

the

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“Do the work of an evangelist” - 2 Tim 4:5

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Signs of the Times

by the Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, Th.D.

What does the Bible say about the survival of Christian believers during the horrendous calamities that will come upon the earth in the last days? Will God destroy the righteous on earth together with the unrighteous?

These are timely questions that concern every Christian.

After the destruction of the world by a flood, God pledged that a flood would never be visited upon mankind in the future. It is not inferred that there will never be a day when God would bring a similar condemnation and destruction upon the world. On the contrary, the scriptures reveal unquestionably that there is a day coming when divine wrath will be unleashed upon the world due to universal rebellion, iniquity, moral depravity and disobedience. It is often referred to as *“The Day of the Lord.”* Malachi calls it the *“Great and dreadful day of the Lord”* (4:5).

It will be a dreadful day because it will be a day of divine wrath. Some of the Old Testament prophets refer to it as the “Day of the Lord's anger”, and others as the Lord's vengeance” (Isaiah 34:8, Zeph. 2:2, Lam. 2:22). The “Day of the Lord” therefore, will be a day of punishment and condemnation. Unlike the first time when God destroyed the world in a deluge of water, the “Day of the Lord” will be marked by a deluge of fire. Malachi says: *“For, behold, the day cometh, that they shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall*

leave them neither root nor branch” (4:1).

Deluge by Fire Depicted by Peter

Not only do the Prophets Isaiah and Zephaniah, as well as Saint Paul allude to the conflagration yet to come, but Saint Peter as well. The coming deluge of fire is prophesied distinctly by Peter in his second epistle and described vividly in terms of “fervent heat” and the melting of the elements. Undoubtedly, we are listening to a description of a possible thermonuclear catastrophe on a global scale which will signal what Peter calls *“the coming of the day of God.”* He begins his forecast by making a contrast between the deluge by fire with the first deluge by water in the days of Noah.

“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished; But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men” (3:6f).

A global conflagration is, therefore a coming event. It will truly be the day of the Lord's wrath. It is not imaginary – not simply a figment of religious imagination. That at some point in the future God will reckon with the iniquity of the world by means of a destructive and consuming fire is a divinely revealed truth! Pretending that it is not does not alter the fact that this holocaust is surely

coming. Silencing that predictive prophecy will not make it go away. We simply harm ourselves and God's people for whose eternal welfare we are held accountable, if we withhold this fundamental doctrine from them.

The reason for which Peter foretells in the Holy Spirit what will transpire on the day of the Lord is to warn us to remain steadfast in our walk with the Savior Jesus Christ. *“Therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness”* (3:17).

That frightful day of the Lord, dear reader, is not far off. The Lord is cautioning His people to be ready. He is alerting you and me by relating to us the terrible things that will happen. God never destroys the righteous along with the unrighteous. When He was about to rain fire and brimstone upon the city of Sodom, Abraham intervened for his nephew Lot who lived there. He put the question to God: “Will thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Just as with Noah, God notified Lot in advance of the impending judgement. Likewise, God has already notified His remnant people about His intention to flood the earth with fire in the end time. He has not withheld it from His own, but rather He duly informs them far in advance. His desire is not to destroy the righteous with the wicked. He has formulated a plan to rescue His church before He deals with the rebellious world in a final conflagration.

Jesus comforts those who hope in Him by assuring them that they will be snatched away in time: *“Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man”* (Luke 21:36).

As it was in the Days of Noah

by Joseph Abbate / President

With all of the latest events shaking the world today, it's good to know that it hasn't taken God by surprise. In fact, it is written that these events would take place. ***“As it was in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of man”*** (Matt. 24:37). Jesus spoke these words in response to the questions of His disciples regarding the end times.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus referred to the conditions of our day as similar to the days of Noah? In Noah's day, mankind had degenerated to the point that God was actually sorry that He made them at all. Yet, Noah was specifically singled out by God: “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). Because Noah took God seriously, walked closely with Him and did His will, God spared him and his family.

We also see the same favor given to Lot, just before God executed judgement on the cities of Sodom and Gomora. What is clear is the fact that there is a limit on how much evil God will tolerate of this world. As a cup that has reached the limits until it overflows, so it is with God's patience. What amazes me is just how deep His cup has been in the past. Nevertheless, we read that God was putting off His wrath: ***“until the day that Noah entered into the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it***

away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two woman shall be grinding wheat together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Luke 17:27-36).

When the disciples asked Jesus where these others would be left, He basically described that those who would be left behind would be as those who have vultures circling overhead waiting for their soon demise. We know that there will be the day when God releases His wrath upon what is described in the Bible as the “children of disobedience.” There is also God's protection upon His children. The question remains, how long will God's people have to endure the disobedience and rebellion of today's generation? We do not know how long God's righteous people, who are living today will have to put up with such evil, just as Noah and Lot had in their own day. Jesus, in one of His parables, likened the last days as to wheat growing with weeds until the day of harvest comes when they are separated (Matt. 13:24-30). There is a difference between God's wrath upon the “children of disobedience” and Satan's wrath upon Christians, which has always been persecution. Many Christians fail to realize this point.

How long did the Christians of the early Church have to endure the rejection of their day's society and the days of persecution? Just as in the days

when the Roman Emperor Nero placed the blame of the burning of Rome on the Christians, there may very well come a time when an ungodly and hate-filled society will blame and persecute Christians for climate change as well as being an obstruction to their utopian ideas, such as one world system of government. There is no longer debate about it. Bibles have been recently burned in Portland, Oregon. As the German Poet Heinrich Heine prophetically wrote 100 years before Hitler took power: ***“Those who begin by burning books will end by burning people.”*** We have had more than enough warnings from history, but has this generation been listening?

A number of early Christians portrayed Nero as the Antichrist. Hitler, Stalin and Mao are smaller examples of what the eventual true Antichrist will be like. History has demonstrated that each time one of these rulers came onto the world scene, they came proposing peace and a better future, but their true intentions became clear after they gained complete control of power.

Another sign of the end days is in the very alteration of our world's ecological system. The Bible describes the world during the end times as a mother which is experiencing birth pains. Lately, a number of scientists have been amazed at what has been happening to our Sun. There is normally an 11 year cycle in which solar flares, also known as sunspots, increase and then decrease. The Sun is now going through a ***“Maunder Minimum”*** which last appeared from 1645-1715. For the first recorded time, our Sun had no solar flare activity for almost 80 percent of

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the time these past couple of years. Yet, the earth's temperature has increased. It is as if the Sun has fallen into a dormant state. However, it may be very possible that the next time the Sun acts up again, that it may burst with a much larger flare activity. We read in the Bible: ***"And the fourth angel poured his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire"*** (Rev. 16:8).

The Holy Scriptures also mention of signs in the heavens: ***"And there shall be signs in the Sun and the Moon, and in the Stars; and upon the Earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the Sea and the waves roaring"*** (Luke 21:25). There has even been a major increase in the sightings of UFOs. Signs in the heavens may include such sightings as well. These UFOs may be signs of great deception. Jesus said that we would be able to tell the period in which we live in by the signs which would culminate during the end times. It would not be one or two events happening, it will all of these happening in quick succession. Yet, the most crucial prophetic sign of our time has been the restoration of the nation of Israel.

Just as when the symbolic figure of Israel, (the Fig Tree) begins to bud forth, we would know that the time is at hand: ***"When they now shoot forth, you see and know of your own selves that Summer is now at hand. So, likewise, when you see these things come to pass, you know that the Kingdom of God is near at hand. Truly I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled"*** (Luke 21: 30-33).

Did you hear that? Jesus said that the generation which is witness to the rebirth of the nation of Israel, will not pass ***"until all be fulfilled."*** Israel officially became a nation in 1948. Jerusalem was recaptured in 1967, and Jerusalem has now been recognized as the capital of Israel. All in just a few decades!

St. Paul describes what people would be like during the last days: ***"But know this; that in the end day perilous times shall come. Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful,***

proud, demeaning, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:1-4).

Saint Paul clearly points it out! Yet, for the most part, people are just waiting for things to settle down and get back to normal. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but, things are never going back to the way things were just several months ago! This is not because, for most people around the world, that they don't want things to get back to normal. It is mainly due to the fact that there are certain leaders of countries and organizations which will not allow it to. Why, you may ask? Because they want to collapse the entire system specifically to gain a foothold on power!

For generations America has stood in the way of dictators whose goal was absolute power, whether it was Hitler, Stalin or Mao. These types of brutal leaders have not gone away, and we have been at war with them in ways which usually cannot be seen. It is often cyber-attacks on our power stations, banks and even dams, such as what Iran attempted to hack into on the Rye Brook Dam in New York in 2013. They are even caught shipping addictive and deadly drugs across our borders, or trying to overthrow our allies across the world, and even the spreading of contagions such as we have been experiencing lately. We cannot forget the inner battle this nation is facing with the extremist anarchist and Communist groups which are trying to destroy our Democratic Republic and replace it with their forms of Socialism. It is no longer hidden. They declare it openly now. Once America is out of the way, they will be unhindered in the pursuit of power. Many dictators had underestimated the American resolve in combating fascism and communism in the past. The Communists found that they were not as effective as hoped for on the proxy battlefields against America. From the

1950s and through the 1980s, governments throughout Asia, Africa and Central and South America were overthrown and entire countries were invaded by Communist military forces and spies. They were checked for the most part by America and her Allies.

However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the strategy of infiltration was used to push Communist agendas into schools and movies. If they could not defeat the West through military might, they would use inward channels to divide Western society, break up the traditional family unit and sow racial discord straight from the classrooms. KGB defectors, Yuri Bezmenov, Arkady Shevchenko and Yuri N. Maltsev as well as Russian Generals, had warned the West in detail about these Communist tactics. Their videos can still be seen over the internet. I recommend that you watch them while you still can! Once a society has accepted their own nation and culture as evil, they will be ready to fundamentally transform society, usually from Movies to government regulations and programs. The word Communism is now replaced with the general word of Socialism, but it is still the same agenda which is being pushed. Please don't take my word for it, take the word from the people I listed above! Not only had they experienced it first hand, they were originally operating these very programs to overthrow Western society when they were working for the USSR! When America is removed from the world scene, the current regimes of the world will finally be unhindered in their conquests. The end result will be the loss of freedoms for many and violence on a scale this world has never witnessed before!

Throughout history, anarchy, upheaval and rebellion has often appeared on the scenes of revolutionary France, Cuba or Russia. Even though we have witnessed such passions in the past, this generations embodies all of the characteristics of

precisely what Saint Paul had been describing! This is what the peoples of the earth had to be like during the days of Noah! There have been times of upheaval, but in all of my knowledge of history, I cannot recall a period of time in which the younger generation have hated the older generation to such a point that they are beating them and even killing them!

Revolutions often begin with the cause of equal rights for all but end in freedom for none! America has been one of the only exceptions. Not that this country has ever been perfect, but rather, had a moral foundation which could be built upon throughout the ages. Anyone with an understanding of history already knows this. I do not know of anyone who denies America's shortcomings and past sins. Yet, America is really the only country which has tried to correct and fought to heal its past and implemented laws to rebuild its broken past sins. Nevertheless, the younger generations are not taught about this. Rather, it has been taught to hate their own country, their own history and even themselves!

One of the latest teachings is called the 1619 Project. This project is geared towards teaching our children that America's founding was not 1776, but rather 1619, in which slavery was brought to North America by the western colonial powers. Of course, this is a part of history, but only a partial history. As Benjamin Franklin had once stated: ***"A half-truth is often a great lie."*** So the question should not be if the colonial powers had built upon slavery, but rather, what were the rest of the world's empires doing at the same time? We cannot separate the peoples of the

past from the historical period in which they were living.

The America's had witnessed brutality, not only at the hands of the Spanish Conquistadors, but also its native inhabitants such as the Incas, Mayas and Aztecs. In fact, Cortez' army consisted of 90% native tribes who combined their forces against the Aztecs, because of their brutality and human sacrifice of the conquered native populations. The Incas and Mayans had almost wiped themselves out with destructive wars before the Spanish even arrived. On the other side of the world we had the Shoguns of Japan, the Mughal Empire of India and the Turkish Ottoman Empire. All of these Empires had the institutions of slavery and indentured servitude. **All of them!** All of them were responsible for the killings of hundreds of thousands and even millions of people whose countries they invaded. In the case of the Ottomans, it was in the tens of millions, and enslaved tens of millions more. The Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East have been all too familiar with the Ottomans, since they suffered under their brutal control for hundreds of years. Would the Americas have been better off under the Ottomans?! How about the Shoguns or Aztecs?!

Why have these facts been ignored in today's classrooms? Because there is an agenda being pushed! This generation has more information at its fingertips than any other time in history. But are these technologies being utilized for learning purposes, or for entertainment? Unfortunately it is mostly the latter! However, many of

today's social movements are not being pushed by logical or rational teachers. It is not rationality, but rather passions, and to quote Benjamin Franklin again: ***"Passions govern, and they never govern wisely."***

Even a more sad fact is that many of today's teachers have effected those now in government to the point of the talk of implementing reparations for sins of a distant past generation to be upon a current generation of whose ancestors, in many respects, were not even in the America's during the time. The Orthodox communities had not arrived in America in any significant numbers until the early 20th Century. The number of Greek and Eastern Orthodox communities in America during the periods of slavery and Indian Wars were literally only in the hundreds of people. None of them were wealthy, and none of them were treated very well when they arrived to these shores. In many cases they were ostracized and even killed. They certainly didn't have privileges in this country or even the ones they came from.

The time in which we are living are the days of which the prophets of old had foretold. We know that there will be much more to come upon this generation. I have to confess that these days have been difficult for me to get through, let alone write about. It is truly sad to see many people today filled with such despair and hate. Let us remember the words of Jesus: ***"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near"*** (Luke 21:28).

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