

FROM OUR PASTOR

MAY 13, 2017

Sabbath Greetings to everyone!

According to the tradition, "It was his first day in Alexandria and Saint Mark, the Evangelist, walked around the city bedazzled by its wonders. The small village that Alexander the Great had chosen to build into a city bearing his name had grown to equal Rome in its greatness." During the following centuries, Alexandria became a center of Christian learning and philosophy, with monasteries there producing numerous manuscripts and some of the most recognized names among the Roman Catholic church fathers.

The Coptic Christian community in Egypt is perhaps the oldest group of its kind. Coptic Christians trace the founding of their church to a missionary journey by the evangelist St. Mark in the year 42. According to tradition, Mark also spent his last days in Alexandria, then the capital of Greek-influenced Egypt and a center of knowledge and culture in the Mediterranean world. The first converts he made were the native Egyptians known as Copts for the language they spoke, which was the last surviving form of ancient Egyptian. The word *Copt* is rooted in the ancient Egyptian word that describes a person from Egypt.

The Coptic Orthodox Church has followers among Egyptian immigrants to other countries in Africa and around the world, including the US, and "daughter churches" in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Coptic language, written using Greek letters, remains the official liturgical language of the church, but over the centuries has been gradually replaced by Arabic, the language of modern Egypt. Today, the Coptic Orthodox Church is headquartered in Cairo at St. Mark's Cathedral. St. Mark's was bombed recently when an Islamic State terrorist blew himself up during the Palm Sunday liturgy, leaving 17 people dead.

This is nothing new. The Copts, who make up about 10% of the country's 90 million population, have endured persecutions for over a thousand years, but so far have been able to maintain their community. Deadly attacks by militant Muslim groups have increased in recent years.

BBC reported in February, "**Dozens of Coptic Christian families in Egypt have fled North Sinai province after a number of killings in recent weeks by suspected Islamist militants..... Islamic State militants released a video, warning of more attacks on Egypt's Christian minority.**"

There have been recent predictions that Isis and other groups intend to drive out or kill all the Copts. This would be a holocaust comparable in size to the Nazi murders of 80 years ago. Will the world stand by and watch the bloodbath? Will the Egyptian government try to protect nine million peaceful citizens?

We need to watch what is happening to the Copts because this might be a harbinger of our own future. In one of his final messages before being crucified, Jesus Christ warned, " Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (Matthew 24:9) and " the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service." (John 16:2).

So, the persecution is religion based--just as history has proven so often through the centuries. But in the future time Christ foretold it will be worldwide. This will be accomplished by the coming "beast"--or powerful civil and military government--that will dominate the earth just prior to the return of Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom on the earth.

Revelation 13:1 says "Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name." What will this great power do? "Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Verses 6-8)

So, what do you need to do now to prevent becoming a part of this false military and religious system? Make sure your name has been written in the Book of Life!! As the gospel writer Mark warned centuries ago: "Take heed; see, I have warned you of these things beforehand." [Mark 13:23](#)

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