

It is great to have a good friendship with God, to know He is our special God, and more importantly that He thinks we are special. It can make us feel so wonderful and special. To know God and to know that he knows us is superb!

And in the Bible, we can find passages which support that. Things like John 15:14, where Jesus says *"You are my friends..."* And 1 Peter 2:9-10 *"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people..."*

There are some passages like that in Amos. Speaking to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob he says 3:2 *"You only have I known, of all the families of the earth;"*

And the people loved hearing these soft, caring, gentle words of God.

It made them feel good inside. It comforted the pains of life. It cushioned the lining of their leather thongs, so that life's walk was more bearable. and they felt that as long as they kept up certain things, then they could live life the way they wanted, enjoying the blessings which flowed from God and all was sweet.

Yet as we heard from chapters 1 and 2, the Lord had heard the cries of the less fortunate. He had heard the cries of the oppressed in the nations around them, and he had heard the cries of the oppressed in their own land.

Now the Lord was calling them to account for the way they lived in the land full of blessings. For not all was as nice as they thought.

In chapter 4 we have seven scenes of life in the land of God's people.

[i] In verse 1, family life is not as God had directed. Instead, the wives are merciless to the poor and needy, and abusive to their husbands, treating them like slaves.

[ii] In verse 4, religious life is not as God had directed, even though they were very fussy about offering what they were supposed to, but God had specifically order that it be done in Jerusalem, and they had set up their own

temples, which did not please God. Instead of approaching God and seeking his presence with them in the way he had stated was the only valid way, they did it in their own ways, thinking it was okay.

[iii] In verse 6, in the land of milk and honey, God deprived them of food, so there was hunger and no daily bread.

[iv] In verses 7-8, also in the land flowing with milk and honey, God withheld the rain, so people wandered from town to town seeking water.

[v] In verse 9, in this paradise on earth, God destroyed their crops by disease and pests.

[vi] In verse 10, in their land of rest, God sent diseases and armies to kill lots of people.

And [vii] in verse 11, massive disasters came.

Why? It appeared as if the people were being very religious. Why was God treating his beloved, cared for and chosen people so badly?

The answer is there in the passages as well. There is a constant repetition at the end of each scene: *"yet you did not return to me, says the Lord."*

Earlier in their history, God had warned about this. In Leviticus it is very clearly laid out in chapter 26 that if God's people do not obey his word, then he will bring on a progressively worse punishment. and if they refuse to turn back to God and obey him, then he will eventually call up a nation nearby to wipe them out and remove them from the land he gave them.

Amos understood this. He saw the state of the people and said that God was calling on them to repent and turn back, yet they refused.

So he said that God would save them, but only like someone rescues the bone of the leg of lamb after a Sunday roast has eaten the meat. There will not be much left at all.

And Amos 5 is a chapter of weeping and crying

Amos

3-5

Loved Yet Accountable

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for God's people, for the Day of the Lord's judgement was coming.

If they thought things were bad, then they haven't seen anything like what was coming. No real survivors.

The sad news is that this did occur in history. God's people in the northern state of Israel, just as prophesied by Amos, did get wiped out. There was no human way possible to get them all together again.

But that was not all so long ago, was it? Surely God is not like that now! Not our God who is our friend and loves us so much!

Surely he has not said anything like that for us, has he?

In the beginning of Romans, the Apostle Paul has set out a similar thing to these chapters of Amos. Instead of God sending plagues and wars and famines on his people, his anger at our turning away from him is seen in giving us over to the passions that rage within. The end of chapter one is seen in our news broadcasts day after day. Our women's magazines are full of the things they describe. Our schools are no less spared from much of it. Our society is full of every kind of wickedness. Life is like that.

But in Romans 2, the apostle Paul says that God is letting us experience all this because he is kind, forbearing and patient, waiting for us to turn back to him and repent.

It is as if he has withdrawn his hand of blessing and mercy and letting us stew in our own problems, waiting for us to realise that we do need him and call out for help.

But he also says that there is a limit to his patience. A day of judgment is coming when Jesus will return to judge the world.

People today react exactly as they did with Amos. Some hear and respond, but many will mock and react against it. They will claim it's old stuff and not relevant. They will question the authenticity of it. They will say it has been

replaced.

But I believe it. I believe the Bible has come from God. As Amos 3:7-8 says "*Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?*"