

## The Second Sunday before Advent

*Sunday between 13 and 19 November inclusive*

### Principal Service readings

Daniel 12.1-3	Resurrection and retribution
Psalm 16	I keep the Lord always before me; in his presence is everlasting joy
Hebrews 10.11-14, [15-18,] 19-25	The Old Testament priest and the new way through Christ
Mark 13.1-8	Jesus speaks of wars and rumours of wars

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *Prediction of the destruction of the Temple*

<sup>1</sup>As Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!' <sup>2</sup>Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'

<sup>3</sup>When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup>'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?' <sup>5</sup>Then Jesus began to say to them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. <sup>6</sup>Many will come in my name and say, "I am he!" and they will lead many astray. <sup>7</sup>When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.'

Mark 13.1-8 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

## Comments and Questions

When people are suffering they often ask, 'When will it all end?' This chapter of Mark gives hope to the suffering, then and now – there is a promise that 'those who endure will be saved' (13.13). The Temple was an impressive building that had started to be built in 21 BC, and was still being built when Jesus was speaking (around AD 29). It was finally completed in AD 63, seven years before it was completely destroyed after a siege. Everything comes to an end. So, what lasts? – only God himself.

Deceivers of different sorts have always been a danger to Christians. Are there people around us today who claim to be special messengers? Or those who claim to know when Jesus' 'Coming' will be? To avoid being led astray Christians should seek to find out what God himself is saying. 'Do not be afraid,' is a phrase often used by Jesus (see Matthew 1.20; 10.26; 28.5 ...). What is the effect of fear? Christians have a double duty: to prepare for 'the End' and to be faithful in the present time.

### Quotations

1

We have all probably heard the phrase, 'The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.' Could we also apply that to God Almighty? I believe we can. The Bible clearly teaches that God changes not. So, how he interacted with mankind during troublesome times in the past is most likely a great indicator of how he will manifest himself again in future biblical events.

*God's nature and the end of the age / Bob Palumbo. 2019*

2

Like measuring light as a particle or wave makes it what the observer expects, so too does assuming things about reality make it so. I fear the conclusion people gear up for is the wholesale demise of many millions unless this spiritual ennui ceases. How many catastrophes have people expected in the last few decades? How many times have humans expected the End Times?

*Flies to wanton boys / Thomm Quackenbush. 2016*

2

3

Note, though, something else of great significance about the whole Christian theology of resurrection, ascension, second coming, and hope. This theology was born out of confrontation with the political authorities, out of the conviction that Jesus was already the true Lord of the world who would one day be manifested as such. The rapture theology avoids this confrontation because it suggests that Christians will miraculously be removed from this wicked world. Perhaps that is why such theology is often Gnostic in its tendency towards a private dualistic spirituality and towards a political laissez-faire quietism. And perhaps that is partly why such theology with its dreams of Armageddon, has quietly supported the political status quo in a way that Paul would never have done.

*Surprised by hope: rethinking heaven, the resurrection, and the mission of the church / N. T. Wright. 2007*

### Related topics

*For further study:*

Eschatology; salvation; morality: foundations; revelation; service / mission

### Closing Prayer

You promise, O God,  
not to abandon us to death,  
but to deliver us on the day of ruin.  
In these last times,  
equip us with the spirit of right judgement  
that we may not follow false prophets  
nor be alarmed amid rumours of war;  
but strengthen us to endure the labours  
which will herald the birth of your new age.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Celebrating the Christian Year, Year B, 2 before Advent<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.*