

## MARANATHA

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“O that you would realize that each moment is golden” (Ellen G. White)



**I. Introduction:** The moment I heard that the *Shekina Editorial Board* have chosen “Maranatha” as the topic concern for the upcoming College Magazine 2018-2019, then the first thought that strike me so much is the geniuses of the editorial team about the term. All common topics of course have their own value but if so general, then, readers take it easy and interpretations can be also be so common. So, I personally do appreciate them for opting “Maranatha”, which is really appropriate especially in the theological circles like us. Biblically, the word and its connotation have its specific course (to the context of Corinthians especially) however, to make use of it, for us today through various interpretations is always appreciable to revitalise the message of truth which is ever applicable to any context. I am sure that there will be many fascinating interpretations, but still then as a humble exercise of academic keening, I do want to contribute this piece of article/essay in responding to the urges of Editorial Board of Shekina. And It’s my pleasure to reintroduce the word “Maranatha” in the aspects of “*Be Prepared, amidst the subverted World!*” Without acknowledging the context of the text where the word “Maranatha” was being spoke, direct self-interpretation may not be fair enough I supposed, for which let us reconsider some of the requisite background faces.

**1. Etymology and Meaning:** According to the explanation by *Max Wilcox* in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* and other referred sources, the word ‘Maranatha’ comes from two Aramaic words ‘Marana’ and ‘Tha’. Fascinatingly, these words have not been translated, but transliterated in the Greek language. This was usually done for phrases that were commonly known, or easily understood among the readers. However, the exact meaning of this phrase is somewhat lost in transliteration due to the variations found.

As the New Testament was written in Greek and in the later versions, the word for “*Maranatha*” is a single word, “*μαραναθα*”. However, it becomes confusing, because of the fact that the earliest manuscript of New Testament has this phrase written in two words: “*μαραναθα*” or, “*μαρανatha*”. The word becomes more abstruse with the presence and absence of space in the syllable, because meaning goes accordingly as the words are spaced. E.g. if taken as ‘*Marana tha*’, it connotes

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a command, “Come, O Lord!” or, “O Lord, Come!” or, “Lord Come!”. On the other hand, if we take as ‘Maranatha’, then it implies “Our LordMaster has come!” However, most versions of the Bible translates it as “Our Lord come”, the Aramaic Bible in simple English translates it as “Our Lord has come!” Varying bit further, some other versions has the meaning “Our Lord is coming!” which is seemingly more appropriate for my writing of interpretations too.

Originally, ‘Maranatha’ is supposed to be from Chaldian and Syrian Origin, which generally could be understood as an explanation used to urge people to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Etymologically, “Mar” is said to be a word used to describe the act of forgetting, with origins tracing back to the Old English and German language. “Anatha”, on the other hand, means, “an accursed thing”. So, together it implies someone who has devoted himself to evil and who deserves to be ex-communicated from the Church.

### **2. Biblical Usage:**

**2.1. “Maranatha” in the Bible:** For the first and the last time, the word “Maranatha” in the English form is found only in the Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, especially in KJV of the Bible, in the following passage: “*The Church of Asia salute you.*

*Aquilla and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the Church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand. If any many love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be “Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus Amen.”* (1 Corinthians 16:19-24)

### **2.2. The context, where the word was used:**

As we all know that the passage belong to the Paul’s first letter to the church of Corinth, which is obviously a closing part of the letter. Paul, in addressing some serious issues prevailed in the Church in Corinth, definitely wrote this letter, in around AD 53-57, in instructing them what they must do in order to grow in their faith. Chapter 16 in particular addresses specific things that Paul wanted them to be doing in several matters. The chapter begins with Paul’s addressing about what they should do in matters of taking up the weekly offering (verses 1-4). In verses 5-9, Paul expressed himself as itinerant, and the work needed at Ephesus was so affected. In verses 10-12, he addresses Timothy’s arrival and how they should receive him. And in verses 13-18, Paul challenges them to “standfast” in their faith and take to heart the things he has written concerning how they should

conduct themselves. Above all, the letter act as a letter of rebuke particularly in concerning the evil that was existing in the context. So, finally, in the closing verses, especially in v.22, Paul gives the final warning that, “Anathema Marathana”.

**2.3.”Anathema Maranatha”:** The word “*Anathema*”, has the same root as the latin word “Anathema” (the word before Maranatha in 1 Corinthians 16:22) which is defined etymologically as “an accursed thing”. Literally it means “being against a theme”, referring to God.” And when it comes to a particular sense, it is used to describe a person that was ex-communicated from the Church because they were “devoted to evil” and “accursed”. So, combined word as “Anathema Maranatha” is then used to describe a person that is cursed to receive the wrath of Jesus Christ, because of the person’s rejection of God by indulging in evil or unbelief.

We can see that the word “Maranatha” is ambiguous in its origin and connotation. However, it is obvious in the text, that the word act as a conjunction with the word “Anathema”, that seems to indicate the coming of the Lord to bring upon wrath on the evil doers of this world. Paul used the phrase “Anathema Maranatha”, in describing those who were cursed or ex-communicated from the local Church because of unbelief and embracing of evil to be dealt with by the Lord. Biblically we are told that grace and

forgiveness for those who repents, but curse and death for those who are not at the end.

**3. Maranatha! Be Prepared amidst subverted World/Hour!** Various scholars had their own interpretation on the topic “Maranatha”, in various way, but of course indicating the future eschatology/ second coming of Christ as the central. Ellen G. White a well-known American author had impressive interpretation on his book “Maranatha” that begins with ‘First coming of Christ’ till ‘the Second coming of Christ’, whose central message is to be prepared to face the imminent return of Christ. Another prolific writer born from Netherland,

Harry Bultema also had splendid interpretation of “Maranatha” on his book “*Maranatha! A Study of Unfulfilled Prophecy*”, published in the year 1985, which is a careful and systematic study of the premillennial return of Christ.

Keeping in mind the main key concept of the term, I want to pen down in addressing that “*Maranatha! Be Prepared amidst subverted World/Hour!*”

**3.1. Who we are!** Before we fully understand the topic explanation, let us begin to think who we are! Then let me answer that “We are just an uncertain object, as similar as an electronic device whose life is not possible without a

current.” Life as we practically experienced, is so uncertain and fleeting that actually we can be born or die at a time in a day, which is a matter to think. That gives us the value and existence of our life on this earth. But knowingly nobody wants to admit that today someone is dying then tomorrow could be our turn, the reason is no one wants to die earlier than the other. It is certain that death is waiting for all, no matter who we are! We all created to meet the death at the end, which has no alternative. Despite this, we are made responsible to do our best at the earliest when the opportunity avails for us. Among the biological family, intellectual differentiate us from the rest, who can conquer whole things of the earth. Instead of knowing self-identity and duties, we are shattered and infused by laxity, leisure-living, hatred, complaints, negligence of time, and so many other things overshadowed our thoughts and living. Knowing one-self and its value can really make a difference.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb ‘Prepare’ means ‘making ready for use’ or ‘consideration’, which has its term origin from the Late Middle English i.e. from French ‘preparer’ or Latin ‘praeparare’, from ‘prae+parare’; and as an adjective ‘Prepared’, it means ‘created in advanced’ or ‘pre-planned’. In simple sense, to be

prepared for something means, to get ready of our job ahead of its actual time.

**3.2. Subverted World/ Hour:** It is true that the present world is a complex place where life can either be a meaningful one, or else, a very futile. The world will not directly changed us, but we must prepared ourselves with the world. Perfection is not laid somewhere else specifically for us, rather, it is looking forward by all imperfect beings to achieve, which remain an ongoing search ever! All the elements that exist in the world shaped and mould us in course of time, but we can handle it better to be shaped by us.

While some are starting their lives, some come close to the end. While some are born, some are dying elsewhere. When rich are enjoying but no peace and satisfaction at last, then poor are suffering but ever content of what they have been! When some are too genius and prosper, but the foolish are getting worse in all aspects of life. When someone’s life is so precious more than diamond, but there are many lives for whom no one is there to set single drops of tears. When someone thinks he/she really is intelligent far better than others, then time comes when there are still many from whom they also have to learnt something still better. When someone thought that his/her life is worthless, then worse than

him/her, many lives are lying aside uncared and homeless. The technological development has changed the life pattern and divided them too, which having enormous implications in every single life. There are still many things to be said, which cannot be inserted in this piece. Therefore, we can never ever have uniform of existence and the definite picture of the world in complete order. In such a complicated place we are living. Then the question is how to handle or prepare ourselves, *Admire this Subverted World/Hour?* to obtain true ideality of life. I do agree with Pope Francis's statement, "My choices including related to the day to day aspects of life, like the use of a modest car, are related to a spiritual discernment that responds to a need that arises from looking at things, at people and from reading the signs of the times. Discernment in Lord, guides me in my way of governing." By discerning the ongoing situation, it is wise to prepare ourselves, of course no time to complaint rather to restore the best.

**3.3. Past is out of hand and Future is uncertain:** There can be a person who is still living in the past or, who are over-visionist about the future, at the cost of neglecting the present which is the actual treasure of life. Lily Tomlin has rightly remarked that "The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything. The just make the most of everything that

comes their way." What I want to convey here is past has already left us and future is beyond our reach, what we have better to do is bringing out a platform for now which is living. Of course, past has its own significance whether good/bad; and focusing on the future vision drives us to strive for the best, but in doing so it should not take the place of present. Life in its present day is more important than any other stages.

**3.4. Present is best at the hand, making its best use is the wisest step:** To me, no matter how I was in the past, and how I am planning to be in the future, but what matter most is how am I now, which is more crucial. Roy Benneth says, "If you want to be happy, do not dwell in the past, do not worry about future, focus on living fully in the present". Today if I am in a right track, it will definitely build memorable past and will also lead us to a definite goal and purpose of life; but if not, then neither can we build past story that tells others how to live nor can have any hope for ourselves to have a definite path for future. Chelsea Roman said, "All that is certain is this very moment". In addition to that the statements of Zoey Sayword goes "Do not wait for the perfect moment, take the moment and make it perfect". For Eckhart Tolle, in his book 'Power of Now', giving importance to the present hour, he has stated "All negativity is caused by an accumulation of

psychological time and denial of the present. Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry, all forms of fear are caused by too much future and not enough present. Guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of non-forgiveness are caused by too much past, not enough present. "Present hour is the best opportunity that we only have, so as to do our best in all our doings. If so, there is no substitute time for us to sleep away, hate, gossip, murmur, deceit others and so on, as we spent our days. Rather, wherever we are, we must settle our own task for a day in a day, not in a week. Using one's time or opportunity very judiciously can make an ordinary person to achieve extraordinarily things.

**3.4. Maranatha! Maranatha! Be Prepared!** Howard Huff states, "It was not raining, when Noah built the ark." The best utility of present day can be understood as preparation ahead of time in all our doings, and it required planning. Alan Lakein says, "Planning is bringing the future into the present, so that you can do something about it now." Life never brings to us readymade ground to climb upon or, we will never achieve anything without incurring some sacrifice, that time and process. E.g. the student who never have proper pre-plan and preparation about his study, can have greater risk to lose the

opportunity. Preparation always brings better result and that certainly affects the future as well. "The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today" (H. Jackson Brown Jr.) There is also a proverb that: "Opportunities knocks at every door but only once". Stephen Cyrus said, "Remember when disaster strikes, the time to prepare has passed." Making the best possible use of the present time itself could be understood as 'to be prepared'. And it could be the best response to "Maranatha!"

**4. Critical Reflection:** Bible is clear enough that "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day our Lord will come" (Matt. 24:42). Revelation 22: 12-13 says, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the beginning and the end." And 1 Corinthians 16:22 says, "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed (a) O Lord, come! (b)."

God's grace can be in various forms starting from the forgiveness of sins till the opportunity we are enjoying at present. Forgiveness cannot be taken just for granted. Then, "Maranatha" is for us today, an alarming exclamation about Jesus's coming, though it may occur in the

present or in future. We may say that we love Jesus, but not respecting the opportunity that God makes avails for us! Then we are still sinning. Every seconds of the present moment is a privilege given by God, not by our earning. So, to prepare ourselves for his second coming is greatest desire for all believers, but then if we fail to do his commission today, then there is no hope for us tomorrow. Therefore, the keyconcept of “Maranatha! Amidst Subverted World/ Hour” is that Heaven can be realised partially here on the earth while we are living. Without preparing ourselves on this earth, we cannot dream about the Heaven, and in doing so it may costs our whole life sacrifices and self- denial to follow Christ and to meet him face to face at last. Let this be our prayer of preparation as the Psalmist says, “Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom”( Ps.90:12).”

**5. Conclusion:** Therefore, the word “Maranatha” is really significant in present context today. It could be understood in various ways of course, however, this essay interpreted “Maranatha” on account of “Be Prepared Amidst Subverted World/ Hour! as a response to the exclamatory warning of Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians “Anathema Maranatha”. The dimension of spiritual preparation by over-spiritualising from the distant, at the cost of neglecting the ongoing

process is objected; rather preparation is a matter of practical immediate involvement within the moment of living, at the very place where we are standing. And it has to go along with all determinants which is around us. And so, to respond, “Maranatha!” calls for us to be prepared in all aspects of life, to meet Jesus’ return. It can be fearful to some who are still unprepared and unrepented, but grace, mercy and crown of life for those who are prepared for Jesus’ Coming. Let not the Subverted World/Hour distract us, rather may draw our attention to be prepare and be prepared at the present hour of life.

