

7259U

MID-ATLANTIC BIBLE SCHOOL - 1987

AMOS - THE HERDSMAN OF TEKOA

Speaker: Bro. John Ullman

Study #3: Seek good not evil

Good morning brethren and sisters. Incidentally, I always say 'good morning' at the bible schools, mainly because it's the first opportunity of the day that I have to greet my brethren and sisters. So I usually start that way, and it's nice to hear you say 'good morning' to me also!

I'd just like to start this morning by a little word of explanation before I get into our subject properly: a number of you who thankfully find the book of Amos as interesting as I do, have asked me why it was that I chose this subject for this bible school. The answer is that I didn't! it is my custom when invited to speak at bible schools to forward a list of a variety of subjects for the committee to pick from, and in that sense, I generally try to put in a variety of subjects perhaps from the teaching of the Law, or the prophets, some New Testament subjects as well, and very often something on the Psalms, and it's up to the committee to pick whatever they wish or think will be helpful for the school. So therefore, I'm very happy that the subject's been picked because it's one that I find very, very interesting and very, very absorbing, but in that sense, it does present certain problems, and it presents certain headaches. No aspirin, please! I'm not asking for that, a different kind of a headache, because the problem is really, not so much what to put in, but rather what we have to leave out! In that regard I think it only fair to tell you that a couple of years ago in my home ecclesia, the arranging brethren asked me to do a study on one of the minor prophets, and because I was very interested in it, I said I'd do a series of studies on Amos. They said, 'well, how many studies do you think it will take?' and I had a bit of a brief look at it and I thought, well, it's 9 chapters there, maybe 10 perhaps a dozen sessions at a bible class will do. Well, we finished up producing 26 one-hour bible class sessions, not because we wished to do so, but because the material was there and the thoughts out of the book just kept running into our mind, so much so that we found it difficult to get the thoughts down fast enough, once we became completely immersed in the study. So therefore, we have this rather heart rendering problem, how do we reduce 26 into 6, and I tell you it's not very easy; in fact, it reminds me of an experience that we had in Israel on one occasion, where we had just one day left in Tel Aviv (which happened to be the Sabbath) and there were only two tours operating out of Tel Aviv that day. One of those went up to the Galilee, and the other went down to the Dead Sea, and my wife and I discussed what we would do, and we really didn't know what to do, and we discussed the matter in our

hotel room (as wives very often do, I'm sorry, as husbands and wives very often do) and so finally I said, 'well, I know what I'll do; I'll go down to Mr. Jacobson, the owner of the hotel (it was called the Jacobson hotel) and I'll ask him what to do. So I went down to Mr. Jacobson (it was a very unusual hotel, a very small hotel because when you came to book in at the front desk, there was the receptionist, and it happened to be Mr. Jacobson. When you came down for breakfast in the morning, the waiter that took your order at the table was Mr. Jacobson. Then he'd duck out to the kitchen and the chef became Mr. Jacobson; when it came time to take your bags out to the bus, and receive a tip, it was Mr. Jacobson (I never saw anyone else in the place) but he was a very nice Jewish gentleman, a very nice Jewish gentleman indeed. So I went down the stairs and I said, 'Mr. Jacobson, I have a problem', what's your problem? well, it's like this, we have just one day left here in Tel Aviv and because it is the Sabbath, there are only two tours operating, one to the Galilee and one down to the Dead Sea. Now I want your advice, if you were me, which one of the two would you take?' Do you know what he did? he looked at me and he threw up his arms (as only a Jewish person can) and he said to me, 'Mr. Ullman, if the mother had only two children and you asked her which one she loved the most, what would she tell you?' Now that's one of the warmest experiences I've ever had in Israel, I've had a lot like that, it shows you their great love for the land, but in addition to that, it shows you the problem I've got with Amos! because I feel the same way, which part do we love the most?

Anyway, we've got to do the best we can, and this morning we're going to look at some of the sections, that will lead us through the more central part of the book, and the one thing that I can hopefully rely on, is that you've all got the analysis of the book now on a sheet, you'll be able to look at that and follow through where we are at as we go along. We want to have a look this morning at chapter 2 and just briefly at verses 9 and 10, which detail some of the blessings that Israel had received at the hands of their God, some of the things that He'd done for them. 'Yet destroy I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite'. The personal pronoun there is important, it's things that God had done for them, and therefore, representative of things that they had not been able to do for themselves. Therefore, they should have had a sense of gratitude to their God, for the very wonderful things that He had done, in the same way as our hearts should be filled with gratitude for the same God, because He hasn't changed.

You know how it says in the prophecy of Malachi, 'I am Yahweh, I change not', and He doesn't change either! He has the same character that He has always had, and so therefore, there were all these things that He had done for them and for which they should have felt a sense of gratitude, but it was absent because as we saw yesterday, they no longer had a really worthwhile perception of what the truth meant, and the truth really meant very little to these people, in that very, very tragic way.

So, when we get to verse 11 of chapter 2, upon which we'd like to comment briefly

because it really is a very important verse; whilst verses 9 and 10 are highlighting some of the actual material things that God had done for them in defeating their enemies, leading them out, bringing them into the Land; when we come to verse 11 there is particular emphasis upon the spiritual blessings that God had provided for them. So there can be no doubt really, that when we look at the words of verse 11, that the greatest gift that God has ever made to mankind, is His divinely inspired revelation, which was brought to its very peak when that Word was made flesh in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, as far as the people of the prophet Amos's day is concerned, where would they have been without the Word of God? If God had not, in His love and compassion sent to them prophets, raised up men to go to them, to explain to them about the truth, to bring to the minds of them, their responsibilities to their God, where would they have been? Of course, we really stand in no different position as far as that's concerned, without the Word of God today, we would be without the knowledge of God. We would be without a knowledge of His will or His purpose, we would be without a knowledge of what He requires from us, that we might develop those characteristics that will cause Him to find us fit for an eternal place in His kingdom.

It is very, very interesting there, that in verse 11 there is a special mention made of the prophets and of young men for Nazarites. Mention of the Nazarite is really most interesting, because whilst the prophets spoke forth the Word of God, they spoke it in so far as the Nazarites were concerned, they were 'living examples' of the Word of God, put into practice in daily life as Numbers chapter 6 shows us. The word 'Nazarite' is a word which means 'separate or consecrated' (5144) and so therefore, they were Israelites who had separated themselves to the exclusive service of Almighty God and therefore, have consecrated their lives to their God. In that sense, of course, the Nazarite provides a wonderful type of what we should be in the truth. It's interesting that Amos classes the prophets and the Nazarites as divine blessings given to the nation of Israel by God. Wasn't he perfectly correct in doing that? You see, what he's really highlighting is the fact that the people of Israel were really without excuse for their attitude toward God and for their general behaviour. In view of God's repeated attempts to set His Word before them, not only in word through the prophets, but in practical examples with men such as Nazarites, men of truth, walking before the people in the way that God would want them to do. But you see, they had not only disregarded those men, the prophets and the Nazarites, they had done even worse, they had attempted to corrupt them. You'll notice that in verse 12 it says, 'You gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not'. Now on the surface those words might not appear to be saying a great deal, but really they are devastating words! Just think of that statement for example, with the Nazarite, one thing he was not to do in his dedication to God, was that he was not to eat of the fruit of the vine, so it said in Numbers chapter 6. But it says here, 'you gave the Nazarites wine to drink', and we've got a picture there of Israelites recognizing a Nazarite and going along to him and saying, 'look, we know you've dedicated yourself to God, we know that part of the dedication according to Numbers 6 is that you don't take of the fruit of the vine, but here, what does it matter? drink this, have this, enjoy this with us!' So in other words, God is saying to Israel here in verse 12, you deliberately corrupted the Nazarites, whom I sent

unto you, to show you the way to walk in the truth.

It's really a shocking situation that Amos has got to draw attention to in this regard. So what it comes down to is the fact that these tribes in the north, the northern kingdom to whom Amos had been sent, were breaking down the principles of the truth, and they weakened and even did away with the purity of the truth; and what Amos is saying here is that they seduced men away from their conscientious dedication to Almighty God, by trying to persuade them to weaken their stand for the truth. That's as far as the Nazarites were concerned, but as far as the prophets were concerned, the verse adds, 'and commanded the prophets saying, prophesy not!', in other words, keep quiet about the truth! They refused to listen to the Word of God, and of course, they did so because the Word constantly rebuked them. But when we ask the question, why did the Word of God rebuke them? what is the answer? There can only be one, did God really take enjoyment in the act of going about generation after generation, rebuking His people for their lack of faith and for their lack of a godly walk before Him? Did He rejoice in that? did He take any joy in that? did He delight in having to rebuke them in that way? On the contrary! the very fact that the Word of God rebuked the children of Israel, was a classic example of God's love for those people. Because if there are people who won't do what we think is wise for them to do, and they don't want to take our advice, the general attitude in life is to say, 'well, if that's how you feel, you go and do what you like, I don't care what you do! I've tried to help you, I've done the best I can for you; I see the issue in a certain way, I believe that I have the wisdom to help and to direct you and guide you into a better way. I've done my best for you; if you don't want to hear that and you don't want to know anything about that, well that's alright, you go and do whatever you like!' That would be the human point of view, but the very fact, that God constantly kept coming back, to raise up men like Nazarites and to raise up the prophets. To raise them up for the benefit of His people, shows His great love for those people, His intense interests in them, His desire to bring them back from the brink of disaster. His desire to educate them, His desire to encourage them in the way of truth; and if it hadn't been for that, He couldn't have cared for them at all. If He didn't want to redeem those people, if He didn't have an earnest desire to express His love and gratitude for the fact that He had a people that had been called out because of the faithfulness of Abraham, that great man of faith to whom the promises were given concerning the nation of Israel. If God hadn't cared then He wouldn't have done anything; and isn't it the same with our own children? why do we discipline our own children? Why do we sometimes find it necessary to punish our children, if the err is such that they deserve it? Do we do it because we think, 'ah, here's another opportunity to get out that 3 foot lash and really give it to this kid and really tear the skin off his back; tie him to a post and rip him to shreds!' Do we do that? I know as far as my own children were concerned in their upbringing, whenever it became necessary to administer discipline or punishment, my heart used to sink! and you know the old saying, don't you? the parents saying, 'this hurts me more than it hurts you!'; you can say it, but the kids don't believe it! But, very often it's true, and I can tell you honestly from my heart, my heart used to sink when it became necessary to administer discipline to any of my children, because I didn't like having to do it, but I knew also that if I didn't do it, that if that child was allowed to do

what it liked, and to treat my authority as its father with absolute contempt, then I would raise up a monster, instead of a child of God. Therefore, I knew that that discipline was necessary and God treated Israel like that for the same reason.

He administered discipline and He administered punishment where it was necessary; His basic idea again and again and again, and His basic motive was to try and bring those people back, and you know, there's a passage there in Amos that we may have the time to look at a little later, where it says repeatedly in that chapter, 'that ye did not listen unto My word, but ye did not hearken unto Me', and it shows all the things that God had brought upon them in an endeavour to try and turn those people back to Him. But they didn't want to be turned back and that, of course, was the great tragedy! So here in verse 12, 'they commanded the prophet saying, Prophecy not!' so therefore, their attitude was that they would not accept the discipline of God, they would not accept the rebuke of God, they didn't want to hear it and they didn't want to know about it. So they were in no frame of mind to have the disposition to receive the rebuke of God, and so therefore, because they didn't like that and they didn't want that, they set about to endeavour systematically to silence the voice of the truth.

So then, when we look at chapter 3 there's a statement here which really the whole of the book of Amos revolves around, and I want us to have a look at this this morning, because it's an absolutely devastating statement. It's one of the most glorious statements found anywhere in scripture, by way of a challenge to God's people. It really is very, very wonderful! Here we have in chapter 3, (we've completed our consideration as briefly as it's been, of Part I of the prophecy of Amos) and we now come to a consideration of Part II which we define as 3 messages detailing the sins of Israel (that is the northern kingdom) and warning that judgment upon them is eminent. You'll notice that each of these messages begins in the same way; chapter 3 and verse 1, 'Hear this word that Yahweh hath spoken', chapter 4 verse 1, 'hear this word, ye kine of Bashan', and chapter 5, 'hear ye this word, which I take up against you'; again, emphasizing the necessity for God's people to hear the Word of God. 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias', is the warning of the Lord Jesus Christ and the plea of the Lord Jesus Christ; that the Word is there, and may we open our ear to hear and to receive and to humbly submit to whatever that Word requires of us.

Now here you'll find in chapter 3 and verse 1 that the Word says, 'hear this word that Yahweh hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt'. Of course, there is a clear reminder that they were called to be the family of God, in the same way that our own children are our family, in the same way as today we are called upon to be members of the family of Almighty God. But you'll notice that he says specifically there, against the whole family, and therefore, we have there a clear indication that the prophet under divine inspiration was consigning all 12 tribes ultimately to the same judgment of God (not the identical judgment but the same form of judgment). You'll notice that he describes them as 'the family which I brought up from the land of Egypt', and there again is another expression, illustrating the greatness of

God and His mercy toward that nation. You'll notice again the emphasis upon the personal pronoun 'I', it was something that God had done for them, and in doing that, He did for them something that they could not do for themselves! They couldn't have gotten themselves out of Egypt, they couldn't have got themselves through that wilderness, they couldn't have got across the river Jordan, they couldn't have got into that Land and defeated all the Canaanites and established a kingdom in that Land. GOD DID ALL THAT FOR THEM! Now, where was their gratitude? and really, b&s, we don't stand in any different attitude, do we? Has not this same mighty God of Israel, delivered us out of Egyptian darkness and set our feet on the pathway to the Land of promise? And so therefore, the crowning act of God's goodness, is to deliver a people who can't deliver themselves, so let us remember that we stand in that position! It's very important for us to do so, we must never forget the great privilege that's been extended to us, by a God who really does not owe us anything!

He doesn't owe us anything, out of the goodness of His heart, out of His kindness and His love and His compassion, He has, as is said in Acts 15 verse 14, 'been taking out of the Gentiles, a people for His name'. We are blessed and privileged to be numbered among those people, and Amos was trying desperately to get Israel to see as the wording here is in chapter 3, 'that they were the family of God'.

They were the people of God and He had brought them out of Egypt to be a people for His name and for a praise and for a glory, as the prophet Jeremiah says. So then, what a privileged people they were! and as we remember the case of Israel of old, let us not forget what a privileged people we are, in relation to the same principle of being called out, of being chosen, of being set on the way to eternal redemption by a God who has shown toward us, a love and a compassion that we have done nothing whatsoever to earn. We have no merit of our own that requires that God do this for us or that for us, or anything else for us. BUT HE WILL DO IT, BUT IN RETURN HE EXPECTS CERTAIN THINGS FROM US, as He expected them from the people of Israel!

Look at this incredible statement in verse 2, when He reminds those people, 'YOU ONLY HAVE I KNOWN OF ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH', now should not that really have humbled those people, to hear those words from the mouth of Amos, when he speaks in the name of the God of Israel? You only have I known of all the families of the earth, in actual fact, the Hebrew language would indicate that the real emphasis is on the word 'only', and that we should understand it as meaning 'ONLY YOU have I known of all the families of the earth, ONLY YOU!' When it came to pick out a nation, the promises were made to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, and those promises were never dishonoured by God, and so therefore, what a wonderfully privileged position in which they stood. Are not so many of those words from the Old Testament taken up by New Testament writers, by Paul in Romans, in the epistles of Peter, and so forth, to show that those same privileges, the ones rested upon the nation of Israel, for their spiritual enlightenment and development, now rest upon us, and therefore, how humbly and submissively should we respond to the very awesome privileges that God has given to us!

Then we come in verse 3 to this tremendous statement which I mentioned a few moments ago, which we might almost describe as the cornerstone to the whole book of Amos, because one statement is made here that is really absolutely tremendous, not only in so far as it applied to the people of Israel, but in principle the way in which it applies to us. Now in verse 2 and verse 3, when we put them together this is what we read, 'You only (or to put it the way we suggested) ONLY YOU have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities'. Just before I get on to verse 3 which I wanted to link with that, a thought has just come to my mind, do you know that yesterday morning in teaching a class of youngsters, I think around the ages of 9 to 12, we got on to a matter similar to this, although we weren't dealing with this, we were dealing with Thessalonians actually, and you might think that kids 9 to 12 are a little young to be getting hold of Thessalonians. That's what I thought until I got onto it, but some of the answers I got just absolutely flattened me. They were really good! but one passage in Thessalonians that we were looking at was really relating to the fact, that God is going to call the world to account for the fact that they've ignored His word and despised His name and rejected His truth. I asked the question, 'well, in that case what about us? what about those of us who have the truth? where do we stand in regard to that? One boy around 10 years of age stood up in that class and he said, 'well, uncle John, the fact of the matter is, that because we know the Word of God, we are more responsible to God than the world is outside!' I'll tell you this, no brother or sister 50 years in the truth, could have answered that question more accurately than that little boy. I made sure he got a couple of bonus points for that answer! You know, children never cease to stagger me, b&s, with their ability to comprehend; sometimes we find and we feel that children are merely kids, but you know, I found out in the bringing up of my own children, that really children are just little people. It's not good enough just to say they're kids, they don't understand, they don't know. They may be kids and we may use that expression in a common colloquial way, they may be kids, we're not arguing with that at all, but they are little people and they've got minds that are developing, and sometimes we become absolutely staggered at the extent of what those little minds absorb; you know what the prophet said, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings', if only there had been mature men and leaders in Israel in the days of Amos, who had the mind of that little 10 year old boy yesterday morning? See God says here in verse 2, 'YOU ONLY have I known of all the families of the earth: THEREFORE, I will punish you for all your iniquities'. They were more answerable to God than the Gentiles who knew not God. But here is the point in linking it together, because having said that, God now challenges the people with this question in verse 3, and it is an absolutely magnificent question when we have a look at it. I know it's a verse in Australia that's very often quoted in public lectures to show the need for coming to God in a state of separation and dedication; that's very often used in exhortations as well, but let's have a look at this verse, verse 3.

Here is the question, it's not difficult to understand on the face of it, the question is, 'Can two walk together, EXCEPT they be agreed?' Now as a bland question we know that the answer is NO, because the idea of walking together, implies walking together harmoniously. But look, here's the point, it's an absolutely glorious verse of scripture,

the word that is rendered here as 'agreed' is the word which holds the key to the understanding of the whole verse. The word is only ever translated as 'agreed' (3259 - Gesenius) in this one place, it is a word which more correctly signifies to meet with any one at an APPOINTED PLACE. To meet with anyone at an appointed place, let's think about that! Now in the same tense as used here, it is used to describe the mercy seat, as the meeting place between God and His people, where it says in Exodus 25 verse 22, 'THERE I will meet with thee' and the word is not only the same word as we have here rendered 'agreed' in verse 3, but it is even in the same tense. That's important, because sometimes the same word can have a slightly different meaning if the tenses are different, the same as they do in our English language. But you see, God said there, that there is a principle for divine worship, once the tabernacle came into existence; because in the Most Holy Place was the place where was to be the Shechinah glory, as the proof of the fact, that God dwelt among His people. Not literally, but a manifestation of God in the Shechinah glory, and that's how it is rendered. 'THERE I will MEET with thee' and when it says 'there' it really means 'not anywhere else'. In other words, God established a principle for divine worship, that was to be the place of meeting between Israel and their God. The same word occurs again in the same tense, in Exodus 29 verse 43, 'And THERE I will meet with the children of Israel', and again, the word 'meet' is the same word that we have here in Amos 3 verse 3. So therefore, we should correctly understand this verse as saying this, 'can two walk together harmoniously other than at an appointed meeting place'.

A really incredible statement especially perhaps as far as Israel was concerned, applying its initial importance to the fact, that they had separated from the tribe of Judah when there should have been no separation whatever, they should not have separated, they did wrong in separating. But they separated and revolted against the ruler of David's heirs, and therefore, they went up into the north and founded a kingdom with its headquarters at Samaria and they built their own temple, ultimately temples in the plural. It was there they founded the calf worship instead of the cherubims on the altars, and all the things that God had said that were to be in the tabernacle, and then later in the temple that was built at Jerusalem. They had their own ideas of divine worship, now God challenges that northern tribe but saying, 'can two walk together other than at an appointed meeting place?' Where was that appointed meeting place? It was the temple in Jerusalem. What were these 10 tribes doing? They were saying, 'look, we've got our own ideas of divine worship; we're going to worship God, we haven't turned our backs on Him, not entirely anyway, but we're going to put a temple up, up here! We're going to worship God up here and we've got a few golden calves here that we're going to put in there to make the place look pretty and nice; it will be delightful! that's what we're going to do'. But there is God's challenge to them, and you might recall whether it was Solomon's son or grandson (off hand I don't remember) but when he had discussions with the 10 tribes, he had discussions with their king and he said to them, 'you come down here, because here is the place of divine worship' (you'll find that in the book of Kings). He said, we're not going to come up there to you because what you're going is wrong; but you come down here to us, where the temple of the living God is, and you worship with us in the spirit of the truth, in the right attitude of the truth, and at the

proper meeting place.

Now isn't that absolutely wonderful? So when we look at those words in verse 3, we've got one party here that is obviously Yahweh Himself and the other must be, of necessity, His people; and where was their appointed meeting place? Well, there we've got it in the book of Exodus, 'There will I meet with thee', and ultimately when the temple was built, it became the Most Holy Place of the temple, and so therefore, we need to remember, the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians that come down to us today, 'YE are the temple of the living God', and that's what we've been called to be to become dwelling places for the character, the glorious character of God. YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD, and so, as far as Judah were concerned, let's not let them off the hook in regard to this problem, because we saw in an earlier session that Amos was as equally critical of the attitude of the people of Judah. They were doubtless, visiting the temple, certainly going to the right place, but was it in a true spirit? or was it in a desire to truly meet with their God in harmonious relationships? According to Amos it was not so! we've already seen that they didn't have that spirit. What of the northern kingdom of Israel? they had repudiated the temple in Jerusalem; they had erected their own temple where God was not present. So this verse really becomes a verse around which the whole of the ministry of Amos revolves; it all revolves around that question, that God will meet with His people, He will meet with them gladly, He will meet with them joyfully, but HE WILL SAY WHERE THEY MEET, and He will say how they meet, and He will say upon what conditions they meet! And the real power in this verse is really quite devastating, Amos is saying to those tribes in the north, 'GET BACK TO THE TRUE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH THE GOD OF ISRAEL' in the divinely appointed way while there is still time. It's as if He were saying, if this is not done, then anything that happens as a result of your refusal to do so, can only be laid upon your own heads.

Now, think of ourselves in relation to that third verse. Can two walk together harmoniously except it be at an agreed meeting place? What a wonderful thing, that we know that the veil in the temple which separated the Holy from the Most Holy Place has now been rent, as it says in Matthew 27 verse 51, and it was rent from the top to the bottom as Matthew specifically states, showing that it was not the work of man that did it, but the work of God. It happened at the moment when the Lord Jesus Christ, as the true Passover Lamb, died upon the stake outside the camp, outside the city. The veil was rent so that the priests of Israel in that time, could no longer serve in that temple, because there was no veil. So as Paul says in Romans 3 verse 25, that God has placed Christ before the world, to be a propitiation; the word 'propitiation' actually means 'mercy seat' (2435); God has placed the Lord Jesus Christ there as the mercy seat which, of course, is beyond the veil. So that through the mercy of God we are now able to pass beyond the veil to meet with God at the appointed meeting place, which is, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To me, that's absolutely magnificent! to think that that comes out of Amos chapter 3 and verse 3, the principle that's involved there. The way that it affected those northern tribes as we saw initially in looking at those words first of all, that they were worshipping

in the wrong place, in the wrong way, and for the wrong reasons. Yet how it applies to us, and yet how tragic when you look at the history of these people, that Israel could have met with their God in harmony. He certainly made enough appeals to them that they should do so, but did they value the great and the priceless privilege that their God had given to them? We know, of course, that they did not, and that they treated that priceless gift as if it was of very little value. So we've got to ask ourselves too, do we appreciate the very exalted opportunities, the tremendous privileges together with the responsibilities and the obligations that the God of Israel has given to us? to allow us to worship Him as He has decreed? What an incredibly privileged people we are!

So in the verses that follow various similes are put forth which were set there as warnings for the people of Israel. There's a very interesting one here in relation to the lion in verse 4 of chapter 3, when the prophet says now with a change of subject, but yet not really a change of subject, merely a change of subject matter. 'Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? (probably we won't be able to comment on the whole verse) but the really the first part of that verse is quite remarkable. Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? The Jerusalem bible renders it, 'does the lion roar in the jungle if no prey has been found'? Let's think about that! The picture is undoubtedly that of a lion stalking prey, (we know of course, as we saw last night) it is the lioness who actually makes the kill, but we believe that the lion is used here in a very, very significant way, because the lion was the emblem for Assyria, and we sometimes read in our Christadelphian writings, about the Assyrio-Babylonian lion, how that the kingdom of Babylon grew out of the disintegrating kingdom of Assyria; and it was the Assyrians who were going to come in judgment against the 10 tribes. That is the reason why the picture given, the anomaly given is that of the lion.

Now what would he do? Do you know that mostly lions like to feed upon large animals such as antelope, zebra, buffalo and so forth. But an interesting aspect of a lion hunting is this, most of the animals that it likes to feed upon can run faster than they can; and in view of the fact that a lion's top speed is about 35 miles per hour, the lioness has therefore, got to very carefully stalk its prey. Perhaps some of us have seen pictures of that, and wonder why does a lion go about killing in the way that it does? That's the reason, because most of the animals that it would pursue can out run it without any problem whatever! So the lion must very carefully stalk the prey, it moves very, very slowly, body very close to the ground, gradually creeping closer and closer toward the prey. Here's the point! the prey are totally unaware that death was near, and the prey in the simile here are the people of the 10 tribes, glibly going about their daily lives, ignoring the warnings of God, taking no notice of the words of His prophets, and therefore, an unsuspecting prey, unaware that the lion of Assyria is gradually becoming more and more powerful, more and more ambitious and will shortly begin to stalk the prey of the unsuspecting northern tribes. And so, there it was! and we find it, so far as the lion is concerned, when it is about 50 feet from its victim, it rushes forward to the kill! and it is also very, very interesting, that this metaphor should be used here, since as we say, the scripture associates the lion with both Assyria and Babylon. So here's the

question asked, 'will the lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey? and the answer is, of course, it won't; but do you know why? A lion would never roar when there was no prey in sight for the very simple reason, that if he did so, he would scare off every animal within 2 miles. So he keeps silent, he keeps absolutely silent! a lion is not normally a noisy animal, a very interesting thing that I discovered when I read up on lions, in relation to this very aspect of the prophecy of Amos. I became very fascinated at all the things I learnt about lions, since God uses the question of a lion here in a simile, I thought I should know something about lions; and that's what I discovered, they are not a noisy animal at all. BUT when a lion roars, he means BUSINESS, that's the point! and that was the warning here. And the lioness roars when she is rushing forward to make the kill and so therefore, in this simile before us here, the lion was not yet ready to roar, so there was still time! The unsuspecting prey going about its daily existence, could pause and raise its head and listen to the words of warning that were coming; words that were saying, 'look, this is what's going to happen, the lion very shortly will be stalking the prey, the prey will be unsuspecting unless the prey becomes aware! The only way you can become aware is to listen, and that is why these three messages begin with the words 'HEAR THIS WORD', and that's why God addressed His nation in that way. He did not want to see them destroyed. He did not want to see the kingdom broken up, He did not want to see the people taken away into captivity, so therefore, He sent a voice, and the voice came through the man Amos. The voice was there to warn, 'you're like an unsuspecting prey, going about your daily life, indifferent to the possibility of danger, of trouble, of disaster; but I, said Amos, am here to warn you; to let you know that you should lift up your heads, sniff the air, smell the lion, be aware of what is coming! and learn from the merciful hand of your God, what you should do, to avoid what would otherwise be an inevitable disaster'.

Brethren and sisters, today we await with earnest anticipation, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring before Him His household, and then to go forth to bring judgment upon the nations. We have the warnings in the Word of God, so many of them it would be difficult to list; we are undoubtedly living at the time of the end, we have the warning, it is our opportunity now, to prepare for the coming of our Lord and King. To HEAR THE WORD as Amos tried to present it here to the people of Israel, to respond to the Word and therefore, to have our hearts and our heads lifted up, in joyful anticipation of the coming of our Lord and King!