Things are speeding up

In a recent TV programme the reporter was interviewing two or three people who were over 100 years old. One of them said she could remember the motorcar being invented! In the last 110 years some amazing developments have taken place: radio, TV and now satellite TV, high-speed trains, jumbo jets, men on the moon, all the wonders of microchip technology etc.

I remember having to use slide rules and now we use electronic calculators incorporated into our mobile phones. This ever-increasing technological revolution has gathered pace in the last 110 years. One consequence of this is the "shrinking world". An attack on a Shia mosque in the Gulf, the slaughter of tourists on the beaches of Tunisia or a beheading in France are seen on TV screens around the world almost as they are happening. The evil one is showing himself quick to take advantage with the rise of international terrorism. There is also the speed of the movement of pornographic literature and drugs around the world. It seems it is as easy to pop across the world in satanic business as it is to pop across the street!

But there is another side to all this. Modern communications are also furthering the purposes of God. Let us make sure we never surrender the great discoveries of our age to the devil. The Lordship and the reign of the Lord Jesus has yet to find full expression in this world, but I believe that we are now seeing the acceleration of His Lordship. All the technical facilities exist for the Gospel to be taken everywhere just as soon as God's people make themselves ready.

I think there will be a great end-time movement of the Holy Spirit. Look at the promise in Isaiah 59:19, ***"So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west and His Glory from the rising of the sun, for He will come like a pent-up flood that the breath*** (spirit) ***of the Lord drives along".***

Picture a river flowing through a deep gorge. As the river flows it slowly undercuts the banks on either side to the point that they collapse, sending thousands of tons of rock and earth into the river in effect blocking it. Below the dam the flow is just a mere trickle.

That trickle is the number of BMBs* we have seen over the last 200 years. It is a steady flow and we are mainly encouraged. But a day is coming when the dam will burst and a **mighty pent-up flood** will sweep across the world. God will come with great salvation blessing to the people to whom He has sent us.

Isaiah 60:1-3 is full of more encouragement. We become shining lights, ***"And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you"***. We will shine as lights in this dark world in such a way that whole nations are going to seek us out to find the way to salvation! We read in Isaiah 60:22, ***"The least of you will become 1000 and the smallest one a mighty nation!"***

So be encouraged! The ones, twos and threes you have seen come to know and believe in the Lord Jesus are going to become thousands – a mighty people – unbelievable! God adds His own signature to this promise. He says, ***"I am the Lord; in its time I will hasten it."***

Swiftness is also emphasised in Isaiah 66:7-8 in the context of childbirth***. "Before she was in labour, she gave birth; before her pain came upon her, she delivered a son … For as soon as Zion was in labour she brought forth her children".*** Physically this can't happen so it isn't speaking about natural birth but rather spiritual birth.

So what is God saying? I think He is saying that in spiritual work we should never assume that time honoured patterns will never change! [A nine-month pregnancy, followed by labour pains, followed by birth will not always be the rule.] The implication is that spiritual births will come suddenly, swiftly and unexpectedly. Perhaps we won't have the chance to witness to an individual for several years with the opportunity to give books to read or DVDs, CDs, satellite TV etc. before they put their

faith in the Lord Jesus. No! People will come to you "out of the blue" begging you to lead them to the Lord Jesus.

Do you suppose Peter expected 3000 people to be saved on the day of Pentecost? I don't think so! He had hardly finished speaking to the crowd when the crowd gave the appeal! ***"Brothers, what shall we do?"*** (Acts 2:37) It was the same in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44), ***"While Peter was still saying these things; the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word"***. Peter was amazed! Are you prepared for similar surprises? I believe God is at work like this today – and more besides.

Amos has another analogy (Amos 9:13***), "Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes, him who sows the seed."*** The New Testament assures us that this promise is all about Gentile people getting saved by faith in the Lord Jesus alone. (Acts 15:16-17)

The agricultural cycle is usually very predictable because it is determined by the seasons and the rotation of the earth on an axis. You plough the field, you sow the seed, the rain waters it, you remove what weeds you can and, in due course, when the grain is right, you harvest it. Then there is a break and the whole process starts again.

Evangelism is very similar. You sow the seed in the hearts and minds of people, you water it with prayer and eventually you reap a spiritual harvest in a person's life. Next you slot him/her into a local Fellowship to be discipled and start the whole process over again.

But what Amos is prophesying is that the time is coming when God is going to accelerate the whole process. It will be as if you, the reaper, are largely working in the summer bringing in the harvest and someone calls out to you, "Get a move on! I'm already ploughing!" It will be a time for a new crop before the present one is scarcely in the barn!

Try to imagine yourself lying in bed at 2 am happily exhausted. Your evangelistic meeting went extremely well and until very late. But six people came to the Lord so you are very tired and very happy. You go to sleep, but just then there is a knock on your door. Bleary-eyed and a more than a little annoyed you open the door. A man and his wife are standing on the doorstep. They are complete strangers to you. They say, "Excuse us, but we understand you are a follower of the Lord Jesus. We are just desperate to get to know Him and be His followers. Can you tell us how to find Him?"

And so you start all over again explaining the Good News and as the sun rises two more have become believers. The reaper has overtaken the ploughman.

The Lord Jesus emphasised this speeding up of the harvest. We are not to assume that there are still four months to go before the crop is ripe, because the fields are ripe for harvest now. (John 4:34-38) then He added an interesting comment, ***"I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."*** (v. 38)

In many places where we work, the sowing is happening as a result of Satellite TV, the Internet, downloading Scripture on mobile phones and in many other ways. People are hearing the Gospel and so the "sowing" is being done by others. All we have to do is quickly put in the sickle and reap the harvest for the Lord Jesus.

Often our concern is that we need much more spiritual maturity if we have so many people to disciple and if we see church planting movements come into being. But the Lord Jesus is able not only to speed up the initial "growth of the harvest", but also its growth to maturity.

In John 2 the Lord Jesus changes water into wine. If you think about this, water is being turned into wine all the time. Rain falls on vineyards, the grapes fill out as the roots take up the water, the grapes are crushed and the juice is fermented. Maturing takes place over a long period of time until the wine is ready for drinking. The best wine is well matured. Water has become wine!

What the Lord Jesus did in that instance was to rapidly speed up a natural process – years compressed into a second! He can do this for us. Wisdom and spiritual insight can become yours at a much faster rate than you can imagine. Perhaps it won't happen instantaneously, but it can be rapid because God is increasing the pace in these days and preparing us for a great harvest.

What is the secret of rapidly increasing in spiritual maturity, wisdom, character and ministry? It is the same as the secret of water into wine, ***"Whatever he says to you, do it!"*** (John 2:5). Total obedience is the price. You can't afford not to pay it!

Another key is found in John 6:16-21. The disciples were having a grim time rowing across the lake in bad weather. Halfway across, the Lord Jesus appeared walking on the water and ***"they were terrified"***. But they were willing to take Him into the boat and miraculously the boat immediately reached the shore where they were heading.

Like those disciples, we think we know the Lord Jesus well. What is it that "terrifies" you? Is it new approaches to discipleship or church planting? Whatever it is, He demands repentance (to let Him into our "boat") and total submission to His Lordship. So be willing to overcome your fears and take every aspect of the Lord Jesus on board and then their experience could be yours. Of course this assumes that your goals and the goals of the Lord Jesus are the same! The Lord Jesus was going to Capernaum and so were the disciples. They made it together! So are your goals the same as His today? Things are speeding up. Our God is on the move. The pace is quickening! Don't be left behind!

∗ Believers from a Muslim background