



Study 6 : "Cheating With Dishonest Scales" (Amos 8:2-8) Sunday, October 11, 2009 BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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Introducing the Study

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?" - skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

The LORD has sworn ... "I will never forget anything they have done. "Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn?" Amos 8:4-7

THE LAW OF GOD

God's Law was delivered by Moses and accepted by the people for their obedience as their side of the Agreement between themselves and God.

You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in his ways, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, & that you will obey him. **Deuteronomy 26:17**

This Law of God was wide-ranging. While summed-up by the Ten Commandments, it consisted of many individual laws that regulated every aspect of life - even down to, for example, the building of latrines (Deut23:12). Amos's fiery denunciation of market place dishonesty simply reflects another provision of the Law:

Do not have two differing weights in your bag - one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house - one large, one small. **Deuteronomy 25:13-14**

IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Consider all the complex things God has on his mind. His power has brought into being everything that exists and it is his power that sustains everything.

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **Colossians 1:16-17**

Surely God has more important things on his agenda; things far more pressing than a trader in an ancient market who cheats people by using "doctored" weights?

And why the fuss; surely Amos is guilty of an over-reaction - putting harsh words in God's mouth?

The LORD has sworn ... "I will never forget anything they have done. "Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn?" Amos 8:4-7

If so, even this reflects the Law that the people freely accepted:

You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. **Deuteronomy 25:15**

A. WHY THIS LAW ... AND WHY TAKEN SO SERIOUSLY?

Given the depths of human sin down the centuries, why this degree of affront for this offence?

For the LORD your God detests anyone who deals dishonestly. **Deuteronomy 25:16**

For an answer, we need to visit again the original Covenant Agreement between God and those he rescued from slavery in Egypt. Note the nature of the promise God made:

And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession ... that he will set you in praise, fame and honour high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God ... **Deut26:17-19**

These former Slaves were not just to be a collection of INDIVIDUALS;

they were to be a: "PEOPLE holy to the Lord your God"

They were not insignificant; they were "his people, his TREASURED possession"

Such is the relationship between God and these former slaves that he thinks of them as FAMILY

... under the metaphor of a young BRIDE to be romanced:

"Therefore I am going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her ... there she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'" **Hosea 2:14-16**

... or of a CHILD to be loved and nurtured

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. **Hosea 11:1**

And so, as "family," they were not just a crowd, but a COMMUNITY!

They had not just a responsibility toward God, but also to EACH OTHER.

"... teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." **Matthew 22:36-40**

And this is why this Law mattered! ... "Loving your neighbour" means treating him JUSTLY

(As an aside: read Amos Chapter 1 and note the terrible sins for which the nations surrounding Israel are judged. It is significant that among all the evidence that could have been produced to prove Israel's rebellion against God in Chapter 2, the prophet chooses this:

Because they have rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept his decrees ... They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor ... and deny justice to the oppressed.)

B. WHY SHOULD WE TREAT OTHERS WELL?

1. Because God Has Set The EXAMPLE

Be imitators of God ... and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us **Ephesians 5:1-2**

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **1 John 4:11**

2. As Our RESPONSE To God's Love For Us

We love because he first loved us. **1 John 4:19**

3. In Order To REVEAL God's Presence Through Us

... if we love one another, God lives in us. **1 John 4:12**

God is Love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. **1 John 4:16b**

4. As The EVIDENCE of Our Growth In Christ

In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. **1 John 4:17**

5. As The PROOF That We Love God.

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. **1 John 4:20-21**

Note that it is possible for a person to have a genuine love for people, but not to acknowledge God.

But it is impossible to profess to love God and not have a genuine love for people.

C. A NEW TESTAMENT PARALLEL

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. **1Peter 2:9**

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. **Romans 12:9-10**