

Prepare to Meet Your God

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A king sent for his jester one day and presented him with a stick. The king said, "Take this stick and keep it until you find a bigger fool than yourself."

Sometime later, the king got sick and was lying on his deathbed and the king again sent for his jester.

He said. "I am going away."

The Jester said "Where?" "To another country" replied the king.

The Jester said "What provision has your majesty made for this journey and for living in the country whither thou goest?"

The king replied "None".

But before the jester could say anything further, the king asked him if he was able to find someone more foolish than himself, and the palace jester replied, "Yes, my king;" and, handing the scepter to the king, he said, "You are that man!"

My text is Amos 4:12 which says **"Prepare to meet your God, O Israel."** By way of background, Amos lived in a small town called Tekoa, some ten miles south of Jerusalem.

Back in those days, the Holy Land had split or up or had been divided into two separate countries. Judah in the south in the town of Tekoa was where Amos lived. The great temple was located in the capital city Jerusalem.

And to the north, was the nation of Israel whose capital city was Samaria. And just over the border in the little town of Bethel was a religious shrine of a "golden calf". Politically speaking, it was set up to keep people from traveling down to Jerusalem to

worship the one true God. The king was afraid the people would switch allegiances and revolt against him.

In those dark days were two countries and two kings. There was great temple in the southern kingdom and a religious shrine of a false god in the north.

Amos who was an unusual person in the sense that he a dual occupation of sheep herder and a sycamore and fig tree farmer. His call to be a prophet came unexpectedly when the voice of the Lord said **"Go and prophesy to my people Israel"**

You see, Amos had no theological training nor was he a part of the school of the prophets. He was a simple shepherd who wore an old faded brown tunic and carried a shepherd's stick. If you saw him, he was not dressed like your typical holy man of God. Nor did he have the refinements of a priest or the flowing robes of the Pharisees. He was an outdoors type who was uniquely called.

After Amos received the message from the Lord, he walked some 22 miles to the religious shrine in the north. With a staff in his hand, he showed up unannounced and said, **"Thus says the Lord...** and spoke of sin and judgment. Let me give you a sample of his words.

⁶ You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Israel.⁷ Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile;

^{6:8} The Sovereign Lord has sworn by himself—that I will deliver up the city and everything in it."

^{6:11} For the Lord has given the command, and he will smash the great house into pieces and the small houses into bits.

7:7“The high places of Israel will be destroyed and the sanctuary of Bethel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of the king.”

And as you could expect, Amos' preaching did not go over very well. First, he was ridiculed, then threatened by the chief priest of the Golden Calf shrine and told to go home. Amos did leave; however, he left written copies of his prophecies with the people.

Today, I would like to focus on one Amos 4:12 which says **Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.**” Not only was a message for Israel, but it is a message for everyone.

“Prepare to Meet Your God” is a sober warning because there will be a day when we will meet God face to face and we need to be prepared.

In the sports world, a professional boxer prepares and trains long and hard before he steps into the ring. It is the same principle with us. Someday all of us will stand before the Lord and give an account and the need to be prepared would be an understatement.

Although I have given my life to Christ and followed the Lord for many years, I don't take this lightly. This is an appointment we can't avoid and hopefully we will be ready.

There was an interesting article that was published some time ago in the Prairie Overcomer magazine. This one little girl said, “Mother, our Sunday school teacher told us that this world is a place where God lets us live awhile, that we may prepare for a better world”.

She continued, “But mother, I do not see anyone preparing. I see you preparing to go into the country and Aunt Eliza preparing to come here. But I do not see anyone preparing to go

there. Why don't they try to get ready?" I wonder what the mother's response was.

To prepare to meet our God, we need to take the time to confess. To examine our ways. To fix any wrongs, to forgive and accept forgiveness.

To see if we can be more devout in our faith, to better support the church and do what we can to advance the gospel whether it be of our time, our prayers, presence, gifts, service and our witness.

A number of years ago when I was stationed at Ft. Devens, MA and I had a dream about a high school star athlete in my home town of Quincy, MA where I grew up. The distance between Quincy and Ft Devens was about 50 miles.

Normally, my dreams are disjointed and make no sense. But this one was different. It was clear and I saw this athlete that I went to school with and the message was Amos 4:12, ***Prepare to Meet Your God***. When I woke up, I began to wonder if I would ever see him or talk with him again.

A couple of years passed, and one weekend, I drove from Ft. Devens to Quincy and happened to see that same athlete at an outdoor basketball court.

I stopped the car and I didn't want to get out, but I did. I was not sure what to say, but knew this was a God given opportunity. I went up to him, reintroduced myself and we made some small talk. Together we shot a couple of baskets. Afterwards, I told him how I received Jesus in my heart.

Then I told him about the dream and the message, "**Prepare to meet your God**". Our conversation went better than expected. He

was quiet and reflective and showed no reaction. We said our goodbyes and left.

About five years ago, I met another high school classmate and asked if he had seen this star athlete. He told me he had passed away. Cause of death was unknown, but he did have a reputation for hard living and I hope he took Amos 4:12 to heart.

Isaiah 55:6 says **Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near.** As people of God, let us be on the safe side. Let's be committed to improve our relationship with the Lord. Have those daily devotions. Get to know other parts of the Bible.

In his book, *A Dangerous Grace*, author Charles Colson wrote about a death row inmate by the name of John Irving who killed a grocery store clerk and was now at the Mississippi's Parchman Prison.

When Colson went in to visit the prisoners on death row, he noticed that most of them stayed on their bunks, wrapped in a blanket staring blankly at the small black and white TV, just killing time.

But John was different. He sat on his bunk reading and what he did was study for the priesthood. Though he was allowed out of his cell one hour each day for personal hygiene and some exercise, the rest of the time he was in his cell and studied.

When Colson asked if he would like a TV if he could arrange it. But John said, "Thanks, but no thanks. You can waste an awful lot of time with those things." John had determined not to waste the one commodity he had to give to the Lord and that was his time. Though he would never get out, he made great preparation to meet his maker.

A number of people in the world believe in reincarnation, but Hebrews 9:27 says **Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.**

One of my former neighbors and I used to have these discussions about the afterlife. When he was diagnosed with cancer and just before he died, he told me he was curious to meet God and his attitude was "I will find out when I get there." Sad to say there was no interest in cultivating a personal relationship.

Knowing that we have this appointment with God, let's do something positive with our relationship with God and be a blessing to others.

Let me close. Amos 4:12 tells Israel and all of us: **Prepare to meet your God.** Today, I would encourage all of us to be intentional about our devotions. Make a schedule. Talk to the Lord regularly along with Bible readings. Make peace with your maker.

The foolish king made no provisions for his journey. He did not even know where he was going. Be sure of your destination. Give your heart over to Jesus and walk and talk with him daily through Bible reading and prayer. Practice the presence of God as we discussed last week. Tomorrow is not promised to us.

May God bless us in our walk with him this week.