

ARE YOU READY TO MEET GOD?

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Amos 4:12.

From this interesting chapter we learn that people in the days of Amos were like people today. They would not listen to God and do what He commanded them. God did a number of things to get the people of Israel to listen to Him and to repent of their sins:

1. God sent a famine.

God said: "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me" (Amos 4:6). In our country we would have called that depression. Poverty and want and great need caused many people throughout our nation to turn to God and begin to pray and to go to the house of the Lord. But when times of prosperity came, they turned away from God again. In these days of unequaled prosperity, sin, wickedness and crime surpass anything our nation has ever experienced.

2. God sent a drought.

He said: "And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered" (Amos 4:7). God caused the crops to dry up and the ground to become parched, dry and dusty, and then He added: "yet have ye not returned unto me."

3. God sent pestilence.

He said: "I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt" (Amos 4:10). This was a chastisement from God, but the people did not repent and return to God.

4. God sent war.

"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. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord" (Amos 4:10-11). God has already been using various drastic means in order to get our nation to repent of its sins. If our country stubbornly refuses to repent, it may be necessary for God to permit the use of atomic weapons against us as a last drastic means to get us to turn from our sinful ways. May God grant that it may not be necessary for Him to do so!

5. God warned them of an impending judgment.

He told them that they must meet God, and then exhorted them: "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). The word "prepare" is used in every realm of life. We are told that, in the military realm, one of the greatest weapons of defense is to be prepared. The United States learned the folly of being unprepared, when tragedy struck on December 7, 1941. Knowing the drinking habits of many of the personnel in the armed forces of the United States on weekends, the Japanese sent their planes to bomb Pearl Harbor. Eight

of the nine battleships of the United States Pacific Fleet were moored at their berths, and such losses were inflicted that it was classified as a major disaster. Two thousand six hundred and thirty-eight officers and men were killed and nine hundred and forty-six were wounded. Before the attack, an army private operating a listening device reported approaching planes. His warning was ignored and holocaust reigned, finding our country unprepared.

Our leaders have never forgotten this unpreparedness and have been determined that never again will our nation be found unprepared in the event of an attack by a foreign power. A very high percentage of the budget of the United States for years has gone into defense. Preparedness is the keynote.

All of our lives we have heard educators say that the way to prepare for life is to get an education. Many have been governed accordingly and have earned an education, but multitudes have not considered it important to get an education.

In the spiritual realm there is no more important admonition than the one which was recorded in our text. Eight hundred years before Christ was born, Amos received his message from the Eternal God, and it has resounded through the centuries: "Prepare to meet thy God."

There is nothing mysterious about these five words. Their meaning is seen as clearly as a path of tar across a field of snow, and is as easily understandable as the moonlight in the sky is seeable on a clear night. Although these words are simple and plain, they are seemingly misunderstood sometimes. People prepare for almost everything except death and their inevitable meeting with God. They get ready for athletic contests. They get ready to go to college. They get ready for political elections. They get ready to marry. They get ready for vacation trips. They get ready to go into business. They get ready to have a "nest egg" for the rainy day of old age. They get ready for everything except the most important thing in life and in death -- meeting God. They make the same mistake that the world's greatest conqueror, Alexander the Great, made and then recorded in his last writings: "I have given time and thought to everything but death, and that is the most important thing that I could have considered." When asked what was the most important thought that ever occupied his mind, Daniel Webster replied: "The most important thought that ever occupied my mind was that of my individual responsibility to God." Charles Haddon Spurgeon, when lecturing the students in his Pastor's College, gave a bit of timely advice in the exhortation: "Young men, do not let any sentiment prevent you from warning men to prepare for death."

I. Why Should You Prepare To Meet God?

1. You will meet God.

Every person who knows and believes the Word of God knows that the time will come when a meeting with God is inevitable.

There are many things that you can refrain from doing. You can refuse to respect the ministers of Christ, to attend church services, to read the Bible, to repent of sin, to believe on Christ, and to serve the Lord, but you cannot refuse to meet God. You

can stay away from church services, but you cannot dodge God. You can deceive yourself and others, but you cannot deceive God.

No matter who, what or where you are, some day and somewhere you will meet God. You may say: "I don't like the idea." That doesn't enter into it. You may say: "I don't want to meet God." Your wants do not enter into it either. You may say: "I don't see why it should be necessary." It doesn't make any difference whether you can understand why it is necessary or not, God says that it is going to happen.

Nothing is any more certain than death. Our cemeteries bear testimony to the fact that death is certain. The Word of God declares the fact that death is inevitable and inescapable. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Death is certain, God says that after death there is to be a judgment. Note that this is an appointment that you do not have anything to do with making, but an appointment that you must and will keep. God has made that appointment for you, and He has made it for all others.

You will meet God. In that matter He does not consult your will. The call of death is one that you will hear and obey. When the summons comes to you, it will not be possible to postpone the meeting. You may call in the most accomplished physician and surgeon, but they cannot postpone for a single hour the execution of God's death-warrant. The time will come when the healthiest of us must be smitten down in death. Whether you will or not, there will not be any evasion of that meeting with God at the judgment.

It is a solemn thing to die, but it will be even more solemn to meet God. You will meet Him Who created you by His power, Who loved you before the foundation of the world, Who gave His son for you, Who throughout your life has tried hard to win and to save you, and Whose love has not let you go in spite of your repeated rejections. You will meet God, your Creator Whose rights you have ignored, and your Preserver to Whom you have not rendered any kind of a recompense.

2. Your lost condition demands it.

By natural birth you are not prepared to meet God. By nature you are disobedient to God and sinful. All the scriptures which represent man as destitute of spiritual life, as hostile to God, as dead in sin, as having a heart which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," intimate that man in his natural state is not prepared to meet God. Without regeneration a sinner could not enjoy heaven any more than a blind man could enjoy the beauties of a flower garden, or a deaf man could enjoy the music of an orchestra, or a sick man could enjoy a sumptuous banquet.

3. You are commanded to do so.

With the utmost clearness and solemnity God has commanded you to prepare to meet Him. Have you obeyed God's command? The highest wisdom under heaven is in being obedient to Him. Whatever God commands us to do is right, safe and best for us.

Since He requires us to "prepare to meet thy God", it is necessary that we do what He has commanded. Our first business in life is to prepare to meet God. We must not allow anything to interfere with or prevent that. It is possible for us to get ready to meet God.

4. You may have to meet God soon.

You do not know when you are going to depart this life, but you do know that your time here is short and uncertain, and you may be called to meet God soon. The time, place and manner in which you will die are hidden from you, but you know that you will die. "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." You may live for years, but you may be called to meet God soon. What about the preparation? Have you made any? Are you ready to meet God?

5. You will be happy when you do.

Get ready to meet God in order to be happy in this life. Augustine said, "We are restless, Lord, till we rest in Thee." You can never experience real enjoyment in life as long as you are in the wrong relationship with God. Satan circulates the falsehood, "You can't have a good time and be a Christian." The truth is the very opposite. Prepare to meet God because of the joy it will give you while you are here. If you are prepared, it will be such a joy to meet God. It will be your best and most joyous experience.

II. How Shall You Prepare To Meet God?

1. Recognize that you are not prepared.

Be frank and honest enough to acknowledge that you are not in the proper relationship with God.

2. Realize that you cannot save yourself.

In your lost condition, you are like a man in a deep well, who does not have any hope of getting out without help from the outside.

3. Repent of your sins.

If you are going to get ready to meet God, you must repent of your sins, that is recognize them, be sorry for them, acknowledge them, forsake them and turn your back on them. Remember that Christ said: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (luke 13:3). So, it is either repent or perish.

4. Receive Christ as your Saviour.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). No one ever really trusted Jesus Christ for salvation who did not get it. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). Put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

III. When Should You Prepare To Meet God?

There is but one correct answer to this question and that is "NOW". "Now is the accepted time." Now! Not tomorrow, but today. Not when you have a more convenient season, but now. Cotton said, "Tomorrow is a period nowhere to be found -- unless in the fool's calendar. Wisdom disclaims the word, nor holds society with those who own it." Light rejected may become darkness. I plead with you to cease making excuses.

"Life is the season God has given
To fly from hell and rise to heaven;
That day of grace fleets fast away,
And none its rapid course can stay."

In the grave there is no place to repent or to believe. I do not want you to fear death; I want you to be prepared for death. Get ready to meet God now, and let Him save both your soul and your life. God is merciful, but His Spirit will not always strive with you. Delay in making this preparation will rob you of so many blessings. The Lord will never come to you. Now is God's time, the right and the best time, and might be the only time for you. Receive Christ now.