

## “Seek Ye Yahweh”

1 Corinthians chapter 1 describes the manner in which the Word was preached and received:

“Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His Presence” (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

The system of salvation extended to Man therefore, involves the elevation of the Father only, making no provision for flesh to glory before Him. “We preach Christ crucified ... unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:23) says the inspired Apostle, and this maxim holds as true today as when it was first written. The Natural man is unable to receive the things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14) - especially when to do so involves humility and self abasement – and so holds fast to that which is natural to him - the indulgence of the carnal mind upon things that do not profit. Preachers of the Gospel taught by Christ and his apostles have been scorned and derided throughout the ages, for in themselves and their natural position in society, there is no human reason why they should be honoured. But “the foolishness of God [i.e. the cross of Christ considered foolish by men] is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (Rom. 1:25) - and though the treasure is hidden within weak and earthen vessels, when Messiah comes to lead his people into victory against the powers of sin, the light shall be caused to shine across the entire globe, after the fashion of Gideon’s victory over his enemies.

This pattern is something that we find repeated in the prophecy of Amos. The seventh chapter recounts the prophet’s words in answer to Amaziah, the priest of Beth-El, who had told him to “flee thee away” and cease prophesying to Israel:

“I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel” (Amos 7:14-15).

So it was that in selecting men to deliver words of rebuke and correction to his people, Yahweh chose those who, by the world’s standards were weak and lowly. Amos was not among the rich and prosperous in the things of this life, neither did he elevate himself to be a prophet – rather he was taken and chosen by the Father, that having no glory in himself to detract from the message, he would be a vessel suitable to hold forth the word of life.

Amos chapter 1 tells us that the prophet’s ministry was during the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. And 2 Chronicles chapter 26 characterises this period as being a time of prosperity. Uzziah, we are told: “built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also,

and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel, for he loved husbandry” (2 Chron. 26:10).

The record continues:

“and he made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men, to be upon the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped till he was strong” (2 Ch 26:15).

Carmel was a fruitful place, and the prosperity of the land was shown by the need for vinedressers and husbandmen to tend the land and beasts. Yahweh blessed him greatly, but only whilst he was of a lowly spirit. He was “marvellously helped till he was strong” we are informed, “but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction; for he transgressed against Yahweh his God, and went into the temple of Yahweh to burn incense upon the altar of incense” (2 Chron. 26:15-16). Had Uzziah remained humble, Yahweh would have continued to elevate him, but as “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18) even so Uzziah became haughty, and fell from his position of favour. Seeking to become his own High Priest by entering the Temple without Divine Authorisation, he was smitten with leprosy in his forehead, and remained a leper till the day of his death.

It is interesting to note that in the year of Uzziah’s death, the prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the glorified Messiah:

**“In the year that king Uzziah died** I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (Isa. 6:1).

Notice here, the Master is “upon a throne”, which speaks of *kingship*, but his train filled “the temple,” which indicates the centre of *worship*, or religion. So it is that in the Kingdom, Christ shall be a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, a king-priest officiating in the presence of Yahweh in the Most Holy.

However, unlike Uzziah, Christ does not elevate himself to be a priestly king: he is made so by Divine appointment:

**“so Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest;** but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I forgotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:5-6).

Moreover, Christ sought salvation from death, in humility not presumptuously. The sacrifices he offered were not animal offerings, but tears, and a meek and lowly spirit that trembled at the Father’s word: “when he had **offered up** prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared ...” (Heb. 5:7).

Returning to the prophecy of Amos, and particularly that portion which forms part of our daily readings for today, we find a constant exhortation to repent and “seek” Yahweh. “thus saith Yahweh unto the house of Israel, **Seek ye me**, and ye shall live”

(Amos 5:4). This theme continues throughout the chapter: see verses 6, 8, 14. The exhortation is therefore, for sinful men to repent and seek Yahweh in spirit and in Truth. Amos' ministry was particularly to the elevated class in Israel; against "the habitations of the shepherds, and the top of Carmel" which would "wither" (Amos. 1:2). Again, he spoke words against the "palaces" of both Israel and the heathen (1:4, 7, 10, 12, 2:2, 3:9, 11, 15). And chapter 5 describes the people:

"they hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly, forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye have taken from him burdens of wheat ... they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right" (Am. 5:11,12).

The poor and defenceless were oppressed by men of standing and prosperity. Just as we read in 1 Corinthians that the truth-holders tend to be men of weak social standing, even so those who spoke out against the excesses of Israel were "hated" and "abhorred". Even so it is today, that men of the flesh pour scorn upon men of the spirit.

But those to whom Amos spake, although they denied the power thereof, they did have a "form of godliness". They made a shew of desiring the long-promised Day of Yahweh to come, when they might be further glorified. But this was not to be so: the Day when it came was to be darkness and judgment, not light and glory to them:

"Woe unto you that desire the day of Yahweh! To what end is it for you? The day of Yahweh is darkness, and not light ... shall not the Day of Yahweh be darkness, and not light? Even be very dark, and no brightness in it" (Am. 5:18, 20).

Malachi spoke of that same day, saying, "who may abide the day of his coming" (Mal. 3:2). Joel spoke of that day, being "*a day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness*" (Joel 2:2). These things ought to provoke us into an inward examination. When Messiah returns, there will be those who seek to be identified with him, and say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them. I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity" (Mat. 7:22-23). In that day, there shall be great darkness and gnashing of teeth on the part of the rejected (cp. Mat. 22:13). It is quite possible to look towards the coming Day of Yahweh with an entirely wrong heart and spirit. It is no use to seek the kingdom to come if it is not our present desire to live by the principles it will be established upon. For one thing, if we do not delight in the things of the spirit of God, we will not be happy living in conditions where only those things are elevated. But more importantly, if we do not seek the righteousness of the Father in our age – have can we expect it to be imputed to us in the age to come?

Amos chapter 5 nevertheless provides us with a vision of hope. Although the coming Day of Yahweh would be darkness to those who cannot abide the glory of the Light, for the faithful there would be an entrance into a dawning of a new day:

"Seek him that ... turneth the shadow of death into the morning ..." (Am. 5:8).

In Yahweh then, there is hope and salvation. It may well be that during the days of our sojourn in mortal weakness that the path upon which we walk will lead us through times of bitterness and hardship. Times that seem like we are walking in the “shadow of death”. Certainly this was true of David – yet he continued to trust in his God:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psa. 23:4).

Again, Israel are depicted to Ezekiel (chapter 37) as dwelling in a valley of death – dry bones resting in hope that they might come together again at the appointed time, and be caused to stand up as a “great army”. In the darkest of whatever circumstances befall us, we can have the confidence that Yahweh is going to bring a new age of light, health, and wisdom – and that if we desire those things in our hearts, we will be part of that kingdom to come. To the Word and to the Testimony we look for light and hope (Isa. 8:20). As the “children of light” we do not seek our own glory, as did Uzziah. Seeking to be identified with he who was meek and lowly in heart (Mat. 11:29), we do not exalt ourselves, but trust in Yahweh that He will give the reward in due time. Not seeking the material things of this life, we seek first the Kingdom of God, and Yahweh’s righteousness, knowing that all other things we have need of will be provided for us (Mat. 6:33). The examples lie before us in the Scriptural record, but only we can made the decision to follow them.

*Christopher Maddocks*