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MID-ATLANTIC BIBLE SCHOOL - 1987

AMOS - THE HERDSMAN FROM TEKOA

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Study #4: Desolation to Come

We concluded our thoughts yesterday morning in Amos chapter 3, and with that very penetrating question in verse 3, which really provides the hub around which the entire book of Amos revolves. It's a question that we considered rather carefully in our thoughts yesterday morning and gave us all something to think about in regard to its application.

We'd just like this morning, to draw our attention to the fact, that the question as it stands in the King James Version, is a very, very valid one apart from the way in which we looked at the meaning of that word 'agreed' in our study yesterday. We saw that we should really understand that the verse is saying, 'Can two walk together, that is, in harmony except they meet at an appointed meeting place?' We saw that that had particular application to the northern tribe, who were worshipping in their own temple or temples in their own way, whereas the place for divine worship was in Jerusalem at the divinely appointed temple. Therefore, the question had a particular application to those 10 tribes who had rebelled and broken away and had gone up into the north. We also saw the remarkable application that it has for ourselves in relation to the removal of the veil within the temple, the opening up of the way into the Most Holy Place, and the fact that our God has appointed a meeting place, with which we can meet with Him.

As we look at this verse again this morning, before we leave that third verse and just look at the first part of the question, 'Can two walk together?' if the two happen to be Almighty God and His people, the answer is, OF COURSE THEY CAN! Of course they can and despite our own imperfections, despite our own weaknesses, despite our own failures, if our disposition is right, if our heart is toward our God in the spirit of His truth, then, of course, they can! Doesn't the scripture tell us in Genesis 5 verse 24, 'that Enoch walked with God'; Enoch walked with God, doesn't it tell us in Genesis 6 verse 9, that Noah walked with God. There's a very wonderful thought in that which we shall endeavour to illustrate, a little more fully as we go along; but what a wealth of meaning is included in these phrases, and of those who are found worthy to inherit the kingdom with Christ, He hath said, this scripted in particular of the faithful who were at Sardis, He said, 'they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy'. They are wonderfully encouraging words, to realize and to appreciate that in all the goodness and the mercy of our God, as displayed toward us, if we respond to Him, in the way in which He

appeals to us, of course, the answer to the question, 'can two walk together?' must be in the affirmative, but it will not depend upon God as to whether the two can walk together in harmony or not, it will depend upon us! and whether we are willing to submit to what God requires of us!

So, for example, we have the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians, when he spoke to the ecclesia there and spoke about the great desire and joy that he had for them in his relationship with them. Speaking about the way in which he had brought them like a father and a mother, as he says in chapter 2, into Christ, that they might ultimately be delivered into the glory and rejoicing of the kingdom of God. He says to those brethren and sisters, in verse 19, 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For YE are our glory and joy'. He was encouraging those brethren and sisters, in the epistle that he wrote to them, followed by a second epistle that follows on, with the fact that they could indeed walk together with their God, in response to the appeal as we find it in the wording of Amos, and as we find it in other parts of the Word of God as well.

But what a monumental tragedy, we're considering here in the book of Amos, that that spirit that can draw men and women to learn to walk in harmony with their God, according to terms and conditions that He has established, what a monumental tragedy that that spirit did not move the people of God in the days of the prophet Amos. They did not and they would not seek to walk in harmony with their God, so when we come to consider these things, we go over to chapter 4 momentarily, and at verse 4, again remember, how that we saw that the three messages in this part of the book, all begin with the phrase 'HEAR THIS WORD', and so chapter 4 begins in the same way. It's very, very remarkable to consider, the challenge of those words in chapter 3 and verse 3, and how we have seen that it can be done, that men and woman can learn to walk together with their God, as the people of God. But as for these people, who would not listen to the voice of Amos, sent through the love of God, although rebuking them; to try and reclaim them to the way that would lead them to eternal salvation.

But we find them doing the very opposite! In chapter 4 and verse 4 we have the prophet saying, 'Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years'. It's a really remarkable expression, the special need of the people is being shown by Amos in this very direct way. The prophet now addresses himself to the throngs of Israelites from the northern tribes who gathered at Beth-el for the festivals of religious worship (as they called them) they came to Beth-el thinking they were worshipping God, but they were not! What an ironical thing that the very name Beth-el means 'the house of God' (1008), but it was anything but that in the days of Amos; so they came to Beth-el thinking that they were worshipping their God, but instead of that they were transgressing, because as we saw yesterday, and we have briefly mentioned this morning, it is quite possible, more than possible, for men and women to learn to walk in harmony with their God and to be acceptable to Him and to gain an entrance into the kingdom of God, with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has made it possible, He doesn't ask of us the impossible, in

any sense whatever, He is a kind, thoughtful, loving compassionate God, and He's made the way possible for us, to attain unto the kingdom. But the only way we're going to attain it, is to do it His way! not ours. So, while the place of divine worship was in Jerusalem, in the divinely ordained people at Jerusalem, the people of the northern tribes were going to a temple that had been erected at Beth-el.

You'll notice the ironical wording of the prophet in that 4th verse, 'Come to Beth-el and transgress', what irony that was! and what a frightful situation it really was, because Amos is really saying there, that you are coming to Beth-el and you think that you're worshipping God, but what you are doing is transgressing the principles of divine worship, that He has laid down in His Word for your benefit. So when he says, 'come to Beth-el and transgress', he says in effect, 'come to Beth-el by all means if you want to, but because of your transgressions God will repudiate you'. And according to the emphasis on the Hebrew wording here, Amos is really saying the statement in a very ironical way, the idea of the Hebrew idiom here is more or less along the lines of 'come on, come on, COME ON! Come to Beth-el and transgress'. So there's great drama in what he says and it really is a very, very terrible situation. But it's a reminder to us, b&s, and a reminder to the people of God in every generation who have followed the record since the words of Amos were recorded in holy scripture, it is a really powerful reminder to us, and a very compelling one, that external worship is a mere mockery of God, if the heart of the individual is not peacefully in harmony with the Creator. Can two walk together? YES THEY CAN WALK TOGETHER, many, many men and women of faith down through the ages of time, have walked together with their God and will be in the kingdom of God, because their hearts and their dispositions have been drawn toward their God in spirit and in truth! and therefore, there was no reason why the people to whom Amos wrote could not have responded in the way in which God appealed to them.

But the reminder is there! These people were worshippers, they went to a temple, they offered sacrifices, they kept the feast days, but external worship is a mere mockery, if the heart of the individual is not in harmony with the will and the purpose of the Creator. So we may be well aware of our weaknesses and our failings and our shortcomings, but they in themselves, since we are dealing with a merciful God, will not prevent us from gaining the kingdom of God. But on the other hand, rebellion is a different matter; open rejection of divine principles is a different thing. So if the heart of the individual or of the people is rebellious to the will of God, then their so called 'worship' is nothing more than a mockery. That's what it was in the case of the 10 tribes, and that is what Amos was trying desperately, as a servant of Almighty God, to try and rectify among those people. External religious worship must always be a reflection of what is in the heart, but if what is in the heart is corrupt and it is ungodly, then the external form of worship has no worth whatsoever. If only the people could have seen that and responded to the message of Amos, and could have seen that what he was saying was for their good, for their welfare, for their education and for their encouragement, to seek their God in the spirit of the truth.

But Amos found that the people of Israel were quite keen to perform the outward ritual of religious practices, but their hearts were corrupt. You know, with that in mind and bearing in mind the weakness inherent in human nature, we can perhaps understand then more fully, why Paul exhorted in Corinthians the need that we should examine ourselves, before the Lord's table; that we should examine ourselves in the light of the perfection of the character of the Son of God, and see where we fall short. To see and acknowledge openly before our God where our weaknesses are apparent, but to still see that perfect example, and to still struggle on in the spirit of the truth toward that perfect example. Not that any of us would ever stand equal in perfection of character with the Lord Jesus Christ. But God looks upon the heart, and we remember that David had to learn that lesson. Samuel himself had to learn it when he went to anoint the next king of Israel in the house of Jesse, and God taught that lesson to those people; man looks upon the outward appearance but God looketh upon the heart! and that is what really happens as far as the purpose of eternal salvation is concerned. Here we have a nation of religious worshippers, who tragically worshipped their God in vain.

So, in chapter 4 and verse 12, as these various points in the chapter are drawn to a conclusion, we would like to briefly comment upon verse 12 and then make some comments on the majestic language of this 13th verse. It's absolutely an awesome verse of scripture, verse 13. But in doing so, you may recall a point I think we made on Monday morning, in relation to the fact, that time and time again, Yahweh had brought this people under trial, brought them into circumstances, where if they had any spiritual discernment whatever, they would have looked at themselves and said, 'why is this happening to us? what are we doing wrong that God is bringing these things upon us?' instead of which they were inclined to say, 'why does God let this happen to us, when we are the people of God!' in other words, the blame was laid, as it often has been, tragically among the people of Israel, the blame for their misfortunes has so often been laid at the feet of God, as though He's in error, rather than them looking upon themselves and saying, 'well, what have we done? where are we walking astray from the truth? God is bringing us into trial that we might see and observe and understand and return to Him in a spirit of humble submission to His will'.

You'll notice here in chapter 4 and verse 4, 'Come to Beth-el and transgress: at Gilgal multiply transgression. Bring your sacrifices every morning and your tithes after 3 years'. Then the words go on from verse 6 to indicate some of the things that God had brought upon them to try and bring them to their spiritual sensibilities. You'll notice at the end of verse 6 after saying what He'd done there, it says, 'yet hath you not returned unto Me'. Down in verse 8, 'yet have ye not returned unto Me', verse 9, 'yet have ye not returned unto Me', verse 11, 'yet have ye not returned unto Me'; and there's a repetition there, it occurs 5 times! It details 5 experiences that God had brought upon that nation, to try and get them to do that one thing; not to show them that He was merely displeased with them, not to say to them, if they do this, this is what I'm going to do to them. There was a purpose in it all! that they might return unto Him, and there is the overriding love and mercy and compassion of God toward His people. He will do that time and time again until, of course, the time comes when His forbearance comes to an end, and then

follows judgment!. But it's interesting that we have that there in chapter 4, five times, and I believe the '5' there is not without significance, because I believe the significance of the number '5' in the bible, is that of grace and restoration; I believe that's the symbolic importance of the number 5, it speaks of grace and restoration, time and time again, you'll find that throughout scripture, and so in effect, we have these 5 instances mentioned, to cause the people to return unto their God, showing that the purpose of these 5 points of trial that God had brought upon them, was to bring them to a state of grace and restoration, that God might treated them in that way. But the final word is, for the fifth time, 'yet have ye not returned unto Me'.

How sad must the prophet Amos had been! How sad and filled with tragedy must the servants of God down throughout the ages have been, when they have gone to the people of God with a message of hope, a message of encouragement, a message of direction, at the behest of God, God's servants raised up as prophets, and later, of course, apostles who go to the people of God with messages that would enlighten them and encourage them, that would educate them in the truth, that would give them the message of Hope for the future, only to find that the message is rejected. You may recall that in the case of the prophet Jeremiah, when he learned that because the people of the southern kingdom of Judah, had so totally disregarded God's plea to them, and he learned of the fearful thing that was to happen, that the Babylonians were to pour down like a screaming horde upon the kingdom of Judah, and destroy it and overturn it; his bowels failed him, his bodily functions failed him, he was so filled with fear and terror at the prospect of what was to come. It wasn't because he was afraid, it was because he loved his people and it was because he was afraid for his people. There you get the wonderful aspect of God's prophets, who were not simply men who were automatons that God suddenly took hold of, and said, 'you write this, or you go and say this'; when you study the lives of the prophets of God, you find invariably that there is some evidence to the effect, that they themselves were men of God. God chose men of faith, men who were faithful and so therefore, they felt personally in a very real way, as though the tragedy to come upon God's people, was a tragedy that was coming upon themselves. They felt for the people, because they loved the people, they were their people as they were the people of God. So none of the prophets of God ever took any joy in having to go before the people and say, 'Thus saith your God' and announce the judgments that were to come; none of them took joy in that or pleasure in that!

So here we find those well known words in verse 12, 'Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel'. They are possibly the most well known words from the book of Amos, but possibly also, perhaps not as well understood as they should be. 'Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel', but you see, the challenge there was that they were to prepare to meet their God as an adversary; and you can imagine those words coming forth from the lips of the prophet Amos, and try and appreciate or feel what he experienced at that time! We might think that perhaps that he simply stood there like a judge on a bench and simply stood there and said, 'prepare to meet thy God, O Israel', as though perhaps he might have even

taken some delight in pronouncing that judgment upon them. That they were to meet their God as an adversary, they were to meet Him through the mighty power of the Assyrian, who was going to come down and invade that land, and overturn that kingdom, and destroy many of them and take others away into captivity. I do not believe that when Amos uttered those words, that he would have stood forth like a pious judge, pronouncing the death sentence upon a man convicted of murder in a court of law. I believe that when we look at those words, 'prepare to meet thy God, O Israel', those words would have come forth from the prophet Amos like a howl of despair, like a deep cry, a grief, from the very depths of his heart, because he knew there was nothing to be done and it was his duty to pronounce that!

We have to remember, b&s, that we today are given the opportunity to prepare to meet our God, O Israel, in the sense that we are to meet the Lord Jesus Christ. It should be our very earnest prayer and it should be the dedication of our lives, that we will not, like the people in the days of Amos, have to meet Him as an adversary! I do earnestly believe that if we will all hearken to the lessons we can learn from the book of Amos, words delivered to a people so long, long ago that are still recorded in the pages of holy writ as Paul says, 'for our learning and our admonition'. That if we will strive to learn those lessons from this great prophet of God, then we will prepare ourselves to submissively learn the lessons that are taught during the course of his ministry, and if we do that then our faith will be strengthened, we will be encouraged in the way, as Amos tried to encourage his people in his day, so we might be prepared, as the Lord puts it Himself, 'to stand before the Son of man'. So those words would have come forth reached out of the prophet Amos, out of the depths of his despair! because it need not to have been so!

Then at the end of the chapter Amos tries once more to get them to see something of the God, who held in His hand, the whole of their destiny. Look at the words of verse 13, that follow so remarkably after that pronouncement in verse 12. 'For lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, Yahweh, The God of Sabaoth, is His name'. That is majestic language, absolutely magnificent language in the final verse of chapter 4; if we understand those words, if we respond to them, we will be lifted and we will be elevated above the everyday corruption and weakness of the life in the world about us, the corruption and weakness that is inherent in man, and when we are lifted up then we will see the heights and the majesty of the glory of the God that has called us for His name and for His purpose. I'd like to read you that verse as it's rendered in the Jerusalem bible, very, very touchingly and very, very beautifully, this is how verse 13 reads, 'For He it is who formed the mountains, created the wind, reveals His mind to man, makes both dawn and dark, and walks on the top of the heights of the world. Yahweh God of Sabaoth is His name'.

Aren't they tremendous words? If only the people in the days of Amos could have paused, in their everyday life, and listened to those words, for He it is that formed the mountains, created the wind, reveals His mind to man, makes both dawn and dark, and

walks on the top of the heights of the world, Yahweh God of Sabaoth is His name. Aren't they really words to bring every man and every woman to their knees before their God? Aren't they words calculated to make any person with any perception of understanding of the truth, to stop and to pause and to consider first of all, the wonder and the glory and the majesty of the God they worship? The power that is incumbent within Him and then to look at themselves and see their own feebleness, their own weakness, their total dependence upon that mighty power from on high, and therefore, the need to submit to His will, whatever it might be for our own good? You see, that verse is telling us wonderful things: He formed the mountains, it's reminding us that He created the material universe; then it says He created the wind, that tells us that He's not only the Creator of material things but of energy itself. Then it says, He reveals His mind to man, which shows that He's a loving and a benevolent God-He doesn't have to do that. There's no law that says that the great Creator has got to reveal His mind to man, but He does it! Then it tells us that He makes both dawn and dark, in other words, He can exercise power in a way that no other being can do, in heaven nor on earth. He has the ultimate power, limitless power, which means that He can do all things and He can achieve all things. 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him?' was the thought that went through the Psalmist as recorded in Psalm 8, and I'm sure we all appreciate those words, so therefore, in view of what is stated here, for the benefit of the people of Israel so long ago, should not man then, bow humbly before such great power? Light and darkness cannot be made by man other than a purely artificial way. God brings these things about by His means. It tells us here that 'He walks on the top of the heights of the world, an incredible statement. He walks on the top of the heights of the world; He is a supreme being, the supreme Sovereign, the all-powerful One! the all exultant One, the One upon whom we depend for all things.

So in this relation when we look at chapter 5, and again we see the words as they carry on with these 3 messages. 'Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation'. It goes on to tell us in verse 2, 'The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise, she is forsaken upon her land', and the word 'forsaken' (5203) there should be rendered literally, 'she shall be dashed upon her own land', and of course, it would be the Assyrian lion that would do this to her. Then it says, 'there is none to raise her up', which may appear to be rather a remarkable statement, 'there is none to raise her up', was there anyone to raise her up again? Of course, there was! there was their God of whom we just read in verse 13, the God of infinite power, the God of infinite benevolence, the God of forbearance, the God with the capability of doing all things for all people if they respond in the way in which He calls upon them to do so. Yet it says here there is none to raise her up, wasn't there anyone who could raise her up again, of course, there was, there was their God who could have done it, but the wording is specific, why is it so specific? It might appear to indicate that even God couldn't raise her up! but that's not right. The point of the verse is that since the people had turned from Him, they would not permit Him to raise them up! That's what He was trying to do through the prophet Amos, and therefore, for that reason and that reason alone, there was in actual fact, literally, none to raise her up. God was there but He could do nothing unless the people returned to Him! which of course, has been the constantly reiterated

plea throughout these chapters of Amos.

And what of ourselves? Let's have a look at a very interesting verse in scripture, Psalm 37, where we find the experience of this great man of faith, who had learned what it was like to live near to God, to live close to God, to feel the Presence of God. There's something very wonderful about these verses; there are a number of things that are very wonderful about them, but this morning, one thing in particular that we'd like to see, that if only Amos could have got the people of his day to understand this, things would have been so different. In Psalm 37 at verses 23 and 24 we find that the Psalmist says, 'The steps of a good man are ordered by Yahweh' (now the word 'good' of course, as the italics indicate, is not there) and the word 'man' is the word 'gibbor' and therefore, it refers to a man who was even a 'great' man. It can be used of a warrior, it's used many ways in scripture but generally of a man of some standing or some power or influence; but, the Psalmist is saying here, that even the steps of a man who might be set high in authority, and be in a high position, need to be ordered by God. So it says, 'such a man delighteth in his way', but then it tells us in the next verse, 'though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for Yahweh upholdeth him with His hand'. Now what a wonderful verse of scripture that is, and how magnificent is that message in its encouragement for us. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for Yahweh upholdeth him with His hand; you try and make a picture out of that verse. You see a man walking along in the way of the truth (a man or a woman) trying to walk along in the way of the truth, they are doing what they can to serve their God in the spirit of the truth, but because of the weakness of the nature, the weakness of what we are, the propensities within our nature, we will fall, it happens to all of us. We will fall, but the idea here is of someone falling but they don't quite fall to the point where they smash their head on the ground, because it says here in verse 24, 'that God will uphold him with His hand'. Now to get a picture like that where you have a picture of someone who is walking together with God; can two walk together? we've seen that they can! and in Psalm 37 there is a picture of that being done. There's a person walking along the way that God's directed, that they might come to the kingdom of God; they're trying to do what God requires of them, and they trust in God and they have faith in God and therefore, God is near. The verse is pointing out that God is so near that as the fall commences, God is so close to that person, He can reach out and take them by the hand before total disaster falls upon them, and bring them up onto their feet again!

It is a picture of a person walking in very close harmony with God, 'can two walk together?' Enoch walked with God, Noah walked with God and we can walk with God; of course, we can! because He has made it every bit possible for everything that we need to accomplish that way of life. So therefore, we have a wonderful picture of the way in which those who trust God can rely upon Him, those who put their faith and their confidence in Him upon the basis of submitting to His will, will have Him near. Now some years ago at a American bible school, when I had been giving a talk from some other completely different section of the Word of God than Amos, but it had been something along the lines of the things we'd been discussing this morning; after our meeting a sister came along (this was many years ago) and she placed a little piece of

paper in my hand, and she was so shy that she didn't say anything just handed me this little piece of paper with a smile and walked away. I looked at this piece of paper, and do you know what it had written on it? It said simply in a very nice fine writing, 'if you sometimes feel that God is not near, who moved?' I thought that was a beautiful thought, and you know something? that little piece of paper is still here to this day in my bible. It's a reminder to me, that if you sometimes feel that God is far away, who moved? now on the basis of Psalm 37 and that verse we read, you've got a person that's close to God, who's aware of the presence of God, and if sometimes we get very desponded as I think we all do at times, with the trials and tribulations of life, the things that go wrong, we all get an element of despondency that comes into our lives, if we ever get that way where we feel that perhaps God has deserted us, let's remember that little statement. If we think that God has moved away from us, we're wrong! if anyone has moved it hasn't been God, it's been us! So what we need to do, is to turn around and go back and once again be in that position as described in that beautiful verse in Psalm 37; be so close to God that when the time comes that we fail, that something goes wrong, our God is close enough to us, because we are close enough to Him, that He can put out His hand in a sense, and raise us up and lift us on our feet, and our feet are still directed by Him that will lead us to His kingdom. A very wonderful thing! And how we need that closeness, and how we need to be close to God in that way, it is so very, very important that we remember that and we keep close to God by a constant absorbing of the things recorded in His Word; by constantly appealing to the Word of God to speak to us. We stay close to God by regular communion with Him in prayer.

Yesterday morning, I asked a question after my session here, of a little group of young children: now I said to them, I want you to consider something, I want you to think about this and then be very careful before you answer. I said 'imagine a situation where I might say, well, I've studied the bible for 35 or 40 years, whatever, I've given a lot of time to it, I've tried to live by the Word of God and I think I've reached a stage in life where really I know enough; I don't think I need the bible anymore really. Oh, I read it now and again perhaps but I don't think I need to worry too much about it, I've required a knowledge of the truth, I think I'm pretty well established in the truth, I don't think I need to worry about it so I can put it away and not think too much about it'. I said to this class of children, 'do you think I'd be very stupid if I did that?' And there was a chorus that nearly lifted the roof, YES! So I said, alright, yes, I'll accept your answer but I said, now tell me why? and one little girl about 10 years of age said to me, you would be stupid to do that, Uncle John, because if you stop reading the Word of God, then you will stop thinking about the things of God, and then your mind will be getting filled with other things that will draw you away from God and away from life in the truth, and then when Jesus comes, you won't be ready!' Is there anyone here with 30 or 40 years experience in the truth who would like to improve on that answer? because I couldn't and you see, that's what we've got in that beautiful psalm, the guard, the safety, that's what we've got in the book of Amos.

Now let's turn to chapter 5 and to verse 4 for the couple of minutes that we have remaining to us. We're going to see the theme of the book which I think we mentioned in

our first study. In chapter 5 and verse 4, here we have the theme of the book of Amos, 'For thus saith Yahweh unto the house of Israel, Seek ye Me, and ye shall live'. You'll notice in verse 6, 'Seek Yahweh, and ye shall live; you'll notice in verse 8, 'Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion'; you'll notice in verse 14, 'Seek good and not evil, that ye may live'. Chapter 5 brings us to the core of the book and therefore it brings us to the theme of the book. Let us consider those words briefly this morning in verse 4, 'seek ye Me and ye shall live'. Isn't it very interesting that that statement which really epitomizes the message of the book of Amos, is really in two parts? The first is 'seek ye Me' and that, of course, was their responsibility! That was the responsibility of the people, because God's talking to the people of Israel. Seek ye Me, and it was their responsibility, it was their need, it was their obligation as it is ours. But in the latter part of it, it is beautiful, 'and ye shall live'. That is what God will do for us, it's beautiful, absolutely beautiful, and it reminds us of those tremendously moving words in James, when James says to us, 'Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you', and how wonderful that is, exactly as we have it in the book of Amos. 'Seek ye Me' (that's what we have to do first) and then 'ye shall live' (because God can do that for us). James puts it in exactly the same order, James says, 'draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you'. If our heart is right, if our disposition is right then in that way God can do everything for us, though we cannot do it for ourselves.

As we look at that then, as the theme of the book of Amos, is it not remarkable to think, as personally my own conviction is, that that is the theme of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7 where the Lord utters the core statement around which the whole of that discourse revolves, and it is simply this, 'seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness' and may that be our dedicated way of life until the Lord returns!