

stonework and votive offerings, Jesus said, 'All these things you are staring at now – the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another: everything will be destroyed.' And they put to him this question: 'Master', they said 'when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that this is about to take place?'

'Take care not to be deceived', he said 'because many will come using my name and saying, "I am he", and, "The time is near at hand." Refuse to join them. And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened, for this is something that must happen but the end is not so soon.' Then he said to them, 'Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines here and there; there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

'But before all this happens, men will seize you and persecute you; they will hand you over to the synagogues and to imprisonment, and bring you before kings and governors because of my name – and that will be your opportunity to bear witness. Keep this carefully in mind: you are not to prepare your defence, because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations and friends; and some of you will be put to death. You will be hated by all men on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost. Your endurance will win you your lives.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Reflections on the Gospel

EVIL WILL NOT HAVE THE LAST WORD

Today's passage from the Gospel of Luke (21:5-19) comes from the discourse on the future that Jesus gives as his days in Jerusalem draw to their climax. In the discourse Jesus looks beyond his own death and resurrection to the time of the Church. In this period the disciples will have their own 'passion' to undergo in the shape of the trials that await them in the long period before the kingdom of God is finally in place.

The disciples will be persecuted and hauled before law courts. Most poignantly, they will suffer division and betrayal among themselves and within their own families.

In all this they should draw comfort from knowing that Jesus has foreseen such trials and placed them within the context of events leading up to the overthrow of evil and the triumph of God at the time of his own return as cosmic Lord.

The time of the Church has extended vastly beyond anything foreseen by the early believers. We retain the doctrine of the 'Second Coming' in our creeds not necessarily because we believe that Jesus will soon appear on the clouds of heaven but because it asserts the eventual triumph of God's rule in the universe.

Until then, all is provisional. Wars, famines and earthquakes continue. Those who work for justice and a more human life for all people face hostility, imprisonment, even death. There will always be grounds for disillusionment and loss of faith. The Lord's encouraging message applies as much to our time as it did to the early generations of believers.

Brendan Byrne, SJ



FIRST READING

Mal 3:19-20

A reading from the prophet Malachi
The sun of righteousness will shine on you.

The day is coming now, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and the evil-doers will be like stubble. The day that is coming is going to burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, leaving them neither root nor stalk. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will shine out with healing in its rays.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 97:5-9. R. cf. v. 9

R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.

1. Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp / with the sound of music. / With trumpets and the sound of the horn / acclaim the King, the Lord. **R.**

2. Let the sea and all within it, thunder; / the world, and all its peoples. / Let the rivers clap their hands / and the hills ring out their joy / at the presence of the Lord. **R.**

3. For the Lord comes, / he comes to rule the earth. / He will rule the world with justice / and the peoples with fairness. **R.**

SECOND READING

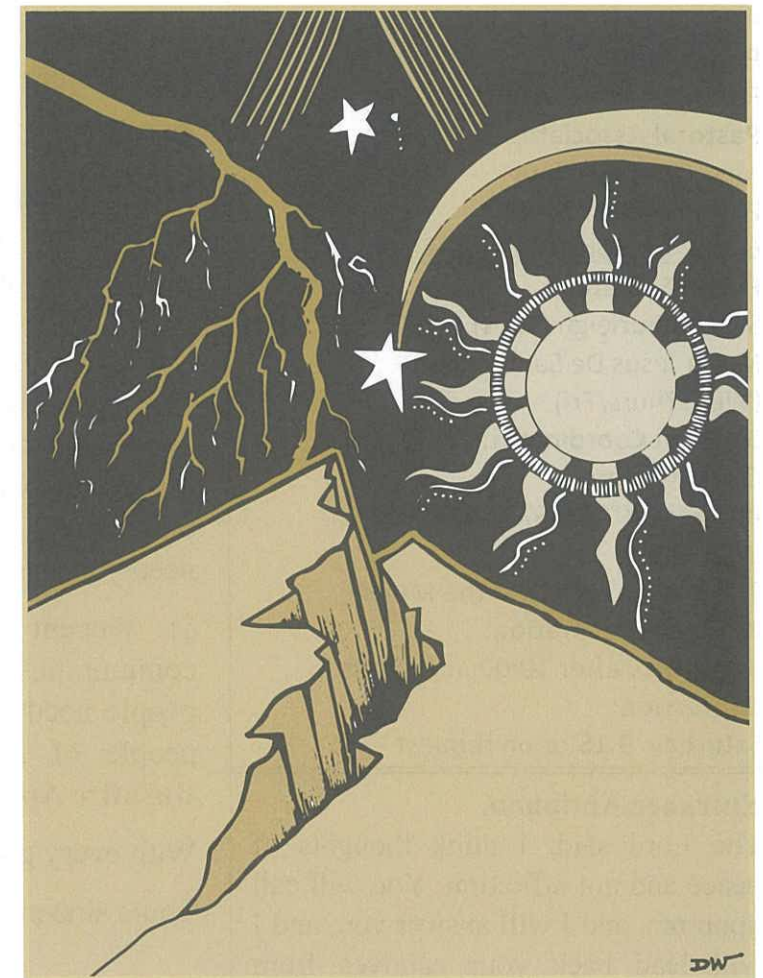
2 Thess 3:7-12

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

Do not give anyone food who refuses to work.

You know how you are supposed to imitate us: now we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we ever have our meals at anyone's table without paying for them; no, we worked night and day, slaving and straining, so as not to be a burden on any of you. This was not because we had no right to be, but in order to make ourselves an example for you to follow.

We gave you a rule when we were with you: not to let anyone have any food if he refused to



do any work. Now we hear that there are some of you who are living in idleness, doing no work themselves but interfering with everyone else's. In the Lord Jesus Christ, we order and call on people of this kind to go on quietly working and earning the food that they eat.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lk 21:28

Alleluia, alleluia!

Lift up your heads and see;
your redemption is near at hand.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 21:5-19

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Your endurance will win you your life.

When some were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine