

Today's Quick Word Amos 2:11-12

By Bruce Christian

AMOS 2:11-12 *"I also raised up prophets from among your sons and Nazirites from among your young men. Is this not true, people of Israel?" declares the LORD. "But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy."*

Our whole world is under God's Righteous Judgement. As Paul wrote to the Romans: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that MEN ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE." (Romans 1:18-20).

Into this frightening situation, Jesus calls on all who follow him to function as 'salt and light' (Matthew 5:14-16) - 'salt', to counter the process of decay and putrefaction caused by sin, and to bring out in life God's intended good 'flavour and taste'; and 'light', to expose and overcome the darkness, and to reveal God's true, intended 'path' of life. When Jesus made this call in the Sermon on the Mount, he anticipated the fierce opposition that would result from its being put into practice: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." (Matthew 5:11).

This is just what God had said to the nation of Israel through

his faithful Prophet, Amos. Here in Australia, the followers of Jesus have enjoyed a time of relative freedom from the level of opposition and persecution anticipated by Amos and Jesus. But now we are starting to experience it to an increasing degree. Faithful Christians are being criticised and marginalised as 'anti-social', even 'unAustralian', for not going along with and endorsing lifestyle choices that are clearly contrary to God's revealed truth in his Word, and are being castigated, fined, and even imprisoned, for declaring God's truth in the public forum.

God's people need to be encouraging one another and praying for one another, that our gracious, faithful Lord will enable us, in HIS strength, to stand firm in these days, against the forces and pressures that are marshalled against us. Let us take heart from Amos' reply to the priest Amaziah when he was commanded to keep quiet and go home: "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'" (Amos 7:14-15), and let us hear his dire warning, "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, 'when I will send a famine through the land - not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.'" (Amos 8:11). May we be spared that Judgement!

Today's Quick Word Luke 1:1-2

By Bruce Christian

LUKE 1:1-2 *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye-witnesses and servants of the word.*

The Apostle Paul tells us that “when the TIME HAD FULLY COME, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5). We might find ourselves wishing that video-recording had been invented before Jesus was born so that we would have an accurate record of his appearance, his life, his teaching, his miracles, etc. But from what Paul says about ‘the fulness of time’, it is clear that it was part of God’s divine providence, his Plan of Salvation, that the means of transmission of the life-giving message of the Gospel was to be the written word of Scripture.

Many years ago, a Year 3 SRE class said to me that if I could ‘get Jesus to walk through the door now’ they would believe all the things I was telling them! I was able to point out that, of all the people who were privileged to hear his voice and be eyewitnesses to his miracles, the majority still did not believe, and, in fact, the more influential ones of them had him nailed to a cruel cross as an imposter - so I couldn’t see why it would be any different today! No, our Sovereign Lord God CHOSE to use written ‘propositional revelation’, the ‘truth revealed in words’, to bring people “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9) to himself in repentance-and-faith.

At the very opening of his Gospel, Luke encourages us to have full confidence in the Gospel record (and, by implication, in the whole of Scripture) as God’s revealed truth - as a record coming from “those who from the first were EYE-WITNESSES and

SERVANTS of the word. As one of these very eyewitnesses and ‘servants of the word’, the Apostle Peter himself testified: “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:16-21).

Do we have this same view of Scripture? Or instead, do we, like many today, sit in judgement on God’s Word, requiring it to be acceptable to our culture and thinking, to be ‘Politically Correct’? Are we humble ‘servants of the Word’, letting it direct our thoughts, words, and lives in every way, and trusting it to do God’s saving work in human hearts. As the Prophet Isaiah says, “my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:8-11).

Today's Quick Word Hebrews 13:8-9a

By Bruce Christian

HEBREWS 13:8-9A *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. ...*

Perhaps one of the most offensive, and 'unacceptable', things about the Christian Gospel today, in this age when Political Correctness is so important, is its essential claim that there is NO OTHER way to have peace with God, and the hope of eternal life with him FOREVER, than through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This was true at the very beginning in the Garden of Eden - "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15).

It was true 4,000 years ago in the time of Abraham - "Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.'" (Genesis 22:8 - cf what Jesus himself said to the Jewish leaders of his day: "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he SAW IT and was glad." - John 8:30).

It was true 3,500 years ago when Moses instituted the Passover

Lamb as a sacrifice whose sprinkled blood was accepted as a sacrifice in the place of the firstborn in a household in Egypt.

It was true 2,800 years ago when Isaiah prophesied: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-6).

It was true 2,000 years ago when Jesus himself said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6), and the Apostle Peter declared to the Jewish authorities: "Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

And it has been true ever since, and will be true for ALL time. Yes, whether we like it or not, "Jesus Christ IS the same yesterday and today and for ever." - ALWAYS the ONLY Saviour. Let us 'not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings' that say otherwise in an attempt to be more acceptable to the prevailing ideas and culture! A world, a person, WITHOUT JESUS remains eternally LOST.