

CHRIST THE REVELATOR

Millions are aware of the redemptive role of Christ. They know that Jesus died to reconcile man to God. But how many realize that their very Savior predicted today's chaotic world conditions in advance and foretold the outcome of it all?

The very first verse of the book of Revelation states: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. . . .*"

Jesus Christ was a prophet; Jesus Christ was a newscaster of future world events; Jesus Christ forecast the overall, general sequence of events that would characterize the world from His time to now and on into the future; Jesus Christ was an up-to-date *futurist* in the true sense of the term.

He talked not only of the mind-bending, fast-moving, sometimes horrifying events to presage His second coming, but also of a *wonderful world to come*.

Blessings to come. Go to the Gospel accounts. In their contents, Jesus spoke directly of an altogether different kind of society that would envelop the earth in future ages.

The religious set of Jesus' day thought they had Him cornered with a trick question about marriage and the resurrection. But He deftly answered their questions by informing them of the never-before-heard-of conditions of tomorrow's world.

He forecast: "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain *that world* [age, Greek], and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: *neither can they die any more. . . .*" (Luke 20:35-36).

Have you ever before heard of a world in which part of the inhabitants—the *compassionate* ruling class as other scriptures make clear—can no longer die? Visionary futurists of our day contemplate a fantastic world with a vastly lengthened human life-span made possible by super-replacement parts for worn-out body organs. But how many en-

vision the ultimate: ". . . neither can they die anymore"?

Matthew's Gospel account sheds yet more light on conditions in this incredible civilization yet to come.

This particular scripture about tomorrow's world does have a definite negative connotation. However, it also has an unspoken positive side as we will show. Those that were hostile to (and attributed intentional indignity to) the Work that Jesus Christ was doing through the power of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming that future world would be on the outside looking in.

Notice Matthew's description: ". . . But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in *the world to come*" (Matt. 12:32).

But on the positive side, the benevolent rulers will be composed of those who execute justice and judgment in their personal lives. David said: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (II Sam. 23:3).

Some specific positions in this future world have been preassigned by Jesus Christ Himself.

To His apostles, Jesus promised: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30).

The epistles written by Peter and John are a microcosm of the overall good character of the apostles. Dedication, loyalty and love earmark those remarkable letters.

The Gospels are not the only biblical books whose contents reveal specific prognostications of Jesus Christ in His role as a prophet.

As was pointed out, the book of

Revelation is unveiled by Jesus Christ Himself. If you have a red-letter Bible—one in which the first-person quotations of Jesus are printed in red—you will be struck by the many prophecies spoken by your Savior.

Further revelation on the world to come unfolds as you progress into its exciting contents. Specific rewards are prophetically promised to specific churches (and the Church as a whole) in chapters two and three. "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations [in tomorrow's world]" (Rev. 2:26).

Rulership—the reward for overcoming sin and doing Christ's Work—is promised to every Christian executing justice and judgment in his personal life.

The Bible is chock-full of prophecies about this wonderful world to come. One scripture that perhaps best sums up the general conditions of the wonderful world tomorrow, and *on beyond*, was spoken by Jesus in Revelation 21:5. ". . . Behold, I make all things new." That statement is all encompassing. Our fragile, uncomprehending human minds could never fathom the depth and breadth of that prophetic promise.

In keeping with Jesus' *modus operandi* in His message to the seven churches, we have first presented Christ as the Revelator of these *good* things to come.

But he also is the Revelator of incredible prophecies of punishment to come on this world in the relatively near future.

Punishments to Come. Jesus was *both* specific and general in His futuristic forecasts of various types of punishment for the world's sins.

He directly foresaw the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The horrible

picture was so vivid in His mind that He made great lamentation for what He knew would befall that city (Matt. 23:37).

And on His painful path to the cross, "...there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

"But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, *the days are coming*, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us" (Luke 23:27-31).

This stark prophecy *was fulfilled* (at least in part) in less than four decades. The historian Josephus recorded a vivid account of the terrible famine which ravaged Jerusalem: "It was now a miserable case, and a sight that would justly bring tears into our eyes, how men stood as to their food, while the more powerful had more than enough, and the weaker were la-

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menting [for want of it]. But the famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive to nothing so much as to modesty; for what was otherwise worthy of reverence, was in this case despised; inasmuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants: and when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives..." (*Wars of the Jews*, book V, chapter X, section 3).

Josephus further described mass killings and deportation: "...So the [Roman] soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies" (*Wars of the Jews*, book V, chapter XI, section 1).

"And now, since his soldiers were already quite tired with killing men, and yet there appeared to be a vast multitude still remaining alive, Caesar gave orders that they should kill none but those that were in arms, and oppose them, but should take the rest alive. But, together with those whom they had orders to slay, they slew the aged and the infirm.... Titus also sent a great number into the provinces, as a present to them, that they might be destroyed upon their theatres, by the sword and by the wild beasts; but those that were under seventeen years of age were sold for slaves....

"Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege, eleven hundred thousand..." (Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book VI, chapter IX, sections 2, 3).

The horrible happenings of A.D. 70 are an apparent type of the even more grueling events of the end time.

Perhaps the whole picture of these age-ending prophecies is best

described and brought into proper focus in Matthew 24.

The disciples asked Jesus: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [Greek *aión*, meaning age]?" (Verse 3.)

Then Jesus proceeded to enumerate a series of general events and happenings that would characterize the times from the first century to now—actually intensifying to the extreme at the very end of the age.

Among the things Jesus specifically mentioned was religious apostasy, wars and rumors of wars, natural disasters here and there on the earth, and blatant religious bigotry finding its ultimate expression in countless brutal martyrdoms.

Signs of Christ's Coming. Finally, the world would be so dominated by sin that even some Christians would begin to lose their first love and actually begin to betray, persecute, and cause to be put to death their own brethren. On the world scene, Jesus warned of several prophetic benchmarks to precede His second coming—none of which has yet been fulfilled to the fullest extent.

1) *Publishing of the Gospel*: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). When you see the *true* gospel beginning to be announced to the world's nations—when you see this prophecy in action on the world scene—you should increase your personal world watch and vigilance.

2) *The Abomination of Desolation*: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place [apparently some type of edifice of worship is yet to be erected in the Holy Land]... then let them which be in Judaea [the modern nation of Israel] flee into the mountains....

"For then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be [again]" (verses 15-16, 21).

Jesus spoke of the vital necessity of understanding this "abomination" in the parenthetical phrase, "whoso readeth, let him understand" (verse 15). It appears to in-

volve a great religious leader who would make his world headquarters in the Holy Land. This event's great import lies in the fact that it is a sign signaling the beginning of *the great tribulation*.

3) *The Hour of Trial*: Jesus—the real Revelator of the Bible's last book—refers again to this utterly unique time in the world's history. Notice His message to the Church in Revelation 3:10: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the *hour of temptation* [trial], which shall come upon *all the world*, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

This hour of trial (an hour is a relatively short time in biblical prophecy) will not be a local upset done in a corner of Asia. It will be global in range—all the inhabitants of the earth will be affected.

4) *Jerusalem Surrounded with Armies*: The companion prophecy Luke 21 gives us an additional prophetic waymark to consider. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (verse 20; cf. Zech. 14:1-4; Rev. 16:16).

But notice that this prophecy then parallels Matthew 24:16-20 as it describes the events just before the great tribulation: "Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto" (verse 21). Luke then describes *the great tribulation* in different words. "For these be *the days of vengeance*, that all things which are written [in the Old Testament prophecies] may be fulfilled" (verse 22). (Jesus often used the expression "it is written" when quot-

ing or paraphrasing a passage from the Old Testament [Matt. 2:5; 4:4, 7, 10; 11:10; 21:13; Mark 7:6; 9:12, 13; 11:17, etc.]

The Bible simply does *not* clearly delineate all these eventful prophetic bench marks in easy one-two-three order. Nor are the ones mentioned the only ones; there are many more. The Bible is written "here a little and there a little," and therein lies one of the reasons Jesus continuously admonished His servants to watch (Matt. 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:33-37).

As world events unfold, Christians (and especially the ministry—see Amos 3:7) should begin to match up the world scenario with the biblical prophecies.

Jesus Christ—the Revelator of all prophecy and the living Word that inspired the whole Bible—enjoins the following very big responsibility on all Christians: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things [the end-time events mentioned in the preceding verses] that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

Believe it or not, God is very concerned that His elect (any person or persons who will truly obey Him and help perform His Work upon the earth) not suffer with a disobedient, God-rejecting world.

But the qualifications for physical escape are spiritual. Hoarding honey, soybeans and other food staples is not the right route to take.

"Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger,"

cried the prophet Zephaniah (2:3).

A sermon-on-the-mount-type character is required. If you develop such Christlike character, the chances of your escaping the great tribulation are very good.

God's anxiety for the physical welfare of His people is recorded by the prophet Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold [here is the reason for hiding], the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity . . ." (Isa. 26:20-21).

Notice that verse 21 ties right back into the Christian's prophetic responsibility: watching significant world events individually (and warning the world as a Church) as well as praying to be worthy to escape the punishments of God on this sick and dying world.

Watch! □

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