Bible Study 17

November 3rd, 2021

RE: Chapter 8 and 9

Amos (continued and concluded)

Chapter 8:

We are on to the last two chapters of the Book of Amos 8 and 9. Amos continues to use a clever device of allowing God to speak in the first person.

“Hear this you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land.” 8:4f

He admonishes the rich merchants who use every device to cheat the poor, giving them false measure for grain and poor quality merchandize. He tells Israel that the Lord will never forget these things. He begins a series of stark warnings. “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in the broad daylight. I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make the time like mourning for an only son. And the end of it like a bitter day.”8:9f.

Amos’ words are well chosen because they harken back to Egypt and the struggle of Moses and the Israelites to break free of Pharaoh and their Slavery . They make reference to the 10 great plagues when the earth went dark and all the first born sons of Egypt died on the night of the Passover.

It is a total reversal of Israel’s Great Saga of Salvation that took them across the Red Sea and freed them from Slavery. Now Amos goes further and hits at the heart of all that the people of Israel love—‘the Promised Land.’—All of this because they have deserted the 10 Commandments and the Covenant with Moses and gone to worship Pagan gods in Bethel and Samaria.

“The day is coming when I will send a famine through the land, not a famine of thirst or hunger, but a famine of hearing the word of God. Men will stagger from sea to sea, and wander from North to East, searching for the word of God, but they will not find it.” 8:11f.

Amos talks of “In that day’. It is a phrase often used by the prophets who talk about “The Day of the Lord.” It is an expression which depicts a judgment day for all mankind but more particularly for Israel. Now Amos tells the people that that day is at hand.

Chapter 9:

I saw the Lord standing at the altar and he said: “Strike the tops of the pillars, so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on their heads of all the people, those who are left I will kill by the sword.” 9:1f.

Amos is predicting the destruction of the great temple of Solomon. But more, it is also a reference to the destruction of the great Philistine temple when Samson pulled the pillars down and all the Philistines were killed. Yet this time it is not the enemies of Israel who will die but Israel herself.

Next he mentions that they will be driven into exile… We have to remember that Amos was saying all this in a time of great economic prosperity and wealth. The response was that the rich women laughed at him and their husbands beat him and drove him out of Bethel. They would not listen.

“Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. I will fix my eyes upon their evil and not the good.” 9:4f.

In a great prophetic climate, Amos speaks of the waters covering the Israelites. Again, it is a reverse of the ‘Crossing of the Red Sea’, when all the Egyptians died. This time it is Israel who will drown by God’s own hand.

“Who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the land---the Lord is his name.” 9:6f.

Although the prophecy of Amos calls for the destruction of Israel, God leaves one last grain of hope. He states that only the sinners will die. A faithful few will survive and from these God will again raise up the House of David.

“In that day, I will restore David’s fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and rebuild it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name,” declares the Lord, who will do these things. 9:11f

God in Amos ‘prophecy promises to bring back the people from Exile and plant a new vine that will nourish his people. It is to be a new beginning, a new Promised Land with new rebuilt cities, and once again they will be his people.

Thus the Book of Amos ends with a few lines of hope.

Fr.Bill