

## SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

Looking back a decade or two, and then taking a sweep over conditions in our world at present, who can read Christ's pointed but brief outline of world events in the 24th chapter of Matthew's Gospel without being jolted into a realization of the accuracy of Christ's forecasts? This important prophetic statement was given in answer to his disciples' question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Surely no man in full possession of his senses, in the light of the present-day situation, dare trifle with Christ's words as are here recorded. Without a doubt, he spoke not only "as one having authority," but as one who could see the end from the beginning.

According to Christ, the approaching end would be heralded by wars, famines, pestilences, plagues, and earthquakes of such frequency and magnitude that "men's hearts would be failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21:26.

The saddest indictment of modern man is to be found in Christ's forecast that men would not learn from their tribulation, and that "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold." Matthew 24:12. In fact, he contended that in the end of the age things would be so shocking as to parallel the days of Noah and Lot when adultery, violence, and vice of every kind ran riot. It was said that back there men were fierce, that sex deviates roamed the streets, and that the thoughts of men's hearts were only "evil continually." It must be confessed that even in professedly Christian lands the changes in men's thinking in regard to common honesty and decency have been so rapid and marked that even heathen peoples are dubbing us as being absolutely amoral.

In his prophetic outline, Christ uttered words that arrest the attention of those who still believe in his Word and authority, for they seem to throw down Heaven's challenge to all men. Here are the words: "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." In the light of present moral trends and world tribulation, it seems as though the Master is saying that in spite of all these things, and though men's love for God and His gospel are waxing cold, the true gospel, the gospel of the kingdom, shall not be retarded or stopped, but be heard in all the world without any failure. They are dull ears which fail to hear God's challenge in such words. The One who commanded his disciples: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20), still commands his followers.

In this passage he speaks of an "end," the consummation of an age, and assures his servants that he will be with them, and will see it through till that end. Yes, he still commands men on to the performance of his will. It is the command of the King of kings - a command performance. Apostates and revilers might as well try to stop the rolling of the tides, or the coming of the seasons, as to endeavour to stay the plans and purposes of God. Has He not decreed: "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven ... so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isaiah 55:10,11.

While the world hardens in its hostility to God, and His standards for human conduct, it is still a well-attested fact that hundreds of thousands of people, even in heathen lands, are turning to God and the acceptance of His gospel year by year. This transcendent work will not be stopped by the defiant hands of unbelievers, but will end in triumph with the return of earth's rightful King, when will be heard "great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15.

But notice, this gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in all the world for a "witness." Men must have their chance to hear the message. "Wickedness in high places," or in the earth beneath, shall not prevent willing men and women from receiving the gospel's witness. The coming of the Son of God to earth at his first advent was the greatest event of human history. By his teaching and his living example of that teaching, he put the requirements of God for men beyond question. Finally, his death on the cross for sinners that they might be forgiven and accepted into citizenship for his kingdom, is acknowledged even by his enemies to be the tenderest, the most beautiful, and the most amazing story ever told. Yes, God says men must hear it, and shall hear it, and that this shall be to them for a witness. If under the urge of God's Spirit a man accepts Christ, and his provision for our race, it witnesses in his favour, and of him it is said, he "shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24. What peace and what certainty of destiny there are in such God-given words! However, if men hear and refuse to follow the inner voice of conscience, Heaven says, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Romans 12:19.

It is of interest to note again that Christ's prophecy of Matthew 24 was given in answer to the disciples' questioning. They had asked information on two points, the destruction of the temple and the end of the world. They had pointed out to their Master the magnificence of the great temple of Herod, which was the very pride of the nation. It was said to be a glorious mass of marble and gold. "The front of the temple was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and at the first rising of the sun reflected back a fiery splendour." Made of green and white marble, the rabbis used to boast, "He who has not seen the temple of Herod, has never seen a beautiful building." But Christ predicted, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The building being such a colossal structure, the disciples thought surely Christ's statement must presage the end of the world, hence the dual nature of their question.

Josephus, the historian eyewitness of the times, tells that Caesar commanded the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Great Temple, except for the highest towers and the west wall. However, later the whole area was ploughed up. The Talmud says, "On the 9th day of Ab (July-August) the city of Jerusalem was ploughed up." As the years rolled by, the disciples, as they carried on the work of Christ after his ascension, must have reflected on the words of the prophecy. The grim ruins of their beloved city must have spurred them on to greater zeal in proclaiming this message of his kingdom yet to come.

"Choose you this day whom you will serve." In these days with their abounding iniquity and defiance of spiritual standards, men the world around are making decisions with results that will prove eternal. Past history, and that of the present, proves beyond question the divine origin of Christ's mission, and the certainty of his predictions dealing with the end of our age. Remember that in his great prophecy he challenges sin and sinners in the following words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall

not pass away." Matthew 24:35. His is a command performance, and history is responding and must. It is on the pledged word and honour of Christ himself, that events move according to plan, to the consummation of, "New heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.

As we move with men and women of faith, time will prove that we have moved in the right direction.

\* \* \* \* \*