.8 billion gallons). The flood killed over 2,200 people.
15. The saddest part of the story is that engineers warned residents about an impending disaster, but the people ignored the warnings.

CONCLUSION:

1. I have been to many funerals over the years. Some I preached, some I did not.
2. At many of the funerals, the deceased had no testimony of being a genuine, born again Christian, but nevertheless many friends and relatives consoled each other with foolish assurances that, "He is in heaven now."
3. The great evangelist D.L. Moody used to tell the story of the death of a wealthy unsaved plantation owner down south before the Civil War.
4. The man had an old slave who was a true Christian. When the rich man died, people said to his slave that his boss had gone to heaven.
5. The old slave shook his head and replied, "No, I'm afraid he's not gone up there." Someone said, "Why, what makes you say that, Ben?"
6. He answered, "Cause whenever he went up North, or went on a journey to the springs, he always talked about it for a long time; he packed his bags and got ready. But I never heard him talk about heaven; never saw him get ready to go there."
7. Amos 4:12 says, "Prepare to meet thy God."