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MID-ATLANTIC BIBLE SCHOOL - 1987

AMOS - THE HERDSMAN FROM TEKOA

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Study #1: An introduction to Amos

Good morning brethren and sisters.

We'd like to start our first session this morning, with a little detail on the background of the times of Amos. As we mentioned briefly on Saturday evening, it's not a book of the bible that's received a great deal of attention from us in any respects, more's the pity as I found out myself when I endeavoured to make some kind of a detailed study of that remarkable book, but we're hoping that we're going to learn something about that book during the course of this week. It is, of course, as with most books of the bible, very, very important to have some idea of the background to the book, and the setting in which the prophet Amos ministered. So we're going to deal with this fairly briefly because we have so much else that we'd like to talk to you about, in regard to Amos.

So far as the background of the times of Amos were concerned, the kingdom of Israel in the north, and the kingdom of Judah in the south, were really living in times of comparative peace and well being and prosperity and wealth. From all outward appearances it was a very easy going and prosperous time. Jeroboam II in the north had gained major victories over the Syrians and had regained a lot of territories that had been earlier lost from Hamath in the north right down to the Dead Sea in the south. Similarly Uzziah who was reigning over Judah at this time, had experienced similar territorial gains; he had conquered the Edomites and the Philistines and had crushed the power of the Ammonites. So therefore, you've got a situation in the northern part of the land with the ten tribes in the southern part of the kingdom with Judah and Benjamin, a situation where both kingdoms were experiencing what the world would call 'good times' and enjoying what the world would also call 'the good life'. With all of this, they felt a security which really laid the foundation for the development of the disintegration of both nations. Now there's something to be learnt from that, surely! both kingdoms felt very very safe and secure from external danger and, therefore, spiritually speaking they went to sleep. It really provided in the days of Amos a Laodicean situation, and our brief words so far, really indicate a situation both in the north and the south, where it seemed as though nothing really could go wrong. They had regained territories, they were prosperous, they were well off, they could take their ease. The Laodicean situation was that they said, 'we are rich and increased it goods and in need of nothing', and Christ told that ecclesia, 'that thou knowest not that thou art wretched

and miserable and poor and blind and naked'. You know, b&s, the real problem at Laodicea was not that they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, the real problem was that they didn't know and an even worse problem was that they didn't want to know. The situation in the days of Amos was identical, and I'm sure that we're all aware of the fact, that it is a biblical fact, that throughout the ages, the people of Almighty God, both Jew and Gentile, whatever they've been, had stood more firmly and more resolutely in defence of what is right in the eyes of God, when they have been under attack, and when they've had to struggle for the survival of the truth.

Now that, of course, is a very, very real situation. We have to be aware ourselves of the times in which we're living, of the dangers that confront the body of Christ, as they were the dangers that confronted the kingdoms in both the north and the south in the days of Amos. So therefore, I believe, that if we are prepared to make a study of the book of Amos, we'll find that it has a remarkable relationship to our own times, because you see, God sent His prophet Amos to warn the people particularly in the north, but He also mentions the south, as we hope to see, to warn them of impending judgment and that it was necessary for the people to be prepared for God to intervene in their affairs; that the times of ease and luxury and well being were soon to go, and in that regard the people should be ready for what would follow. So therefore, in the days of Amos, the brethren had become so indifferent to the truth, and indifferent to their loyalty to their God, that the truth had really died within them; and instead of manifesting the qualities of loyalty and zeal, dedication, spiritual development, self-sacrificing for one another, they had really become dominated by the very opposite characteristics; pride, selfishness, and an incredible degree of cold indifference to the demands that their God made upon them. It's difficult to comprehend but it's there in the book of Amos.

So then, is it any wonder that Amos found himself addressing a people who did not respond to his message, because the truth meant little or nothing to them in their heart of hearts. Therefore, the great danger and the great crisis facing Amos, was that while the people of Samaria were facing spiritual and national extinction, they had neither the willingness nor the spiritual abilities or discernment, to be able to respond to His message. There is a grave warning again for us today, and we must be aware of the signs of the times. We must be aware of the signs of the times; we must be aware of the significance of the times in which we live, as God's Word tells us in every book of the bible. We must be aware of the fact that the Lord's coming is near and that we must be a people preparing to meet our Lord. But these people were unable to do that! and that, of course, was a catastrophic situation, and we do not want to find that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes; we find that the message of men such as Amos and all the other faithful men of God who down through the ages, were the instruments by which God's Word has come down to us today, that they had, at the time of the end, been largely ignored or treated with a little casual indifference that will not have us quite prepared, as we should be, for the Lord's coming. As the people of Amos were not prepared for the time of judgment, when the Assyrian nation, known for being the most merciless and ruthless of all the nations of the ancient world, when they swept down upon that northern kingdom of Samaria and decimated them and destroyed them, and yet they

had had ample warning of what was to happen, and it was only their fault and nobody else's that they were not ready when God came to intervene amongst His people.

So therefore, it will be apparent from these few basic words, that Amos has a special and urgent message for our times. Unlike, of course, Israel of old, we must not ignore that basic message, because it is important that we listen to the voice of all God's prophets. We are not without sound advice upon this question within the pages of scripture. For example, consider these thoughts for a moment! Proverbs 4 and verse 13 tells us, 'Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go. For she is thy life'. That's how important it is! 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 15, 'Hold fast that which is good'; 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 15, 'Stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught'; 1 Timothy 6 verse 12, 'Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called'; 2 Timothy 1 verse 13, 'Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou has heard'; Hebrews 6 verse 18, 'Lay hold on the hope that is set before us'. And from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, two brief but dynamic messages, the first from Revelation 3 and verse 11, and 2 verse 25, when He said, 'Hold fast that which thou hast, hold fast till I come; and secondly, in Revelation 2 verse 7, 'He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias'. Now those messages come to us from the book of Proverbs, the two epistles of Thessalonians, the two epistles of Timothy, Hebrews and from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and that is the type of message that Amos was striving to get across to the people of his day, that he might engender in them some renewal of dedication to their God; some re-enlightenment concerning the fundamental principles of the truth which should have been directing their lives, and so therefore, his intention was not to condemn the people out of hand in the sense of simply being a prophet of doom, as the expression is sometimes used, but rather to expend himself, as did Paul in the service of the ecclesias in his day, as did the Lord Jesus Christ Himself above all other men. They were prepared to expend themselves that the people of God might be enlightened concerning the significance of the times in which they lived and that they might be prepared in their hearts and their minds for those things that were to come.

Now when we come to a brief remark concerning the chronological setting for the ministry of Amos, it becomes really very, very interesting. It is safe to say that from the revolt which divided the kingdom into two, until the disintegration of the northern kingdom, was probably roundabout 210 years. Now we are aware of the fact that they are those who claim that this would have been probably a period of 240 to 250 years, but an examination of the kings and the chronology that we have for that period doesn't really sustain that view very, very well. We mention this only to give an indication of the incredible number of major events which took place during this relatively short space of time, that is biblically speaking, a time of about 200 to 210 perhaps 220 years, nearer 210 years, we believe.

Now let's just recap to the position that brings us to the ministry of Amos.

1. The death of Solomon took place about BC. 937 and some 6 years later, with Rehoboam on the throne, Jeroboam led the revolt which resulted in the division of the

kingdom, and that would therefore have been around BC.931.

2. Now in view of the fact that Jeroboam had already been plotting before the death of Solomon, so that Solomon you may remember, sought to take his life, and that caused him to flee into Egypt where he remained until the death of Solomon.

3. From that information in scripture, it is evident that those 6 years which were so vital, those 6 years would have been years of chaos and turbulence. That's part of the background of coming to the days of Amos, when by then, things had been sorted out and things were relatively calm and easy.

4. Now we find also chronologically speaking, that some 73 years after the revolt, there began the ministry of Elijah which was followed by Elisha, and that covered a total period of about 63 to 65 years. The ministry of Elisha then, would have concluded about 136 years after the revolt; again that's not a very long time in biblical terms. So we've got good reason to believe that Amos came on the scene only about 30 years after the conclusion of Elisha's ministry; during that period as Amos himself tells us Jeroboam II reigned in Samaria, and Uzziah was contemporary with him in the south in Jerusalem.

5. So, therefore, we would date the ministry of Amos at between 765-755 BC. Now all of that is basically important in itself, in coming to the introduction to the prophecy of Amos. But it is even more important in the detail that we have briefly set before you in regard to this chronological setting of the book of Amos.

I'll tell you why! In view of the fact, that it is almost universally recognized that the disintegration of the northern kingdom with whom Amos was mainly concerned, took place in the year 721 BC. it means the northern kingdom had only approximately another 34 years to survive after the ministry of Amos. Now that to me, makes that book very, very dramatic. That detail gives the whole book of Amos a flavour to me, of great urgency. It establishes a very grave situation within the nation, because God has now sent the prophet Amos to His people in the northern kingdom and in effect, without mentioning any time, He's giving them 34 years to completely rehabilitate themselves spiritually. To turn away from their wrong ways, to seek their God in spirit and in truth, to raise themselves up in the truth, and become a nation of worshippers of the one true God. So it is no wonder, that the message of Amos went forth with such urgency, when there was so little time left, for the northern kingdom to become rededicated to their God and to begin to walk in His ways and to honour Him as God wanted them to do! Of course, as far as we ourselves are concerned, we can see a parallel, can't we? We've already mentioned the fact that in the days of Amos, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom were both living in a kind of Laodicean state, where they were well pleased with themselves, they were well satisfied with their situation and they could see no need to listen to such a message of urgency as came to them from the mouth of the prophet Amos.

We ourselves today, are living in a time when really outside the meeting places in the

world about us, there is relative peace. We know there is moral chaos, there is political disorder all over the world, but as far as our daily lives are concerned, we're not greatly troubled are we? any of us? Whether we're here or in Australia or Great Britain, wherever we might be, we have a period of relative peace and calm. We haven't got the government screaming around our shoulders that they're going to call everyone up for military service, there is not an impending danger of war that would affect the whole country wherever we might live. We live in relatively easy times as far as that is concerned and it's a time when it could be a time of danger! We might remember the principle set forth by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 3 so far as the world is concerned, when he stated, 'When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them'. That, of course, is precisely what happened to the northern kingdom of Samaria, and the question for us is, 'will the Lord's coming take us by surprise? will it find us unprepared in the same way as were the people of that northern kingdom, when the Assyrians swept down upon them? They had had ample warning, they knew exactly what was going to happen, God had left them in no doubt as to what His intention was! and the fact that the people were unprepared, was their own fault entirely and could never ever be laid, any blame at the feet of Almighty God.

So therefore, the background to the times of Amos were really most turbulent! and let us try and understand what it must have been like for the northern kingdom, who had experienced the dubious honour of having 6 kings in the space of merely 35 or 36 years! That gives us some idea of the turbulence of the times! 6 kings in the space of 35 to 36 years in the northern kingdom so the ministry of Amos was preceded, so far as the northern kingdom was concerned, by a very stormy and tempestuous times; but now, as Amos was sent forth by Almighty God to warn of judgments to come, because of the ease that they were taking, because of the victories that they had achieved, because of the self satisfaction that they felt, they were unprepared for a message such as delivered to them by God's prophet Amos. Why? because now they were at peace, they were prosperous, they had overcome their enemies. Who wanted to hear a message such as that presented by Amos, a message which indicated that they were in need of being roused up? and a devastating judgment was to come from Almighty God on high! But who wanted to hear that in the days of Amos? in view of the opulent and easy and prosperous and peaceful days that they had finally achieved after a stormy and tumultuous period that both kingdoms had past through. Of course, in their unwillingness to hear the message of God's prophet, therein lay their passport to utter ruination.

So then, we come briefly to the name of the prophet, which is really very interesting, when we're able to observe him as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. The name 'AMOS' is derived from the Hebrew word 'amas' (5986+6006) which means 'to load or to impose a burden'. You'll find that this root word 'amas' occurs in such passages as Zechariah 12 verse 3 which says, 'In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people' and the word 'burdensome' there is the word 'amas'; you'll also find that it occurs in Isaiah 46 verse 1 where it is rendered as 'heavy laden', and in the same chapter in verse 3 where it is rendered 'borne' as though carrying something. So therefore, the

name 'Amos' signifies one who bares the burden and we can simplify that by saying that it signifies 'the burden-bearer' a remarkable word with a remarkable meaning, the burden-bearer, and in that respect Amos represented a type of Christ.

The suffering servant of Almighty God going forth preaching the Word of salvation, and the dominant theme of the book of Amos, as we hope to show shortly, are the words, 'SEEK YAHWEH AND LIVE'. That expression which occurs either in itself or like it 3 times in the book, is really the dominant thought behind every chapter in the book of Amos. SEEK YAHWEH AND LIVE, and when you come to think of it, it was a fairly simple, straight forward message, wasn't it? Seek Almighty God, the God of Israel and you will live, and the alternative was don't seek Him and die! So therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ came forth with this same message preaching the Word of salvation, whilst at the same time as we'll all recall, warning of judgment to come, first of all, in AD.70 and then, of course, at His second coming. But there's another way in which the name 'Amos' may be quite clearly understood, in its meaning of 'burdensome'; being burdensome, and that meaning would also represent the prophet as a type of Christ but in a different respect; because Isaiah spoke of the coming of Christ and said that He would prove to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the people of Israel in Isaiah chapter 8 verse 14, the prophet makes mention of that, and so therefore, that was the case, was it not? the nation at large didn't want to receive Jesus of Nazareth as their Saviour and their Messiah. What they were interested in was some kind of a knight in shining armour who would ride up with a sword in his hand, lead them to battle against the Romans, rid the land of the Romans and re-establish the throne of David and re-establish the kingdom of Israel. That's what they were interested in! They did not discern that the Lord Jesus Christ brought the message of salvation, which required first and foremost, a change in the hearts of the people. That His message was one of submission to God, acceptance of the ways of God, the humbling of self before God, that the Word of God might take root in the hearts of the people, and change them and transform them and build their characters after a godly fashion, as required in the scriptures of truth. They didn't want to know that and they didn't want that, and that is why the nation did not receive Him. He became to the nation, by and large, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. In other words, He became a burden which the people could not or would not bear, so therefore, as Isaiah in effect put it, 'they stumbled at the burden'. This is exactly what happened in the days of Amos as well, they stumbled at the burden which Amos endeavoured to place upon them; a burden which they did not want, they rather preferred to break the yoke that their God would have placed upon them to guide them into the right way and in the right spirit. They did not want to become encumbered with the demands which their God made upon them, and so therefore, in a typical sense, Amos would carry their burdens in that he would lead them to Almighty God, or else he would prove to be a burden, which they would not be prepared to be loaded with and therefore, they would reject him. He could have done one or the other, the tragedy is that the second instance is what happened!

Now with those few thoughts in view for this morning, we'd like to show you, a brief outline on our transparency of a telescopic overall view of the book of Amos. Now we

don't want you to be worried about trying to write this down, because you won't have the time for one thing, for another thing, we have prepared these for you which have been printed off very kindly by your committee, and there will be one available for all of you after the end of our session this morning. I understand there are a pile of them near the back of the hall there, and there's another pile here on the edge of the table, and we would ask everyone to avail themselves of one of them, so that you've got it before you, during the course of the week; you may even be moved to check it all out, make sure that you think it's all right, and you've also got the basis for marking in your bibles if you so desire, an outline of the book of Amos, which is always very helpful when you come to the book of the bible, to have an overall view of what it's all about. Now first of all we've going to show you a transparency that will give us the main headings.

The main thing we want to do with this one, in a moment we're going to make this much smaller in print, so you'll be able to see it much more readily is, first of all, to show the various parts of the book.

PART I - takes us from chapter 1 to chapter 2. The certainty of approaching divine judgments upon Gentiles and upon Judah and Israel.

PART II - takes us from chapters 3 to 6. Three messages detailing the sins of Israel, and warning that judgment upon them is eminent.

Part III - we have a series of 5 visions that take us from chapter 7 down to chapter 9 verse 10.

Part IV - finally, part IV, which is the epilogue, which is the prophetic picture of the Messianic kingdom to come.

We find that the theme of the book, SEEK YAHWEH AND LIVE, is found in chapter 5 verse 4, verse 6 and verse 14.

Now we're going to have a look at these in a little closer detail.

PART I, the certainty of approaching divine judgments upon the Gentiles and upon Judah and Israel. We first of all, have the introduction of the book, with a promise of coming judgment, in very, very dramatic fashion in verse 2. We then have a section on judgment to come upon Syria, the Philistines, the Phoenicians, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah and finally Israel. So Judah and Israel are mentioned in this series of judgments that are to come. From that we note, that 6 Gentile nations are listed, the number which symbolizes the flesh, but together with Judah and Israel the total number of nations becomes 8, and 8 is the biblical number symbolizing the 'cutting off of flesh'.

Then in PART II, we have three messages detailing the sins of Israel and warning that judgment is to come! That is in chapter 3 through to chapter 6. The first message is divided into 3 parts: judgment will come, it's going to come and it's going to be the work

of Almighty God because His family had turned from His ways. Then, Amos justifies his appearance as a prophet and a teacher. Then he shows the unrighteousness of Samaria and the certainty that the sentence will be fulfilled. The second message describes the dominance of the kine of Bashan, Samaria's women of that time; secondly, ungodly worship in Israel, God's chastisements have proven ineffective because He had endeavoured to chastise the nation and lead them back to a right way. The third message takes us from chapter 5 to 6. 'Seek Yahweh and live', in which it is pointed out that lack of morality leads to disaster. There will be judgment upon Israel whose worship is really a mockery in the days of Amos. Samaria's lack of spiritual perception is in the next part of this third message. Then Yahweh's oath is unbreakable therefore, judgment will be inevitable. And then finally in part II, Israel's alleged strength will not save them, a very, very interesting part of the third message.

In PART III we have a series of 5 visions. The first is the vision of locusts, the second the vision of drought, the third the vision of the plumbline, and then there is a parenthetical passage included in verses 10 to 17 of chapter 7, a confrontation between Amos and Amaziah, who claimed to be the high priest of the northern kingdom. Then it takes us back in the first verse of chapter 8 to the fourth vision, the basket of summer fruit, then commerce and comfort will result in mourning and sackcloth. Then God will desert His people and they will continue to uphold their apostate position. Then finally, the fifth vision, Yahweh standing by the altar, and, of course, He is depicted there in a most dramatic manner, as standing by the altar ready to offer the nation as a sacrifice upon that altar, because they had failed to heed the series of messages.

Finally, PART IV, the epilogue, which changes the whole content of the message of the book. We have a wonderful prophetic picture with which most of it will be familiar, of the Messianic kingdom to come. This section divides into 2 parts, first of all, in chapter 9 verses 11 to 12 there will be a need to restore David's kingdom because God has promised that it will be so; and then finally in the last verses, 13 to 15, Yahweh's blessing will return to the nation, to the land and to the people. So in that way, you will have a brief outline of what the book is about and upon that basis we can take it a little further.

Now in Amos chapter 1 and verse 1, we have the words of Amos, 'who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake'. That first verse, and verse 2 to come, are really packed with an incredible amount of information. We notice that they are the words of Amos, but we don't have to go very far to learn in verse 2, that they are really the words of God, and so therefore, here's the prophet who speaks and is recorded here under divine inspiration, with a message for God's people. We've already looked at his name and seen the significance of it, and seen how that it has 2 different aspects, either of which could have applied to the people in the days of Amos. Exactly as in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, either He would be the burden-bearer for the people, or else He would become a burden unto them, which would result in their end. We notice hear that they were told in verse 1, that

he was among the herdmen of Tekoa, now Tekoa is placed by Nelson's bible atlas and by Unger and also by Smith's bible dictionary as being about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. Now that adds a very interesting note to the book of Amos, because it indicates that Amos came from the south; and coming from the south he was sent to the tribes in Samaria in the north. This may well have been one reason why the north rejected his message, and isn't that sometimes the case? I wonder if God had sent a prophet raised up from among the northern tribe and send him to the people of Samaria, whether they would have accepted him as one of their own and listened to what he said? I sometimes wonder whether there was such a feeling of competition or whatever you like to call it, between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, that once it became known that Amos had come up from south of Jerusalem, all the way up to Samaria to bring to them the Word of God, that they felt in themselves, well, because he comes from the other kingdom, because he comes from another part, we don't want to hear him, we're not really interested in hearing him! So in that sense we have Amos set before us here as numbered among the herdmen of Tekoa.

We're told here that this was 2 years before the earthquake. Tekoa, the words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, 'which he saw concerning Israel, in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake'. Now there's nothing said really as far as this earthquake is concerned. We don't know a great deal about it, but we do know about a few other things; the word rendered 'herdmen' here is very, very interesting. This word 'herdmen' is only rendered this way in this one passage in the whole of scripture and of this word Gesenius says that it means 'a shepherd of a kind of sheep which have excellent wool' (5349). It must be a very special words to have that special meaning. Hence, says Gesenius in a wider sense, a herdsman, a cattle owner or owner of flocks, now that means that Amos was either the owner of a flock of top quality sheep or he was an owner of cattle which in those days, in many respects, were more highly prized, more valuable, and more highly regarded than sheep. Now in addition to this conclusion, when we come to chapter 7 and verse 15, we will learn that he was also associated with the preparation as Rotherham translates it, for the dressing of sycamore trees. Now they only grew in the warmer areas to the east, so therefore, Amos must have been a man who was used to travelling. He must have travelled to the areas where he worked among those trees; so these opening details indicate to us, that far from being a mere wanderer as he is sometimes regarded, a man living wherever he found opportunities, it seems evident that Amos had certain holdings and certain interests which would have provided him with an adequate livelihood. He is not necessarily a poor man, but the thing is he was a man who had these interests in these various areas and therefore, he was a man who moved about.

It says here that he spoke concerning Israel; now undoubtedly, the northern kingdom is meant, since it was identified by that name, but nevertheless, Amos also spoke concerning Judah which we will have a look at, God willing, tomorrow, and we will see there that Amos found not only the northern kingdom lacking but also the southern kingdom as well. So in this way, we find that Amos introduces his prophecy to us! and

we're told that it was 2 years before the earthquake. Now there may be a further oblique reference to this same earthquake in chapter 4 and verse 11, however, as far as scripture is concerned, no mention is made of this event in any of the historical records, but at the time that Amos wrote, the event must have been very, very fresh as far as the time in which Zechariah wrote anyway, it's still very, very fresh in people's minds, because Zechariah appears to allude to it in his prophecy. It's rather interesting that Josephus wrote, 'the earthquake here spoken of by Amos represented God's strong displeasure when Uzziah usurped the office of the priest as described in 2 Chronicles 26', but whether that is so or not we have no really clear or definite information. We know that it was an earthquake and it must have wrought some havoc, so therefore, Amos says, and we come to this dynamic opening to the book in verse 2, he said, 'Yahweh will roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem'. Now I'm sure we're all familiar with those words; it is a matter of some disputation as to whether Amos is quoting from Joel or Joel quotes Amos, but considering the context of both passages, it is our own view that Joel came later. For example, Joel speaks of the fact that there had already been a Babylonian invasion; at the time that Amos writes, he's writing of the Assyrian invasion which preceeded the Babylonians by some 135 years, so therefore, it appears evident that Joel wrote later! But Amos is speaking about a judgment which was to come upon Israel when both kingdoms were ultimately overthrown. Whereas when Joel uses these words he was speaking of that which still lies in the future, and that is, Armageddon, so therefore, it seems quite reasonable that Joel would quote from a past incident as we've got promised here in Amos chapter 1 verse 2 as a type of the even greater judgment which is yet to come!

In any event, as we look at this dreadful warning from Amos at the very beginning of his prophecy, it is opportune that we bear in mind, that we are now awaiting the fulfillment of a similar incident, because we now await the fulfillment of Joel 3 and verse 16, and so therefore, these words from Amos here in chapter 1 verse 2, should remind us all that we are very rapidly approaching the time when Yahweh will rule from Zion and utter His voice in judgment from Jerusalem. So therefore, let us all take the warning of Amos, and take the lessons of Amos as being applicable to conditions in our own day, of the fact that, as with Amos standing at the very verge of divine judgment, with only a matter of a few decades to go, before the Assyrians would bring judgment upon the people of God, so we ourselves stand in that position where day by day, we await earnestly, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that judgment must first come upon the household of God, and then spread abroad to embrace all the nations of the earth. You'll notice here that Amos says in verse 2 that , 'Yahweh will roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither'. That latter phrase is perhaps rendered, 'And the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn and the top of Carmel shall be dried up'. In other words, the judgments of God would be felt in the form of the severest form of drought imaginable! but that, of course, would only be one form of judgment that would be felt.

You know, it seems as though there is a play on words in those opening words of chapter 1 and verse 2 which speak of Carmel withering of a dreadful drought engulfing

the Land; Amos goes on to speak of people turning black due to starvation and drought and heat and the dreadful things that were to come upon them, because they would not heed the message of their God. And in opening with a reference to this great drought that would engulf the kingdom, in chapter 8 and verse 11 you'll notice that this is amplified into a spiritual message, that there would be a drought as far as the Word of God was concerned, because it says there in chapter 8 verse 11, 'Behold, the days come, saith the Adonai Yahweh, that I will send a famine in the Land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh'. And the dreadful tragedy in chapter 8 verse 11 was not that the words of Almighty God would not be available, that they would not be there, but rather that the people would have declined to appeal to those words, that they would have ceased listening to those words, and therefore, the people themselves created the drought that brought about their own spiritual demise. It's really fearful to have to consider that and to see that that was what developed in the days of Amos, simply because God in His love and His mercy, did everything He could to try and direct those people back again, to a right way, to a proper way, to a profitable way, to a way that would not only bring glory and honour to Almighty God but would also be for the betterment of the people, for their spiritual welfare, for their peace of mind, for their sound knowledge of the truth. That they would become a united nation, serving God in the spirit of His Word; that was what He wanted, He did not want to bring the Assyrians against these people, He took no joy in destroying that northern kingdom, by bringing judgment against them. He wanted to turn them back, and so therefore, b&s, we ourselves live in a time in history when we have the opportunity to fully understand that as in the days of Amos, we are living at the very epoch of the Lord's coming! Those words of warning that we looked at earlier from Thessalonians, Proverbs, Hebrews, Timothy and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, that there is a urgent need as time passes for us to stand firm in the things of the truth. To know and understand the principles set forth in God's Word, that we might be worshippers of our God, in spirit and in truth, which means with the right disposition and according to sound, clear knowledge, and upon that basis, if we hear the message today of God's prophets and the great men who have been the instruments whereby God's Word has been written. That we might be prepared for the coming of the Son of God, that we might be ready for that time, that our hearts might be lifted up, as the Lord exhorted us in Luke chapter 21, in the face of a disintegrating world, we are to lift up our heads and to rejoice, knowing that our redemption draws nigh.

So therefore, we ourselves, can take instruction from the book of Amos, we can receive warnings from this book, everyone of us, because we're all in the truth and these things apply to us! But as well as that, from the book of Amos as from the Lord Jesus Christ, we can receive great encouragement as to what the future holds, that we might be filled with the truth; that we might be moved by the power of the truth in our lives, so that we may be ready and waiting with our heads lifted up in anticipation of the coming of the Son of God. That if we are found faithful by Him, our redemption will be sure! and we will not only have the joy of inheriting with Him the wonders and glory of divine nature, but of going forth with Him together with all the glorified saints to rule the world, at the time when the very final words of Amos will be fulfilled, when the tabernacle of David

will be built again, and when the kingdom will be re-established in Israel and when it will spread abroad to the glory of God, to embrace all nations, upon the face of the whole earth.