

Amos 5: A Prophet's Warning

When Martin Luther King made his famous 'I have a dream' speech in Washington in August 1963 he quoted this chapter of the Bible, declaring, 'we will not be satisfied until *justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.*'

Justice and righteousness matter to God.

Having compromised on their loyalty to the God Who had rescued their forefathers from slavery in Egypt, Israel were not afraid to break His commands and abuse their fellow men and women. The prophet laments a catalogue of human rights abuses. He vividly describes a society that sells the poor for exploitation and tolerates corruption in the courts, all the while practising a sickening veneer of religion.

The Lord is not fooled and sends His spokesman to issue a dire warning.

If His people will not practise true spiritual devotion demonstrated by social conscience they can expect to be judged like the nations indicted for their cruelty in chapters 1 and 2!

Long before it happened Amos was given to accurately predict people from northern Israel being 'exiled' from their land and taken captive by northern superpower Assyria.

We can sense some of the passion and urgency of his preaching in this chapter in phrases like, 'Seek the Lord and live, or He will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire...Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light?' (v 6 and 20)

Yet even the sternest of warnings from the Almighty is not without the possibility of grace.

'Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say He is.' (v14)

The world of the 21st century would do well to heed these inspired words from antiquity. Complacency is not an option!