

## **“Maranatha” – Our Lord come!**

**By Fr. George Pulikkottil, D. Th.**

According to the liturgical calendar of the Oriental Orthodox Church, now we are in the last part of our liturgical calendar, namely the Eschatological period. This period starts from the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (Sep.14th) and ends on the feast of Koodhosh Eetho (the first Sunday of the liturgical year – Oct. 30th in this year). The Gk. term eskhatos meaning "last, furthest" refers in Christian theology to the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. In the Nicene Creed, we pray: "He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; of His kingdom there shall be no end." When we recite this prayer, we do believe and admit four important points: 1. Jesus Christ died on the Cross; 2. He is resurrected and ascended into heaven; 3. He is to return to this earth to judge the world and to establish His Kingdom; and 4. Though no one knows the day or hour of Christ's second coming, a true believer should be always ready to face this final day. The Church is always in preparation for this great day and should always pray for that. This is why the last part of the year is set apart in the calendar as a special period of meditation and study on this important topic – Eschatology – study about the second coming of Christ, last judgment of the world and related things to be happened.

As a part of the preparation and longing for the Kingdom of our Lord in its fullness, we do pray Maran atha (our Lord come)! Though this Aramaic (Syriac) phrase occurs only once in the NT (I Cor. 16:22), it became one of the most important shortest prayers of the Church because of its message and importance. It could be understood and interpreted as the essence of Lord's Prayer – "Our Father, who art in heaven..." The term literally means "our Lord has come", or "our Lord will come", or more likely "Come, our Lord!" Then it becomes a powerful prayer form. In that sense, there is a strong similarity to the final words of the Book of Revelation: "Amen; come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20). This is the basic hope and prayer of the Church that our Lord will come again.

But, will He come again at all? Is it not some what only a superstitious belief of Christians? Why is He so late, if he really wanted to come again? We hear all these from unbelievers or even from some Christian friends those who are still in doubt and confusion. Being the witnesses of the Right Faith (Ortho Dukssu), it is our responsibility to face these questions. See if you believe in Christ and Gospel, then you have to believe in His Second Coming and Last Judgment too, because it is an essential message of the New Testament. In other words the Plan of the kingdom of God will have its completion only on the day of the Second Coming of our Lord. Thus "the Holy Church, the bride of the Most High", will receive her reward on that day – the Eternal life with Christ her Bridegroom. Though we can neither anticipate the time nor the way or method of His coming, we do have His assurance that He will come and restore His creation – the Church. Hence we pray during the Eucharist: "...; we wait for Your awesome and glorious Second Coming..." (Lk. 22:15 & 1 Cor. 11:26).

So, let us recite this prayer from the depth of our hearts on waiting for His eternal Kingdom. Let it be our final goal and longing. Let it be our contemplation and meditation: “Maranatha o’ Kyrielison – Our Lord, come and have mercy upon us.”