

Lent 2- Seek Me and Live - Amos chapter 5, verses 1 – 15:-

The prophet Amos was called by the Lord God to leave his work as “*a herdsman and dresser of sycomore-fig trees*” (Amos chapter 7, verse 14) to give a stern warning to the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The people had turned away from the pure worship of the Lord God to shrines and idol worship. This turning away affected not only their worship but also their attitude to others, especially to the poor and needy. Once there is a move away from the truth of God’s Word there is the danger of further movement until all semblance of righteousness has gone.

Verses 1 – 3:- Notice that the prophet is grieving over the people who have forsaken the Lord and lost the blessing which should have been theirs. This kind of ‘prophecy’ hurts! Seeing people take the wrong turning or make the wrong decision can cause so much grief to the faithful pastor / prophet. In present day terminology, a church which turns away from the Word of the Lord will lose its cutting edge and consequently lose numbers.

Verses 4 – 5:- An imperative for today! Thus says the Lord to each one of us and to his church “*Seek me and live*”. The past blessings are past.
“*Bethel*” The site of an altar to the Lord God erected by Abram (Genesis chapter 12, verse 8) and the place of Jacob’s dream (Genesis chapter 28, verses 11 – 19). Sadly Bethel became a centre of idolatry after the division of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel (1 Kings chapter 12, verses 25 – 30). “*Gilgal*” was where the People of God reconsecrated themselves on the entry into the promised Land under Joshua (Joshua chapter 4, verses 19 – 24 and chapter 5, verses 2 – 9). In the 8th century under the kings Uzziah to Hezekiah it became an idolatrous shrine where the people gathered to worship. It came under the condemnation of both Amos and Hosea (Hosea chapter 9, verse 15). “*Beer-Sheba*” is associated in Amos chapter 8, verse 14 with the worship of the “*Ashimah of Samaria*”. Again a centre of idolatrous worship.

Verses 6 – 7 and 10 - 15:- Again the cry from the heart of the prophet – *Seek the Lord and live*”. The out-workings of the abandonment of the worship of the God of justice and integrity along with the warning of the consequences! Once self is put first then others are relegated to second place. Note that the much discussed booklet “*Living in Love and Faith*” puts ‘love’ (is this ‘agape’ = ‘charity’ or human desire?) first before ‘faith’. Maybe if ‘Living in Faith and Love’ had been discussed (emphasis on faith in the Lord God and seeking his will) there may have been a different outcome? Sadly then as now, neither the people nor the hierarchy would listen (Amos chapter 7, verses 10 – 17) and the consequences were inevitable!

Verses 8 – 9:- A reminder of the greatness of the Lord God. He is the one who created all things in the beginning (Genesis chapter 1, verses 14 – 18). This is the God who brought down the walls of Jericho (Joshua chapter 6, verses 15 – 16) and inspired David to slay Goliath (1 Samuel chapter 17, verses 45 – 49).

The difficulties raised by Joshua in Joshua chapter 24, verses 19 – 24 still hold good! The Lord our God is a Holy God. We are called to a life of holiness and righteousness and we can only approach Him in and through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; pleading his sacrifice for us on the Cross of Calvary (1 Peter chapter 1, verses 18 – 21).

The command to the redeemed people of God is the same in both the Old Testament and the New - “*You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy*” Leviticus chapter 11, verses 44 – 45 and 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 14 – 16. A call to us His people this Lent!