



During the month of Mesore, which is next to the last month on the Coptic calendar, through each of the four Sunday readings as well as the Sunday of Little Month, our beloved church keeps on reminding us of the end of this life on earth and the inevitable return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the first Sunday of Mesore, the Holy Gospel reading from Luke 20:9-19 is the parable of the reckless vinedressers. *"Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others"* (Luke 20:15-16). Thus the church establishes the similitude between the vinedressers and us being stewards over what God has given us in the form of gifts and talents, and the day will come when He will inevitably ask for fruit from the vineyard He has entrusted us with, and for an account of our stewardship. So, the church leaves us with this tremendous warning message to meet us the following Sunday with a more encouraging one.

On the second Sunday of Mesore, the Holy Gospel reading from Luke 5:27-39 is about the calling of Levi, the tax collector. Through this reading the

church lifts our eyes up to the hope existing in repentance. Levi, who later became St. Matthew the writer of the first Holy Gospel, is Jesus Christ's words in action. "*For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*" (Matthew 9:13). This was Jesus Christ's reply to the Pharisees contentions against him for having accepted St. Matthew's invitation to dine at a sinner's house. St. Matthew is an example of someone who did not reject the calling to repentance and change of purpose in life. His status as a tax collector prone to usurping and exploiting changed to a messenger of peace and salvation. Enriching us with this great miraculous change in the life of St. Matthew to meditate on, the church meets us the following Sunday with the method and recipe of this change.

On the third Sunday of Mesore, the Holy Gospel reading is from Mark 3:22-35. The scribes after having seen how the "*the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.'*" But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known" (Mark 3:11,12); they said "'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.'" (Mark 3:22). Jesus Christ's response was an exploration and a subsequently ultimate refutation of the logic behind their

conclusion that He was casting out demons by the ruler of the demons. In addition, it was also a means of demonstrating how to get rid of Satan's tricks which bombard people's lives.

*"How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house"* (Mark 3:23-27). The "strong" to whom Jesus Christ referred was Satan. In order for Jesus Christ to descend into Hades and liberate the captives held hostages in sin by Satan, He had to be incarnated, die on the cross and bind the devil first and foremost. Through this Holy Gospel reading, the church wants to refresh the faith in Jesus Christ reminding the believers that Jesus Christ is still the ONE and only One who can bind the 'strong' in order to liberate us from his grip. In order for us to uncover Satan's tricks and have victory over them, we have to primarily know Satan's devious nature and armor ourselves to face them with God's grace and support.

## Who is Satan?

The devil is known by his four major characteristics of being a tempter, enticer, liar and accuser.

- *The Tempter*. The first famous weapon that the devil launches is temptation. Satan is well described by Isaiah "*Who make a man an offender by a word, And lay a snare for him who reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just by empty words*" (Isaiah 29:21).
- *The Enticer*. By definition, to entice is to attract someone especially by offering or showing something that is appealing or interesting. Satan used this weapon of deception with Eve. From there Satan got the title of 'deceiver and father of all deceivers'. A deception is a lie shaped in the form of a truth and enforced to become seemingly a truth to be believed as something true.
- *The Liar*. The Holy Gospel of St. John characterizes Satan not only as a liar but the father of it, "*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks*

*from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).*

- *The accuser.* The Holy Book of Revelation depicts Satan's nature as an accuser of mankind *"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.'" (Revelation 12:10-12).* A good analogy of Satan's behavior is that of someone deceiving and enticing someone else to make a mistake and after the fall, he accuses him before the authorities. Satan accuses us for things we did not do and for things we did. God dismisses the false charges. Jesus Christ died on the cross to cover with His blood the second charges and give us hope for a victorious life in Him. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ*

*Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1-4).*

## **Satan's Battlefields**

Satan deceives mankind in five very essential areas concerning:

- God. Satan tries to picture God as someone who does not love us nor wants our good benefits. He originally implied this lie by telling Eve that eating from the tree would make them equal to God. Thus, he presented himself as an advisor and God as a liar and someone jealous seeking his own glory apart from Adam and Eve, His own creation.
- The word of God. Skepticism and lack of trust in the authenticity and truthfulness of the Holy Bible and the word of God is Satan's predominant attack of the present time. Offering alternative options of meaning and interpretation to the word of God is a weapon

Satan uses to create confusion concerning the true meaning of biblical verses and historical events.

- Sin. He presents sin as if free from harm and guilt. By telling Eve "you will not die", he encouraged her to accept the offer without hesitation. Nowadays, Satan uses the same technique regarding many spiritual issues such as homosexuality, gambling and many others relating them to permitted cultural diversification.
- Nature of mankind. Satan plays on the strings of the human psychological traits such as, laziness, slackness, fear, depression and hopelessness. For example, after causing people to sin, Satan comes with his evil suggestions of either belittling the act or overestimating its grievousness enforcing more fear, more hopelessness and subsequent depression.
- Principles. Satan introduces new principles and concepts to serve his purposes by instituting doubt and incorrect notions. For example, Satan instills questions about the validity of the Holy Bible, free will, God's existence, etc. Satan wants to stir people to question their belief through a mental warfare.

On the fourth Sunday of Mesore, the Holy Gospel reading taken from Mark 13:3-37 pertains to the end of time and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **How to Fight Satan**

The "strong" requires a stronger one to fight him. By His death on the cross, Jesus Christ bound Satan on our behalf forever. Therefore, Satan has no dominion over us unless we invite him to empower us. Continuous victory comes through a continuous deep prayer life, closeness to the word of God, partaking of the Holy Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion, and a healthy communal life. Such a strong spiritual life will guarantee a safe arrival into eternal life as the church tells us on the Sunday of Little Month, the last month of the Coptic calendar, in the readings from Matthew 24:3-35 concerning the end of times.

### **Conclusion**

Our blessed church, through the Holy Spirit, has arranged for us all the means and ways of Salvation first and foremost through preaching to us our Lord Jesus Christ our victorious savior who is the only one who could and still can bind the plunderer "*In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The humble also shall increase*



*their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to nothing, the scornful one is consumed, and all who watch for iniquity are cut off—*" (Isaiah 29:18-20). Secondly through the Holy Mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation, Confession and Holy Communion and thirdly through the pastoral care offered by her ordained dedicated servants. In addition, our church has given the Word of God very much weight and importance in the weekly readings matching scripture with the annual season; thus spiritually nurturing us around the year and offering protection and shield against the vile of the evil one ensuring a safe and sure arrival at our destination in eternity.

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