

Amos Chapter 5:- A Lament and a Call to Repentance

The prophet emphasises the need for repentance and again specifies some of the sins of which the people were guilty. Time and again he reiterates; “*Seek the Lord and live . .*” Chapter 5, verses 4: 6 and 14. If they do “*perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph*”. Chapter 5, verses 15.

Verses 1 – 3:- The prophet begins with a cry; intended to draw attention and strike fear into the hearts of his listeners. Israel is designated as a virgin because she had never yet been conquered. There is a contrast between her past and her future. Verse 3 describes the loss of 90% of her armies! A terrible slaughter for a small nation.

Verses 4 – 7:- The imperative “*Seek me and live*” is a word for their present situation.

It may be good to remember the things of the past – Bethel means ‘House of God’, the place of Jacob’s dream – Genesis 28, verses 10 – 22. It was one of the two great sanctuaries set up by Jeroboam, the first king of Israel (the Northern Kingdom). See 1 Kings, chapter 12, verses 25 – 30.

Gilgal was another unofficial shrine at the place where the Israelites first set foot in the Promised Land.

Joshua raised a pillar there of 12 stones taken from the bed of the river Jordan:- Joshua 4, verses 19 – 24. It was also the place of the celebration of the first Passover in the land of Canaan:- Joshua 5, verses 8 – 12.

Beersheba was a place associated with the patriarchs Abraham, who dug a well there, and Isaac. The name means “Well of Seven” or “Well of the Oath” see Genesis 21, verses 25 – 33.

The use of these places of past blessings as shrines was condemned. The call is to seek the Lord God in the present moment, not hark back to a glorious past! A message here for the church today!

Verses 8 -9:- It is the Lord the Creator who speaks through His prophet.

Verses 10 – 15:- These words are against those who should have been dispensing justice, expanding on verse 7. The gate of the city was the traditional place for dispensing justice; an example is in the Book of Ruth, chapter 4, verses 1 and following.

Verses 16 – 20:- The coming of the Lord will be in judgement. There was an sense of complacency that God was on their side! Amos is clear that when God comes it will be a time of gloom and despondency for those who have ignored the call to repentance. There will be no hiding place from the cleansing presence of God.

Verses 21 – 27:- The outward worship of the people was not acceptable to the Lord God. The implication of the “*sacrifices and offerings . . in the desert*” is that they were then worshipping with their hearts and outward actions. The need for inner compliance to justice and righteousness is emphasised in verse 24. Because they have worshipped foreign gods, they will be sent into exile to foreign lands – verses 26 – 27.

Chapter 6:- Woe to the Complacent

Verses 1 – 3:- The focus of attention changes to the southern kingdom of Judah with Zion (Jerusalem) as its capital city. It is no more secure than the nations round about, they are all vulnerable to invasion. Maybe the people of Judah felt more secure because Samaria was a strong fortress on its northern border.

Verses 4 – 8:- The ‘couldn’t care less’ attitude of the rich meant that they would be the first to go into exile. They should have been leading the people in repentance and true worship, their pride has led them to judgement.

Verses 9 – 10:- Those who left in the city after the invasion will be smitten by plague. There will be a fear of even mentioning that there is someone left in hiding in case the Lord hears and kills them.

Verses 11 – 14:- There is both a spiritual and moral order in the universe that is just as impossible to ignore as the natural order. It is as senseless to pervert justice as it is to expect horses to run on rocks or oxen to plough the mountains. ‘*Lo-debar*’ means ‘a thing of nought’ and ‘*Karnaim*’ means ‘horns’ = a thing of strength. The people had confidence in something that only existed in their own imagination. Judgement will come by a strong nation who will oppress them from the northern to the southern boundaries of the land.

The whole of these two chapters can be summed up for us in the words of the apostle Paul. Read Romans chapter 12, verses 1 – 3. Our “*hearts and minds and hands and voices*”, the whole of our lives, should be offered in true worship to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.