

End Times **HYSTERIA!**

2020 has turned out to be a wildly difficult year, to put it mildly.

So difficult, in fact, that some are calling it *apocalyptic*. Plague, death, war, famine, political tumult: all these things are pointing to imminent judgment. It's all there in the Bible after all. The end is upon us, now. The Lord will suddenly appear "*as a thief in the night*" (1 Thess 5:2). The judgement of the nations will commence and "*all of the tribes of the earth will mourn*" (Matt 24:30). The angels will separate the good from the evil. And "*He (the Lord) will render to every man according to his works*" (Rom. 2:6).

In the Orthodox Church, we are less inclined to make pronouncements about the exact "when" of Jesus' second coming. History is replete with false prophets and their doomsday clarion calls. (Anyone remember a man named Harold Camping and his May 21st, 2011 prediction?). Instead, we take to heart what the gospel actually say about this: that God the Father is the only One Who knows and that we must thereby live our lives in preparation for the time when we each must stand before Christ.

We also believe that "*the end*" has already dawned in this world through the mystery of the Eucharist. Here we as Orthodox believers ascend from earth to heaven and partake of the eternal banquet of the Kingdom of God. As we pray during the Anaphora, "And remembering your three-day burial and resurrection from the dead, your ascension to the right hand of God the Father, and Your glorious second coming..." Indeed, how is possible to say "*remembering the second coming*" unless we have already passed into the timeless of God Himself? Only in the Eucharist is there a confluence of the temporal and the eternal.

So yes, truly the end has come, but not in the way most would have ever expected - through this mystery of the "*breaking of the bread*" (Acts [2:42](#)). The Holy Apostle Peter, in his first epistle says something similar about the life of the Church and the *breaking in* of God's Kingdom. "*For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those that do not obey the gospel of God?*" (1 Pet. [4:18](#)). We confess our sins in Holy Confession in anticipation of our judgement, or better yet, we are already there with Him at the end making a good account of the whole of our lives.

We should not be overly distraught nor quickly "*shaken in mind*" (2 Thess. 2:1) about what's happening in 2020. Instead we are called to be faithful in love to the Lord in every possible way, praying all the while to pass through, spiritually unharmed, these current trials and afflictions.

Fr. Paul Jannakos