

Alleluia, alleluia!

Be watchful, pray constantly,
that you may be worthy to stand before
the Son of Man.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mk 13:24-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

He shall gather his elect from the four winds.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In those days, after the time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then too he will send the angels to gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven.

'Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you, when you see these things happening: know that he is near, at the very gates. I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

'But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / B

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'MY WORDS WILL NOT PASS AWAY'

The language of Daniel's prophecy and Jesus' dire warnings concerning the day of judgement that will accompany the return of the Son of Man were intended to be deliberately unsettling. In the centuries immediately preceding Jesus' birth a style of literature developed which is now known as apocalyptic.

The seeds for this style of preaching and literature had been sown earlier by the prophets who had spoken of the day of the Lord. At its heart was the belief that God would forcefully intervene in human history and set in order all that humanity had wounded through violence, sin, and unfaithfulness. It was theological reflection on a large scale since it gave expression to the deep-seated belief that God was the Lord not only of life and death but of human history as well.

Faced with a world that desperately needed to be set in order, the apocalyptic literature expressed the belief that the means that God would use would be cataclysmic, involving the resurrection of the dead prior to the distribution of rewards and punishments. The signs that would accompany this moment of judgement and grace were cosmic, involving the disruption of the natural order of the universe.

It is this mode of expression which Jesus himself uses in speaking of God's intervention in our world at the coming of the Son of Man. It is crucial to note that while the heavens and earth will be overturned there is a point of reference that does not change or pass away – Jesus' life-giving word.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Dan 12:1-13

A reading from the prophet Daniel

When that time comes your own people will be spared.

'At that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who mounts guard over your people. There is going to be a time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, your own people will be spared, all those whose names are found written in the Book. Of those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace. The learned will shine as brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 15:5, 8-11

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

1. O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup; / it is you yourself who are my prize. / I keep the Lord ever in my sight: / since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm. **R.**

2. And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad; / even my body shall rest in safety. / For you will not leave my soul among the dead, / nor let your beloved know decay. **R.**

3. You will show me the path of life, / the fullness of joy in your presence, / at your right hand happiness for ever. **R.**



SECOND READING

Heb 10:11-14, 18

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

By a single offering he has achieved the eternal perfection of those who are sanctified.

All the priests stand at their duties every day, offering over and over again the same sacrifices which are quite incapable of taking sins away. Christ, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his place for ever, at the right hand of God, where he is now waiting until his enemies are made into a footstool for him. By virtue of that one single offering, he has achieved the eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying. When all sins have been forgiven, there can be no more sin offerings.

■ The word of the Lord.