

CATHOLIC PROPHECY

by Rod King

Prophecy can arouse a variety of responses in us. For some it evokes fear of the future, whereas for others it is a fascination and can even become an obsession.

When God spoke through His prophets of old it was for a specific purpose—to proclaim in advance what He would do for those whom He would call to salvation.

"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ [which] was in them was indicating....but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you...things which angels desire to look into"(1 Peter 1:10-12).

The purpose of prophetic understanding must be the same for the Church today—to proclaim what God is doing for those whom he has called to salvation. To pursue prophecy for the purpose of superior knowledge simply puffs a person up. "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge...but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2). "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know"(1 Corinthians 8:1-2).

In other words, we can only know what God wants us to know. Anything outside of His will is self-thought and not inspired. To pronounce prophetic understanding is an awesome responsibility and must not be taken lightly.

Who Understands Prophecy Today?

God is jealous about those to whom He will reveal prophetic understanding. The prophet Amos tells us: "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Only those who serve Him faithfully in all areas of their life can receive this special understanding. This also provides a benchmark for those of us wanting to read or hear about prophecy. We can ask the question, "Is this person obeying God's commandments'?" If the answer is negative we can know that they are not being led by God.

The preamble to the book of Revelation preserves this principle. Notice: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place" (Revelation 1:1). These servants are identified as

God's saints in Revelation 14:12, "who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Peter warns us once again about private interpretation of prophecy: "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Is All End-Time Prophecy True?

Most are familiar with the prognostications of soothsayers and astrologers. God clearly warns us to have nothing to do with them. What about Nostradamus or Mother Shipton? Some of their forecasts bear uncanny similarity to events that have occurred, while others are either so vague or ambiguous that one cannot be certain of their veracity. Others are clearly false and untrue.

There is a source of end-time "prophecies" made by religious people over centuries that serves as an interesting comparison with clear biblical prophecies. These were compiled in 1956 by the Academy Library Guild of Fresno, California, under the title *Prophecy for Today*, and republished in 1984 by Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., of Rockford, Illinois.

The book includes the prophecy of St. Malachy, the Irish priest who supposedly foretold all of the popes that would exist up until the destruction of the great church at the coming of Antichrist. His prophecy concludes: "In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church there shall reign Peter the Roman who will feed his flock amid many tribulations, after which the seven-hilled city will be destroyed and the terrible judge will judge the people" (page 9).

Chapter 5 is titled "The Great Monarch and the Angelic Pastor." These two illustrious figures will supposedly unite civil and religious forces to bring a utopian peace and tranquillity to the whole world prior to the coming of Antichrist. Let us notice some of the predictions made over many centuries:

Saint Ceaser of Arles (469-543): "When the entire world, and in a special manner France and in France more particularly the provinces of the North, of the East, and above all that of Lorraine and Champagne [i.e., the region of the major battles of World War I], shall have been a prey to the greatest miseries and trials, then the provinces shall be succoured by a prince who had been exiled in his youth, and who shall recover the crown of the lilies. [The fleur-de-lis or "flower of the lily" has been the heraldic symbol of the kings of France for centuries.]

"This prince shall extend his dominion over the entire universe. At the same time there will be a Great Pope, who will be the most eminent in sanctity and most perfect in every quality. This Pope shall have with him the Great Monarch, a most virtuous man, who shall be a scion of the holy race of the French kings. This Great Monarch will assist the Pope in the reformation of the whole earth. Many princes and nations that are living in terror and impiety shall be converted, and an admirable peace shall reign among men during many years because the wrath of God shall be appeased through repentance, penance and good works. There will be one common law, one only faith, one baptism, one religion. All nations shall recognize the Holy See of Rome, and shall pay homage to the Pope. But after some considerable time fervor shall cool, iniquity shall abound, and moral corruption shall become worse than ever, which shall bring upon mankind the last and worst persecution of Antichrist and the end of the world" (page 30).

Monk Adso (died 992): "Some of our teachers say that a King of the Franks will possess the entire Roman Empire. This King will be the greatest and last of all monarchs, and after having prosperously governed his kingdom he will come in the end to Jerusalem and he will lay down his scepter and his crown upon the Mount of Olives. This will be the end and consummation of the Empire of Rome and immediately afterwards Antichrist will come" (page 31).

Abbot "Merlin" Joachim (died 1202): "The sanctity of this beneficent Pontiff will be so great that the highest potentates shall bow down before his presence. This holy man shall crush the arrogance of religious schism and heresy. All men will return to the primitive Church, and there shall be only one pastor, one law, one master humble, modest and fearing God...because only God alone can and will pour down on the wounds of humanity the oily balm of sweetness..."

"The city of Babylon shall then be the head and the guide of the world. Rome, weakened in temporal power, shall preserve her spiritual dominion and shall enjoy great peace. Six and a half years after this time the Pope will render his soul to God" (page 32).

A few prophecies talk about the end of the papacy and the church. Here are two such predictions, one from a modern Pope.

Brother John of the Cleft Rock (1340): "Toward the end of the world the Pope with the Cardinals will have to flee Rome under trying circumstances to a place where he will be unknown. He will die a cruel death in this exile" (page 39).

Pope Pius X(died 1914): "I saw one of my successors by name fleeing over the corpses of his brethren. He will flee to a place for a short respite where he is unknown, but he himself will die a cruel death."

The "Antichrist"

According to the writings of these "prophets," a man of Jewish birth will be Antichrist. Here are some of the private prophecies about this person who will destroy the power of the Papacy and the Great Monarch.

Saint Methodius (died 885): "In the last period Christians will not appreciate the great grace of God who provided a Great Monarch...Many men will doubt whether the Catholic faith is the true and only saving one and whether the Jews are perhaps correct when they still expect the Messiah"(page 75).

Saint Anselm (died 1109): "Antichrist will rule the world from Jerusalem which he will make into a magnificent city"(page 76).

Dionysius of Luxembourg (died 1682): "Antichrist will be an iconoclast (even against pagan images). Most of the world will adore him. He will teach that the Christian religion is false, confiscation of Christian property is legal, Saturday is to be observed instead of Sunday, and he will change the ten commandments. He will read people's minds, raise the dead, reward his followers and punish the rest."

"Antichrist will fight a successful battle at Megiddo in Palestine after which seven rulers, from fear, will subject themselves to Antichrist and he will thereafter become lord of the world"(page 85-86).

Be Not Deceived

The existence of these predictions over centuries provides a fascinating awareness that events of the end-times have captured the abiding interest of religious people. What is obvious to God's people is that we must be certain what God prophesies so that we will not be deceived.

Jesus Christ warned his disciples in Matthew 24:4, 5 and 24: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.... For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

Are we sure of our ability to discern counterfeit prophecy? These and other "prophecies" will soon be foisted on an unsuspecting world. Notice what the apostle Paul warned in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11: "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who [are] perish[ing], because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason

God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie"(emphasis added).

Satan is the god of this world and he has deceived the whole world with his religious system. Part of that deception is false prophecy and, as we have seen above, the counterfeit is indeed clever. To twist the roles of the principle players in the future explains why the inhabitants of the earth will fight Jesus Christ at His return; they will believe He is Antichrist!

Notice the Counterfeits

These "prophecies" mentioned a Great Monarch and an Angelic Pastor. Who does the Bible say they are?

Notice Revelation 19:19-20: "And I saw the beast [the Great Monarch], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse [Jesus Christ] and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with Him the false prophet [the Angelic Pastor] who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image."

Notice also the interesting twist where the true Christ is called "Antichrist" and "the terrible judge" in these prophecies. What a challenge awaits the resurrected saints in dealing with a terrified world that survives the horrors of the Day of the Lord.

A study of this, and other similar books, will reveal how we are responsible for maintaining a healthy reverence for God's word. Our understanding is not of our own intellect; rather, it is a gift of God.

God's true servants have a great work to do before the famine "of hearing the words of the Lord"(Amos 8:11) comes upon this world. We still have freedom to preach and publish, but that will not always be so. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man"(Luke 21:36).