

6901U

MID-ATLANTIC BIBLE SCHOOL - 1987

AMOS - THE HERDSMAN FROM TEKOA

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Study #5: A famine in the land

Good morning brethren and sisters!

If a mother hath two children and you ask her which one she loves the most, what would she tell you? Well, that's the predicament that I'm in this morning; because we've got today left and we've got tomorrow, God willing, and that brings us to an end to our studies of Amos for this bible school. My problem really this morning is, that tomorrow I would very much like to leave our last session for a consideration of that absolutely glorious vision of the Messianic age to come, which with a last desperate resort, Amos endeavoured to encourage his people. We know that the scriptures tell us that 'without a vision the people perish', now if the people of the days of Amos wouldn't have that vision and didn't want it, we certainly do! We want to make sure that we have that vision very clearly fixed in our minds, and so tomorrow is very important. The problem today is what do we do with the time that we have left? and the amount of Amos that we have left? So what we're going to do is the best we can! We're going to try and draw together some of these threads that lead us to the final section of the book, in the last verses of chapter 9, that is Part IV, the epilogue, from chapter 9 verse 11 through to verse 15.

So this morning we find ourselves still in Amos chapter 5, and you'll notice that we have been, if I might use the expression, 'nibbling away' because that's all the time we've had to do, at some of the key features of the earlier part of the book. We looked briefly at Part I, the certainty of approaching divine judgments upon Gentiles and upon Judah and Israel, and of course, in regard to Part I, naturally enough, we left the bulk of our comments to those that affected Judah and Israel. In Part II we have looked at some of the aspects of the 3 messages detailing the sins of Israel and warning that judgment upon them was imminent. We had looked at in this section, the first message and the second message, and this morning we have the third message. And so we have left for this morning, a brief consideration of Part III in addition to perhaps some of the points in the third of the three messages of Part II.

We would like to just begin this morning by a very sad comment that Amos makes in chapter 5 and at verse 12, where he utters words that are really very, very tragic to have to read. In verses 12 and 13, God is depicted as saying to the people, 'For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right' and that last part of the verse

depicts the needy in Israel who were going to the leaders to get help and guidance. They wanted help in their problems, they wanted to know what to do in their state of difficulties that beset them; but they were turned away, there was no one who really wanted to help them, because everyone was too interested in doing their own thing, as the world says today. So it's a very sad situation! But in verse 13, certainly the words are even sadder when it says, 'Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time'. Now those words must have been very discouraging to Amos, 'the prudent shall keep silence', how frustrated he must have felt when those words indicate to us, that there must have been numerous men of standing and of authority who the people would hear, who could have stood shoulder to shoulder with Amos at this great hour of approaching crisis for the whole kingdom, who could have raised their voices together with him, and who could have rallied the people or at least attempted to do so, to hear the voice of Amos and the words of their God, and thereby, save the nation from impending disaster.

But Amos says, 'such were the times that the prudent shall keep silence'. Those other than Amos (and we don't say there was nobody, but there were those other than Amos) who felt that the situation was such that the only safe things for them to do, was to remain quiet. It was a time of personal danger, for those who would stand up like the Amos's of this world and speak forthrightly about the things of God and the demands that God made upon His people. It's a tragedy isn't it? and those closing words in that verse when he says, almost as if pleading with himself of the utter impossibility of the whole situation, 'for it is an evil time'. Those words seem to be almost wrung from the prophet, as if it wouldn't be so, if only he could not say those words, if only he could avoid facing that situation, for it is an evil time. Of course, b&s, the days in which we live today, are very, very much like that , it is an evil time. But the point is that today, those within the brotherhood and without, we have a responsibility to raise our voices in defence of the truth of God, in maintaining the purity of the truth of the Word of God. Of standing by our brethren and sisters in the stand for the truth, in having the disposition of an Amos, at a time when we all can say, 'for it is an evil time', and remember that our testimony is not only to the ecclesia, but it is like Noah, against an evil world. And that is why we must still, despite the pressures of that world, forthrightly proclaim the truth to the world, the truth of the things of God.

You know, just by passing, in way of this particular type of thought that is here in Amos 5 verses 12 and 13, it was rather remarkable to watch in Australia recently, when the Pope of Rome made a visit to Australia. You all know how there are many denominations or sects of Christendom in the world about us, who are very, very anti the church of Rome. In times past, they had not made it quite clear that they had had that feeling! But you know, throughout the recent Papal visit to Australia, the people of which I was aware , who openly advertised and openly proclaimed the truth of God's Word, in the face of the visit of that man to the country of Australia, were the Christadelphians. Over the years we've even received communications, we've received circulars from people such as the Seventh Day Adventists and others saying, that we should really get together and come together to voice our objections to the influence

and the power and the infamy of the Roman church. But they were silent, absolutely silent! You see, the power of that organization and that system is becoming so great in the world today, that people fear to speak out against it. They fear to proclaim the Word of God in the face of the growing strength of that power, which we know Christ will destroy with the brightness of His coming; so even therefore, in the world about us, in certain respects, the prudent keep silent! why? for it is an evil time! A very sad situation for Amos, as he looked out upon his people and saw the devastation of the minds of the people, because of the pressures that are being brought upon them, that had gradually, day by day, month by month, year by year, worn away at their faith, and here is a man trying to restore faith. Here is a man trying to build up faith, here is a man trying to encourage brethren and sisters in the truth to stand firm at a critical time in the development of the nation.

And so against this background of this aspect of the message, in chapter 5 and in verse 14 he tells them what they must do. He says, 'seek good, and not evil that ye may live', and you'll recall that this is the very essence of the prophet's message as we've seen in part from verse 4 and verse 6 of this chapter. So therefore, this phrase demonstrates that true religion is associated with sound moral conduct based upon sound knowledge of the truth. So the only hope for these people lay in a changed way of life, that is why he says to them, 'seek good and not evil that ye might live', and people who do not do that, will not live. They certainly will not live through all eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ. So here you've got the people who had been concerning themselves with knowing and doing evil rather than in knowing and doing good, but that meant, of course, that they now had to virtually reverse their way of life. But you see, it's also plain in scripture, isn't it? really when we come to open the Word and just hear what God says to us, whether it be through Amos or Isaiah, whether it be through the Psalms or the Proverbs, whether it be out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, whether it be from the apostles Peter or Paul or John or whoever it might be, it's all there and in verse 14, Amos couldn't have made it any plainer, 'seek good and not evil, that ye may live; AND so Yahweh your God, shall be with you', and there is the militant title of the Deity and it is used several times in this section of Amos. Yahweh Elohim Sabaoth, HE WHO WILL BE MIGHTY ONES AND ARMIES, and it represents God in militant manifestation, either for His people or against them. So Amos uses that title, HE WHO WILL BE MIGHTY ONES AND ARMIES, shall be with you if you will only respond to the goodness and the mercy that He holds out to you like a loving heavenly Father. So Amos is saying that if you will seek good and not evil, you will not only live but you will find that your God shall be with you, in other words, He will fight against your enemies instead of against you, if only you will honour Him in the way that He has asked that you do!

So in verse 15 we have this statement also, 'Hate the evil and love the good', and you know, that's a very powerful statement in verse 15 because it represents to us the character of the Son of God. Amos says, 'hate the evil and love the good', it's really another way of restating the opening words of verse 14, but the emphasis here in verse 15, seems to be more greatly stressing the need for the people to completely reverse

their way of life. In other words, you must learn to hate the evil and to love the good. Now the interesting thing about this phrase is that these necessary attributes of character formed a very vital foundation for the development of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ; because Psalm 45 and verse 7 foretells that the Son of God would love righteousness and hate wickedness, and we should really understand as the people in the days of Amos should have, that the two really go hand in hand, that one without the other is of little value. If we dedicate ourselves to loving righteousness, but take no cognizance whatever of evil, or being unable to recognize it for what it is, or to show our repugnance of it, because it is repugnant to God, then what do we gain from the righteousness that we show? Similarly, if we dedicate our lives to hating wickedness and we go about everywhere and we say we hate that wickedness because God does, we can't abide that wickedness because God can't abide it, but we're not filling ourselves with the righteousness of God, then we're unbalanced. You know, b&s, every Sunday morning when we gather before the table of our absent Lord, these words apply, 'hate the evil and love the good', because in the bread and the wine we see the two aspects of the life and the sacrifice of Christ. We see the negative and we see the positive, the bread represents the negative because it represents a body in which sin was not permitted to dwell, that is hating wickedness; but the wine represents to us a body or a life poured out in willing obedience to a loving heavenly Father, that's the positive! So in the bread and the wine we have the positive and the negative aspects depicted here in the book of Amos, 'hate the evil and love the good'. Isn't it wonderful that God provides that way for us, that we can recognize it through His Word?

So in this particular way we're lead to see what Amos says in verse 15, 'hate the evil and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that Yahweh Elohim Sabaoth (he uses the term there) will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph'. Notice he doesn't say it to the whole nation, because the whole nation were too far gone, but Amos is here hopeful that there may perhaps be a remnant who will at least listen to the message that he presents and respond in love and humility and submission to the call that God makes upon them. It may be that Yahweh Elohim Sabaoth will be gracious unto the remnant, and as we look at that phrase there, it's very important that we appreciate our relationship to it. Maybe He will be gracious, in other words, perhaps He will be gracious; it's the same word that occurs in Exodus 34 verse 6, in relation to the revelation to the divine character to Moses. Exodus 33 verse 19, it is used in a very important way, telling us that God can do whatever He likes with His own creation. I think we made that point the other day, because that is as it should be, God created all things, He gave everything life and breath, He created the earth and all that is therein, that He might be glorified in the work of His hands, and therefore, He has absolute sovereignty over it in every respect. So therefore, as Exodus 33 verse 19 tells us, He can be gracious to whom He will be gracious, in other words, the choice of the exercising of the grace is entirely His prerogative. So it should be, we would not want to take away from God, His righteousness; we would not want to try and abrogate from Him, the righteousness of His judgments among men. He has that right and we humbly acknowledge that right, though we must always remember that it is His right to extend graciousness to those whom He will extend it to. So therefore, in that sense, He has

said that there's a certain class of people in the world to whom He will be gracious. If we strive to serve Him in the spirit of the truth, He will be gracious to us.

And so with those words we have an introduction into the third message of Part II. The third message is found in chapter 5 and verses 16 to 27, the third message which deals with the fact that judgment is to come upon Israel, in this part, because their worship of God was really something of a mockery. Verse 16 says, 'Therefore, Yahweh Elohim Sabaoth saith thus', and is it not significant that this is the third usage of the divine Name with these titles in three verses, three usages in three verses, wasn't Amos trying to establish a point? God is manifested in mighty ones, the angelic beings in the days of Amos, God is manifested in mighty ones who also can be used as the divine army from heaven, to go to war against the enemies of Almighty God. He will fight your enemies for you, you need have no fear, He will fight your enemies for you as He promised in the Law of Moses, particularly in Deuteronomy chapter 20 verses 1 to 4, is a section of scripture that comes to mind. He will fight your enemies for you if you respond to Him in the love and the humble submission that He asks of you. So here we have the words of Amos, describing what is to come unless the people respond.

In verse 16 he says, 'Wailing shall be in all streets', and the word rendered 'wailing' (4553) really means far more than that! The word is related to the type of mourning that is associated with death and therefore, it implies 'a death wail'; and you know how emotional the Jewish people have always been, you know how in days gone by they would for funerals, hire professional wailers or mourners who would go before the funeral procession, wailing and howling and mourning, of course, it was all put on it was all very, very irreverent and there was no real spirit of real feeling in it, they were hired for that purpose as the history books tell us, and those who have dug into ancient history of the nation, tell us that was so. Nevertheless, apart from that, we know that they were a very emotional people, they always were and still are to this very day, so he's saying that wailing of the kind of a 'death wail' shall be in all the streets. The word 'streets' (7339) here refers to 'the broad places' whereas the word 'highways' (2351) which occurs in the next line, indicates the 'narrower streets'. What Amos is really trying to say here is that in all places, everywhere, in town and in country and in city, this 'death wail' would be heard throughout the kingdom. A very appalling thing to have to consider! is it any wonder that in verse 16, the prophet says, 'Alas, alas' (1930) but that really doesn't capture for us what it really means, because we don't use that word these days, it's not part of our everyday vocabulary, this is the only time that this word has been rendered this way; it is represented more by the English explanation of 'fear or dread or horror' as we would say 'oh, ohhh'. You just imagine, for example, your reaction, a involuntary exclamation that would spring to your lips if you suddenly witnessed a terrible accident or some frightful tragedy, and you'd give vent to your feelings in that way, and that's all it means. It's a highly emotionally charged expression in the Hebrew language, and it's as if Amos in revealing these things and seeing them all before his mind and what the future held, he pauses for a moment. Jeremiah did something similar to that on a couple of occasions; it's as though Amos pauses here and goes 'oh, ohhh!' as if he can't bear to stand the picture of what is before him. So he

reminds them of the fact that a correct attitude toward the coming of the day of God is absolutely essential.

In verse 18 he makes a statement that really on the surface of it appears to be a little difficult to understand; when he says to the people in that 18th verse, 'Woe unto you that desire the day of Yahweh! to what end is it for you? the day of Yahweh is darkness and not light'. That's very important, it tells us something about the people, remember how we started on Monday morning, by showing a little of the background for the life and times of Amos; and we pointed out that after many trials and tribulations for both the kingdoms in the north and in the south, they had come to a time of prosperity; they had gone to war against their enemies and defeated them. They were living in a period of luxury and well-being, a period of peaceful co-existence with the enemies of the truth. Everything seemed to be going along so nicely, so they were going around saying, 'God has blessed us, isn't it wonderful? God has blessed us; now the only thing that we can look forward to in life is even greater blessings, wait for the day of the Lord to come; wait for the day of Yahweh then we'll see the rest of our enemies cleaned up! We'll see what God will do to the people round about us here, and we'll be established even more powerfully even more comfortably, even more at ease, even more luxury than we even are now! So what does God say to that? 'Woe unto you that desire the day of Yahweh!' there were those who were desiring it so that to the people of Israel, the day of Yahweh would be a time when He would manifest His power! they understood the terminology and so naturally Israel in their state of self satisfaction, believing that 'God had blessed them' because of the condition in which they now found themselves, they believed that the day of Yahweh would bring them total and complete victory over all their enemies. Total and complete contentment in every regard and in every sense, but they did not realize that they had become the enemies of their own God! and so therefore, there could be no joy for them to look forward to the day of Yahweh; on the contrary, as Paul put it in Hebrews 10 and verse 27, 'only a fearful looking for of judgment'. So the very fact, that the people were blind to their true state, is a testimony to the perseverance of Amos and above all else, to the goodness of their God who kept on, who manifested His forbearance until it had become totally impossible. So here they were, coming to God in their way, believing that the day of the Lord would bring to them justification. So aren't we reminded, b&s, of the counsel of the apostle Paul, that we ourselves should continually examine ourselves and continue to humbly throw ourselves upon the mercy of our loving heavenly Father, confessing to Him our unworthiness; the fact that we need desperately what He alone can provide for us.

So is it any wonder at the end of that 18th verse, Amos says to the people, 'to what end is it for you?' To what end is it for you? in other words, in your misguided attitude, just exactly what do you hope to gain from the day of Yahweh? Then the prophet goes on to tell them what they could really look forward to; 'the day of Yahweh is darkness and not light', needless to say, the term 'darkness' when used in a metaphorical sense, signifies disaster, tribulation and abject misery. This was the very opposite of the blessings the nation thought that they deserved to receive. Then we find another of those similes that Amos gives us from nature, and it's very wonderful the way in which Amos, with his rural

existence living out upon the Land, journeying forth back and forth along the Land, how he uses the simile of animals and the way in which animals work and the way in which they get their feed, and so on and so forth, we even get that again here. This sort of language pops up again and again in the book of Amos; for example in verse 19, 'If a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him', that's what would happen, if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, the illustration is that of what could happen when a person finds themselves in an inescapable situation, in other words, running from one fierce animal of prey such as a man might run in the face of a lion, only to find himself grasped into the arms of a bear, running from one fierce animal only to be caught up by another which is just as deadly as the first! It's very wonderful the way in which Amos used language that the people could understand because they were a rural people. Remember how the Lord taught in His parables, using in the parables, agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and things like that, the things the people could understand.

Now when we come here in chapter 5 to verse 21, you'll notice what is stated here in regard to the feasts. Sometimes we wonder whether the people in the days of Amos were doing anything very much at all in the way of religion, or religious practices; they certainly were! because you'll find here in verse 21, God says here in words that are very, very similar and almost identical to those which we find in Isaiah chapter 1. He says here in verse 21, 'I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts'. Now indeed, they were attempting to worship God in their own way, they were holding feast days, there was in fact, no shortage of those who called themselves the worshippers of the God of Israel. For example, we read of animal sacrifices in chapter 4 and verse 4 and in chapter 5 and verse 25, we read of the burnt offerings in chapter 5 and verse 22, we read of them offering meal offerings in chapter 5 verse 22, we read of the thanksgiving and the voluntary offerings in chapter 4 and verse 5; we read again of the thanksgiving offering in chapter 5 and verse 22 and even tithing is mentioned in chapter 4 and verse 4. The reference to the festivals was apparently very prominent events which they even embellished, they just didn't go through the motions, but according to chapter 5 here and verse 23, they kept their solemn festivals with a great deal of singing and even provided orchestral accompaniment which the Law of Moses didn't require. They're embellishing it even more to try and make it more appealing. But you see, here is God saying, 'I hate, I despise those things', why? because all of those activities that are listed in the book of Amos and which would normally be associated with divine worship, were part of a ritualistic form of worship and was not a true reflection of what was really in the hearts of the people. Is it not remarkable that Isaiah who began his ministry after Amos, found and condemned a similar attitude on the part of the people of Judah toward their religious worship? particularly in Isaiah 1 and verse 11 to 15.

Human weakness, we all suffer from it, there is none of us that is exempt from human weakness, not one! and it is so easy to lose sight of what we made mention of a few days ago, the deceitfulness of sin. We have to be very aware, b&s, of sin and what it

can do to us, and the only answer to sin, the only way in which it can be repudiated, the only way we can call upon our God to forgive us for our sins and to strengthen us and encourage us in His way. It is so easy to persuade ourselves that all is well, everything is in order and that there are really no problems in life whatever. Is it any wonder that with all the problems in the Corinthian ecclesia, Paul warned them with a very blunt directness in 2 Corinthians 13 verse 5 as the RV renders it, 'try your own selves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves', and things were reaching a pretty pass in Corinth and Paul had to do everything that he possibly could, to try and direct those brethren and sisters back in the way that they had been taught originally. So there was a need for him to warn them in that way, not because he wanted to stand over them with apostolic authority and wave some kind of a big stick, but because he loved those people as Christ did, because he had died for them. Christ had given His life for them, and you know, I believe there's one thing that comes out, over and over again, in Paul's epistles, it was something (I hesitate to use the word but I can think of no other on the spur of the moment) he was obsessive about it, and that was the fact that Christ had died for men and women all over the then known world where the truth had spread, and he recognized those men and women as people for whom Christ had died, and it was almost an obsession with Paul, that in many of those cases the Lord may have died in vain, so far as they were concerned, and he did not want that to happen! Therefore, all he could do was persuade them, to encourage them, to try and lift them up, to try and direct their minds back to the things that they should really have been obsessed with themselves.

So God says here in Amos chapter 5 and verse 22, where the burnt offerings are mentioned there, 'though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them', and you know, that the burnt offering and the meal offering went together, they were both associated; when you offered a burnt offering, it had to be accompanied by a meal offering. What did they represent in the ritual of the Law of Moses? The burnt offering typified a live given in total submission and dedication to the God of Israel; the very word itself in the Hebrew is a word which means 'to cause to ascend' (5930) or 'that which goes up' and it's like anyone taking up their life in their hands and holding it up to God and saying, 'here is my life, I give it, it's yours! Take it, do with it as you will for the honour and glory of thy Name', that's what is embodied in the burnt offering, a whole life given in dedication and submission to the will of God that God might be glorified, that God might become the Word made flesh. The people, of course, were not doing that, they were making their burnt offerings, but where was that spirit to be found in the days of Amos?

The meal offering (4503) which was always to accompany the burnt offering typified the work of a man's hands, because he had to sit down and go to work and to prepare it! They had to make it ready and it took a little time to do that, so therefore, whilst the burnt offering typified a person giving up their life and offering up their life in total dedication to God; the meal offering typified the work of a man's hands, his labours given willingly and lovingly and gladly in service to Almighty God. Were they doing that? they were not in any sense whatsoever in their hearts, worshipping God in spirit and in

truth, as we have it set down in John 4 verses 23 and 24. So is it any wonder, that God made it very clear to those people, that although they considered themselves to be worshippers, yet as far as God was concerned, He would not accept a ritualistic form of worship when the heart of the offerer did not reflect that which was being offered! What a grave warning that was for them! and how Amos endeavoured to get them to see what was right.

So he showed them what was right, in chapter 5 and verse 24, we have some absolutely glorious language there, absolutely beautiful language in this 24th verse. When he says here, 'But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream', it's a beautiful verse of scripture, absolutely beautiful! God says to Amos, 'tell the people, this is what I want to see in the land. This is what I want to see, 'let judgments run down like waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream'. The word 'judgment' there is a word that occurs 3 times in this chapter, where the main question is always, that of judgment being very strongly presented, and the word itself actually means 'the ability to make a judicial verdict'(4941) and therefore, it implies the hearing of the evidence, the weighing up of the evidence and then the passing of the verdict upon the basis of a knowledge of divine truth. So it was an appeal to the people to sit down and carefully listen to what Amos had said unto them and to weigh up those words and to compare them with the other words of scripture, the words of Moses, the words they had in scripture accessible to them for their learning and their education and they were to sit down and think about these things and then to make wise judgments as God would have them do. If the people of that northern kingdom had had a mature ability then they would not have been in the disastrous situation in which they now found themselves. But the appeal was there just the same and it ushers in a beautiful expression, the idea of that word, 'let judgment run down as waters'. It's rather compelling , the phrase is better rendered 'roll a roll' as waters, and Rotherham renders it, 'roll along like water', and I believe, there's a considerable significance in the fact, that the expression is in the passive voice in the Hebrew text there, it is really as though the people are being urged to let the influence of God's Word bear them up and carry them along instead of trying to fight against it, ignore it, or not worry about it, or put their own personal interruption on it according to the circumstances of the times in which they lived, 'just get into it', just get into the Word of God, let it bear you up and lift you up and roll you along!

Here in this country you are well aware of what a mountain stream can be like, unfortunately in Australia we have very few of those beauties, because Australia is such a flat country. We have very few hills, very few mountain streams except in one or two isolated areas of the country, but here in this country, I never cease to delight in the beauty of the scenery, of the hills and the mountains and the valleys and the wonderful mountain streams. When you're standing beside one, the flow of water is awesome, it just seems to go on and on and on and on, as though there's no end to it. So God is urging the people to let His Word bear them up and bear them along, and that will happen when the people of God surrender up their will and allow God to work in their lives. To permit His Word to roll them along in the direction and the path that He wishes

them to take. So what He's saying is, make right decisions and make right judgments and then you'll be acceptable to your God. He will be pleased with you and He will fight against your enemies and do for you all the things that He has promised.

The simile, you know, is one that Amos would really understand. When he speaks about an 'ever rolling stream', we get that here again in the next phrase, because where it speaks of judgment running down as waters, it then speaks of righteousness, and 'righteousness as a mighty stream'. You seem to note the similarity in the two similes that he gives there, but in both phrases used in this verse, the flowing water is the principle metaphor that is used by the prophet. In both those cases we have a reference to judgment running down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream, and you know, b&s, I believe that there is there, an oblique reference to the Torah or the Law of Yahweh, because you know, that word in the Hebrew which is used for 'the law' (8451) of God, and is particularly applied to the Law of Moses, under which these people were to be directed in their way of lives, is a word that is derived from the word 'yarah' (3384) which means 'to flow as water'. So there seems to be here a beautiful reference to the fact, that if the people would only listen to the commandments of God, if they would only get back to the things that had been written, then indeed, they would be in a position to let judgment run down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. That's the idea of this word 'torah' the word for the law of God, like a mighty stream, a never ending stream, and the Word of God is like that, b&s, it doesn't matter where we go in this world, we can be in a desert place, we can be on top of a snow-capped mountain, we can be down in a valley, we can be in a hot climate or a cold climate, it doesn't matter where we are, if we've got this book with us, and it's our guide and our strength, if it is our encouragement, if it is our way of life, it doesn't matter where we are, the Word of God here is like an ever flowing stream.

It never dries up, it's always there, and can you imagine the effect that it would have upon Amos, the language that he uses there? because in the Middle East he would be like those of us in Australia, not used to ever flowing streams; they were few and far between. For a long time in the year, what would sometimes be streams, would simply dry up, and we call them today in the Middle East, wadis, and that's what they're known as, because they are valleys that are bone dry for months and months and months out of the year. But when the rains come, sometimes those dry wadis become a raging river, not just a stream, a raging river that you can't even get across. But when that rain is dissipated, it goes back to being a dried bed and all you see in a month's time, is dry sand and you wouldn't even know that a river had been there. Therefore, those words would make an even greater impact upon the people of Israel. Remember this, that the Word of God is like an ever rolling stream and it's always there, when you're thirsty and you need that water, you can go to it at any time. Right through every month of the year, doesn't matter when it is, and it doesn't matter whether it is day or night you can go to that stream and you can drink of that stream; it's pure water, it will take care of your thirst, it will fill you and provide for all your spiritual needs. Isn't God merciful to provide that? it's always there and so he says, 'let us see you manifest correct judgments' after the careful weighing up of all the evidence of what the prophet is saying to you, what the

Word of God says to you'. Amos says to the people, 'let us see you make correct judgments and let us see righteousness continue to flow amongst God's people, like a mighty stream, like a perpetual never ending stream!'

So therefore, if only the people would receive those words, if only they would acknowledge the goodness and mercy and the immeasurable benevolence of their God toward them. The fact that He had done everything, He had raised everything for them that they needed, to find their way back to a basis of sound worship, where instead of God saying, 'I will not smell your sacrifices', He would find them a sweet smelling offering because the offerings would represent what was in the hearts of the people. So there was there for them, that wonderful message, 'let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream'. If they would do that, they could be drawn back to their God, and He would be drawn back to them.

That leaves us, perhaps this morning, with the wonderful words of James when he said to us, 'Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you'.