**END TIMES? Jesus, the Anthropocene and Climate change**

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Bishop Richard Randerson

richardrandersonnz@gmail.com

Recently Dr. Andrew Shepherd, theologian at Otago University, led a seminar *Living faithfully in the Anthropocene.*

There have been various eras and epochs in Earth’s history measured by geologic substructures (deposits in rocks) For example the Ice age, stone age and bronze age. We currently live in the Holocene era dating back 11,700 years.

The Anthropocene era is an unofficial term coined around 2000, the key point being that this is the first era in which humankind (anthropos) has a significant impact on the planet’s climate and ecosystems. Examples are the industrial revolution with its smoke and toxic smog, Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Chernobyl, the hole in the ozone layer, global pollution of land and sea and climate change

Some have coined it the Capitalocene erain which the pursuit of financial capital drives greed and self-interest.

The message is that we are destroying our own habitat, as highlighted by those poignant images of polar bears struggling to survive on diminishing ice-floes. How should humanity respond? Our calling is to save the planet not just selfishly for our own survival but for the inherent wellbeing of God’s creation in its own right. Nature is not a resource bank for humanity to plunder.

Cop27 is warning that we are heading for the end times for Planet Earth. And in today’s Gospel (Luke 21:5-19) Jesus also speaks of end times

* The temple will be destroyed
* Earthquakes, fires, famines, pestilences
* Nations will rise against nations

On account of Jesus’ name his followers will be persecuted, betrayed and arrested but will be given words and wisdom to resist their opponents and be witness to him. Jesus says that those who stand firm will win life.

**This is apocalyptic literature -** revealing God’s will

* Eg Ezekiel, Daniel, the Gospels. Revelation
* Post Jesus there was extensive persecution of Christians by Rome.
* Apocalyptic parts of the Bible are coded messages to Christians to stand firm
* Today neoliberal powers of greed and self-interest are the evils that confront us
* There are amazing parallels between today’s Gospel and the realities of the climate crisis ….
* earthquakes, floods, fires and famines
* Pacific nations sinking
* Greta Thunberg and other climate activists are persecuted
* The Anthropocene era is at work.

But humankind has the capacity to fashion the Earth for good: God gives us a different vision (Isaiah 65:17-25)

* There will be a new heaven and new earth
* No more will the sound of weeping be heard in your land
* People will build houses and dwell in them
* They will plant vineyards and eat the fruit
* They will not bear children for calamity
* They will neither harm nor destroy in all my holy mountain
* These same words appear again in Revelation 21 and 22

God shows us a different end – not a fiery termination but End as a goal- a new heaven and new earth here on this planet. And as Christians living in the Anthropocene you and I are called to be co-creators with God in making it happen.

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