

Church of Scotland
Evie, Firth and Rendall Churches, Orkney

Sunday May 23, 2004
Amos 9:11-15

Christ Ascended

Last Thursday was Ascension Day – while not counting day as important, the event is important
After 40 days from resurrection, Christ appeared to hundreds of people
Went up into clouds out of our view – only apostle Paul saw risen Lord after that
Ascension marked end of Christ's earthly ministry – but more : his coronation – crowning
Ps 110 – 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool'
What Amos refers to at the end of his prophecy – prophecy fulfilled, but not completely yet
Let's go back to world of Amos – to around 755 BC – from Tekoa – 10 miles south of Jerusalem
Don't know much more about Amos – herdsman and dresser of sycamore figs
Farmer – man of means – cash crop – contemporary of Hosea, Micah, Isaiah & Jonah
For nearly 2 centuries kingdom of David split – Israel (Ephraim) in north, Judah in south
Amos called from Judah to go to hostile northern Israel to bring God's message
Israel ruled by Jeroboam II – was prosperous and secure – but wealth in hands of a few
Poor oppressed – greed for material wealth, debauchery and false religion characterised
Jeroboam I introduced altars and golden calves for worship instead of going to Jerusalem
Had appointed not-Levitical priests – Israel's sins flowed from this decline
Baal-worship crept in and became state religion under Ahab and Jezebel
Apart from circumstances it was as our own day – term 'God' can mean anything today
Concealed in biblical language was commitment to the Canaanite gods – 'God' was pagan
'going-to-church' religion – if that – today's Christianity – no commitment to Christ
Moral standards or lack shows where we are at – a rejection of God, his Son and his Word
Hedonism is what people are committed to – pleasure now – 'Give me another drink!'
As Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage so we have sold our inheritance as a nation
Amos showed people who thought going to heaven that they weren't – called 'prophet of doom'
He spoke about ultimate questions – righteousness, justice, meaning of history, eternity
He spoke of relationship to a holy God, judgement but also salvation – people didn't hear
Must turn to our text – Amos does depict judgement of God, but in last verses is note of grace
Describes true church – as distinct from 'visible' church – promises fulfilled to them
When kingdom split Davidic king lost to Israel – lost to Judah, too when Babylonians came
But God promised David a king of his line for ever – fulfilled when Christ came
Born of Mary from Davidic line – so too Joseph – after human nature of line of David
At ascension pronounced the king of the son of David for ever king – Lord of all
Christ people share in that reign – part of his kingdom – receive blessings
'David's tent restored' – tent was thrown down – in Christ Messiah revealed – New Year begun
tents connected with Feast of Tabernacles – provision of past and new year ahead
Broken places restored – this new King – his kingdom to extend to all nations not just Israel
He will possess remnant of Edom – Edom represented most vigorous opponents of God's people
Edom overthrown – opposition defeat – but also even Edom included in kingdom
Nations will bear Christ's name – ie be conquered by him – [Commission to church]
Kingdom not of this world – world kingdoms under judgement – not the people of God
Church has a glory – partly fulfilled – but final glory when Christ comes again – advances
At crucifixion hardly any area of globe not possessed by false faiths – tiny beginning
But spread province to province throughout Roman empire to all the world
'reaper overtaken by ploughman' – recalls Lev 26:3-5 – blessing to those who obey the Lord
light of the gospel brings light and liberty to nations and peoples – answer to world poor
'bring back exiled' – church restored – 'plant Israel' - eternal security, not Israel, but new Israel
Because Christ ascended the blessing of God upon every believer is assured – now and eternity
Gates of hell shall not prevail against you!