Bible Study 14 October 20, 2021

“Amos” continued…..

In Chapter three, Amos begins a tradition of prophecy called: “The Enemy from the North.” It is a bitter warning as to what will happen if Israel does not return to the Covenant and the law of Moses.

“An enemy will overrun the land; he will pull down your strongholds and plunder your fortresses.”

The situation is dire. Amos has been sent to the North to the Kingdom of Israel. There he finds the Canaanite City of Bethel which sits on a hill. It is the shrine of the Canaanite god Baal and has as its center point a great Temple. Here the Canaanites worship their false fertility god offering sacrifices at important days in the year.

The Canaanites were a peaceful agricultural people. Their festivals were based on the Seasons of the Year. Amos is sent because the Israelites have drifted away from their faith in Judaism, the Law of Moses and the Covenant of Mount Sinai. They have deserted the Ten Commandments and the morality of their forefathers. They have grown rich and now frequent the Temple of Baal and sacrifice to him. This may well have also included child sacrifice. Amos prophecies:

“On this day I will punish Israel for her sins, I will destroy the altars of Bethel, the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground.”

“Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin some more; bring your sacrifices every morning…..”

Amos stands as the lone voice representing God, Yahweh the God of Israel the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Amos is ridiculed, abused, spat upon by the rich and the powerful. Amos speaks and writes using the voice of Yahweh in the first person. It is a powerful weapon and he uses it with great force. Many of his threats are about agriculture, crops, harvest, disease, plagues, blight, vineyards. Amos uses God’s voice to threaten plagues as he did in Egypt.

Chapter 5 begins with the words: “Fallen is the Virgin Israel, never to rise again, deserted in her own land with no one to lift her up.

Amos in Ch 5 speaks of a great defeat where Israel’s army is destroyed. Bethel and Gilgal spell death and loyalty to Yahweh spells life.

“Seek the Lord and live, do not seek Bethel, do not go to Gilgal. Do not journey to Beersheba. For Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing….”

Amos is horrified that the rich of bethel treat the poor so badly: “You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain.”

Seek good not evil…that you may live… hate evil love good… the Lord will have mercy… on the remnant of Joseph.”

Then in verse 18f Amos begins the great “WOE ORACLES”, prophecies that begin with the word WOE!

“Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord.”

The ‘Day of the Lord’ is a prophecy of a future event when God’s justice will come down on the heads of Israel.

To be continued….