

Some of the Signs of the End of the World And the Second Coming of Christ

William A. Hanna, Ph.D.

The Church Guided by the Holy Spirit arranged readings for the days of the year (Katameros of the Days) and readings of Sundays (Katameros of Sundays), Sunday has special significance being the Day of the Lord

The Last two Sundays of the Coptic Year, being the end of the year have special readings arranged to remind us of the end of the world and the second coming of Christ our Lord. They come from a direct discussion between our Lord and His Disciples documented in the Gospels of St. Matthew, Matthew 24, and the Gospel of St. Luke, Luke 21.

By the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit, will try to shed some light on this discussion:

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matt 24:1-3).

Here the disciples are asking our Lord about His second coming and the end of the world. And the Lord answered them as follows:

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” (Matt 24: 4-10).

Here we see some of the signs:

1. Many False Prophets, many will claim that they are saviors (Christ)
2. Many wars and rumors of Wars. WWI Killed more than 5 Million, WWII killed more than 50 Million. During WWII, Nuclear Weapons were developed and two were dropped on Japan at Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The development of Nuclear Weapons is the worst achievement of mankind. There was approximately 35 years between the two World Wars. People predicted a WWIII around 1980, instead the World continued to live a Cold War starting in 1945 and until 1989 when

- Communism was dismantled. During the Cold War the US and the then Soviet Union each developed Nuclear Weapons that could destroy the world many times over. Could turn it into rubble not fit for human habitation. Thank God the World was saved from destruction by the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, the Eastern Block, and the Warsaw Pact.
3. The Cold War is but a recent memory that is still fresh in the minds of the so called new boomers, the generation born after 1944.
 4. As the world was trying to close the book on WW II, the first of four Arab-Israeli wars started. The war of 1948. Followed by 1956, 1976, and 1973 wars between the Arabs and the Israelis. Then was the Iraq-Iran war (1981-1985) and the Gulf War in 1991. This succession of wars has not ended. As we speak there is a vicious war going on between Israel and the Palestinians, since March 2002, in which the dirtiest of tactics are being used by both sides like suicide bombing, and the targeting of civilians. That is at the time when the United States is fighting the most widely spread war against terrorism from Afghanistan to Morocco, that covers 1/3 of the world population.
 5. With this background, one would conclude that we are beyond wars and rumors of wars. We must be according to the Book of Revelation in the Seventh and last period before the second coming.
 6. Hatred reached a maximum in this generation when individuals and extremists groups are committing some of the most vicious acts of violence against the other. The other here can mean people of different origin, race, or religion. It brings to mind another saying of our Lord on another occasion of saying Goodbye to the disciples as he was getting ready to drink the cup and carry the cross: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” (John 16:1-3)*. This is exactly what some of the criminals and their supporters on September 11, 2001 felt and acted on. Some of them were even looking forward to 72 virgins in their “heaven” according to common interpretation of verses in their book. No reasonable person can accept a God that Rewards Hatred and Killing with heavenly rewards! September 11, 2001 is a day that will remain in the conscious of most people as a bad spot in the history of the human race comparable to the invasion of Poland, and other sad events of WW II

Wars and rumors of wars have been a constant worry of man for more than 100 years. As we speak, the USA is still fighting in Afghanistan, and if the plan is completed as stated, the USA will be fighting against groups and individuals in 47 countries. A very long and very exhaustive war against terrorism.

“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:10-13)

Our Lord is warning us about events He only could foresee: many of us are offended, upset, disappointed, even scared because of the situation the Church is in. Not only we are persecuted in many places, but we are also failing to keep our true Christianity. The devil and his armies are fighting from within and without. Fighting from within is even more dangerous to the well being of the Church, the body of believers. Consider for example, the homosexual scandals plaguing some Churches that has not started in 2002 as some think. It started more than 30 years ago when Churches started to turn a blind eye to unhealthy behavior, and then accepting it, and even supporting that deviate behavior and including such in the ranks of clergy, I am referring to homosexuality as an example of behavior that is not approved in both the old and new testaments. It is important to note that our Church as well as many others teach us to “Love the sinner, and hate the sin” and in this context we mean that a true Christian should show love and concern for all but we have to be steadfast in disapproving the behavior. When we sin, all of us, we are sinners. The Church role is to lead the sinner to repentance. When we repent, we are forgiven and as the Apostle said: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9).*

“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.” (Matthew 24:14)

The Gospel is preached as a witness to all the world, as the Lord commanded the disciples: *“Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.” (Mark 16:14-19)*

When one is preached and hears the word of the gospel, he is free to believe or not. If they do not believe they loose the opportunity to know our Lord and as the Apostle St. John said: *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” (II John 1:9-11).*

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in

those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”
(Matthew 24:15-22)

Here the Lord is referring to two events, that have many similarities. The destruction of Jerusalem that took place in 70 AD on the hands of the Roman General Titus who surrounded Jerusalem for three years until they devoured every thing imaginable like dogs and cats and even some devoured their own children, he then attacked the city, destroyed the temple and plowed the crushed stones under so no stone would stand as prophesied *“As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”* (Luke 21:6).

The parallel is the destruction of the same region before His second coming and the End of the World. Would like to mention that according to the Book of Revelation the second coming will be preceded with the coming of the two olives and two minarets, referring to Enoch and Elijah (‘Elias’). Enoch because *“Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”* (Genesis 5:24). Enoch did not die, so he must come back and die like all humans. And Elijah the prophet: *“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”* (II Kings 2:11). So, Elijah will also come back and die on the streets of Jerusalem, See Revelation.

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”
(Matthew 24:23-28).

With our good understanding now of the wars, rumors of wars, pestilences, and earthquakes, comes next the rumors of Christ Coming before his coming. The Jehovah Witness movement is an example of a cult based on a claim of the second coming that did not happen, and the refusal to deny the unfounded claim. We should be extremely careful not to accept any second coming claim until we see him on the clouds:
“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”
(Revelation 1:7).

They will all see him, and there are those who will rejoice and will be raptured, taken up to heaven, and others who will weep because they rejected him in their lives, when there was still time for repentance and acceptance. His second death is for those

who died in their sins and will die again because they were not redeemed by the precious blood that was offered freely for the salvation of the whole world. And a second resurrection for those who were saved, thus resurrected in life and have a portion and inheritance with the Lord of Life. The Lord assures us that when He comes again it will be openly known to the whole wide World. Where the Carcas is, so will the eagles gather together, what a beautiful analogy between the victorious believers and the soaring eagles: *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)*

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:” (Matthew 24:29).

After the tribulations that already have started, sun will be darkened, and the moon shall not give light and the stars shall fall. Literally this will happen, a few years back the cover story of TIME magazine was about the destruction of Earth in which the editor enlisted the opinion of many scientists who predicted based on scientific facts that the planet Earth as we know it will exist no more. Destruction could come on the hands of the inhabitants of Earth through the use of weapons of mass destruction, or a slight out of orbit change that can expose the planet to environment either hot or cold that will destroy all life, or an asteroid hit that would cause massive destruction and long winters. Spiritual interpretation of the verse is also important here. The sun is symbolic of Christ: “The Sun of Righteousness;” The Church is the moon because it is the reflection of its savior. The stars are the believers. The reader can imagine when the world becomes a desert concerning the faith, Christ will not give His light and the Church will become as a dark moon; and the believers will fall from the faith like the stars from heaven.

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:30).

At this low point in human history, the sign of the son of man will appear in heaven, and He will come on the Clouds, so that everyone will see Him.

“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matthew 24:31).

Following the second coming is the rapture, simply stated is when Christ comes back in His glory, those who are alive will be taken to the Glory of the Lord alive, they will not see death.

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:” (Matthew 24:32).

Here again, the Lord is advising us to open our eyes and watch for the signs. We learned to know the seasons from the shape of the trees. So, we also should recognize the signs when they are fulfilled.

“So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” (Matthew 24:33).

The Lord is advising us that when all these signs are in front of our eyes, we should recognize them and to know that He is close at the door.

“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” (Matthew 24:34).

This verse needs some deeper thinker. Here the Lord is talking again about the two separate but similar events. Speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord said that this generation will not pass until all things are fulfilled, and it happened that The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was witnessed by the generation that lived when He preached the gospel. So, also the events before the second coming will all take place in one generation (Less than 40 years).

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)

The words of the Lord are true, and “besteve amin” truly we believe. Amen.

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” (Matthew 24:36-39).

Here is the lesson that humanity never learns, In the days of Noah, he warned the people for many years but they would not lesson and when he entered the ark, it was Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives, 8 people only were saved. So, when all these signs are in front of us, many continue in their evil ways, do not listen, do not pay attention, and many will not be saved.

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” (Matthew 24:40-41).

The importance of these two verses is that no one can save his friends, or relatives. Everyone has to claim salvation for himself/herself. The old Eastern saying: “take us on your wings” cannot be fulfilled; no one can take another on his wings. Everyone has to be judged according to his deeds.

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” (Matthew 24:42-44).

The most important lesson we the believers should learn is that we don't know when the Lord will come. For that reason we have to stay awake, watchful, vigilant so, whenever he comes, we will be ready to meet him. The end of my world and yours could be right this minute, are we ready to meet our Lord. Did we do what is pleasing to Him. That is the most important lesson a true believer must learn and keep in his thoughts day and night, until we meet Him.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 24:45-51).

In conclusion the Lord gives us a clear contrast between the good servant, the true believer who is vigilant concerning his/her salvation, and the bad servant who neglects his duties, and when the Lord of the two servants comes back, he rewards the good servant with eternal life, and the bad one receives eternal damnation. May our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ keep us all, protect us all, and prepare us all to receive Him when He comes in His Glory and the Glory of His Father. Glory be to Him with His Good Father and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

William Hanna
St. Louis, Missouri