Bible Study Fourteen October 13, 2021.

“Amos.”

Amos is a minor Prophet in the Old Testament. It is important to know what a prophet is. ‘A prophet is a person chosen or called by God, who makes sense of the present in the light of the past and points the way for God’s people into the future.’

Amos is a Sixth Century prophet living in a time of great prosperity. The kingdom of Israel, the kingdom of David and Solomon has long been divided North and South into the separate kingdoms of Judah in the South and Israel in the North.—The significance of this division for Judaism is that now the Twelve Tribes of the Jewish Covenant have been divided and are no longer united.

God speaks to Amos as he sits under a Sycamore tree, for he is a farmer. Yahweh’s message is very specific. Amos is to travel to the North far from his home. God tells Amos that he is going to punish Israel because she has strayed from being his Chosen People. He outlines all the blessings and graces he has bestowed upon his people, but now this sinful generation have broken the Covenant of Moses and worshiped pagan gods.

Amos: 2: 6f. “For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver. And the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed…..”

Amos speaks and writes his own words. He is both prophet and poet and later Israel and all of exiled Israel will find great consolation in his words.

To understand how far the northern kingdom had strayed from worshiping Yahweh the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you need only look at the town of Bethel. Bethel was a Canaanite town and shrine in the hill country of Galilee.

The Canaanites possessed the land long before the twelve tribes returned from Egypt. They were an agricultural people, who grew everything and raised cattle, sheep and goats. Like many who depended on the land they worshiped the seasons, and prayed and sacrificed to their gods for fertility. Fertility for their animals and for the harvest of the crops that they grew. Chief among their fertility gods was Baal, whose statue always appeared as a Bull.

The Jews of Bethel, enjoyed the pagan festivals of the Canaanites, frequented their temple and offered sacrifices to Baal. Historians tell us that this may have included child-sacrifice at special days of the year. The thinking being that if you sacrificed your first born male child, god would bless you, give you more heirs and mighty harvests. –See the connection here between the final 10th Plague in Egypt where the first born male child dies. And later it is a golden calf or bull that the people sacrifice to when Moses comes down the mountain with the tablets of Stone.

Read the first three chapters of Amos and briefly write down your thoughts in a few sentences.

(Continued next week.)

Fr. Bill