

1. SETTING THE SCENE

In Nov. 2000, after some years looking at the Jewish prophets, I became aware of what I have now come to call “The Amos Word”. Let me explain. Prior to one of the worst national catastrophes that the Jews have ever suffered, namely the destruction in 722 of the historical Kingdom of Israel and its capital Samaria, God had given a word of warning to Israel that such a blow would fall. That word came through Amos, and concluded with a remorseless and repeated pronouncement, “*I will spare them no longer*”. The sins calling for this destructive judgement were outlined by Amos and his prophetic contemporaries. They were strikingly and precisely the sins which were being so blatantly and increasingly practised in our own nation and throughout the western world. At that point I became profoundly impressed that the “Amos Word”, “*I will spare them no longer*”, was God’s word for our own generation. So I wrote a pamphlet explaining more fully this “Amos Word” and its relevance to our own times, and gave it the title “*Living in Amos’ Times*”. (See that pamphlet on website)

In thinking through this saga of judgement I was further impressed by the fact that Amos gave this warning word some twenty five years or so before it was actually fulfilled. It seemed important, therefore, to study what happened in Israel in those two and a half decades; they seemed very likely to provide some kind of guidance, at least in principle, for what might lay in the years before us. This particular pattern of a fairly lengthy delay between a word of national judgement and its fulfilment was endorsed in my mind not only by the similar experience of other Old Testament prophets but by the fact that Jesus himself had pronounced national judgement and destruction on Israel in about AD 30 but it was not until AD 70 that the fulfilment came, forty years later.

There is sufficient material in the bible historical accounts for us to gain a broad picture of what happened in Israel in those 25 yrs of delay before the Assyrians destroyed Samaria. I wrote a short account of those years in a pamphlet called “*Countdown to Chaos*” (See that pamphlet on website), outlining the main features of the downward path Israel took in those years. They were

- 1) Futile foreign adventures.
- 2) Political corruption, incompetence and infighting.
- 3) Accelerated economic and social decline.
- 4) Increasing rejection of the Living God and his morality in favour of an idolatry which was essentially permissive, amoral and violent.

They were the characteristics of a nation that was moving toward judgement. I feel it is important and necessary, therefore, a decade on from the first recognition of the “Amos Word”, to make some assessment of our own national journey on the basis of the same four features itemised above, and take stock against that biblical measure. Hence the shape of the chapters in this booklet.

Before making the comparison, however, one further point needs to be made concerning the biblical pattern with which we are working. Amos was a prophet to a whole group of nations who were all under judgement, not just Israel. The book of Amos in fact does not begin with destructive prophecy against Israel, but with prophecy against the nations who were its neighbours. When God’s judgement came the entire group suffered. Though initially I had Britain foremost in mind when I first received the “Amos Word”, it has become obvious over the last few years that the nations of the western world form exactly the same sort of group of nations to which Amos spoke. They all stand equally guilty of the sins of wide ranging economic, social and moral decadence. They all stand under a word of judgement. If one nation stands out in the group it is not the U.K. but the U.S.A. with its dominating effect on all western culture, social, political and economic. Thus the “Amos word” applies to the U.S.A. as much as to Britain and for very much the same reasons. It is in fact in the happenings in the U.S.A. that we can trace most clearly the parallels with the biblical pattern. Since this dominating effect of the U.S.A. is nowhere more evident than in Britain, in looking at the U.S.A. we can see ourselves in the U.K. in sharper focus. That is why I make no apology for giving considerable attention to the U.S.A.’s history in this first decade.

In making the comparison it is not difficult to see from the outset that the similarity between the biblical era immediately after Amos and our own is all too obvious. Now, as then, the downward trend justly deserves the word “catastrophic”. In 2000 the U.S.A. in particular, and Europe in lesser fashion might well have appeared to be on a pinnacle (albeit it a slightly shaking pinnacle!) of world-wide political, economic and military dominance and superiority. But in the year 2011 it is very different. We are now witnessing two appallingly inconclusive wars of attrition which have been running longer than any wars in living memory, and which have cost the U.S. a huge \$3 trillion, severely knocked the credibility of the U.S. military and its Presidency and put it on the back foot with regard to any future military commitment which may occur in the world. Furthermore we are also witnessing the continuing economic fall-out of the massive economic collapse which hit the U.S. in 2008 and then engulfed Europe, Britain included. Apart from the economic uncertainties which have followed in its wake, the cost to the U.S. economy has been again some \$3 trillion and left the U.S. national debt very dangerously high. That crippling level of debt has been mirrored in Britain and Europe. Even now we have not yet seen the full impact of this economic collapse on the social life and stability of the western nations.

These two great hammer blows alone make it possible to accurately describe the first decade of this century as a “contemporary countdown to chaos”. Along with other aspects, they call for something of a closer look. I hope you will be able to persevere through the military, economic and political details that emerge in the following pages. It is in the accumulated detail that the foolishness and futility of godless humanity appears. It is in the same detail also that the irresistible hand of God can be seen working out his purpose of judgement in such human folly.