

In this gospel passage Jesus speaks both to his **present generation** and to a **future, unknown generation** that will witness his final coming in judgment of the world. And yet we will also discover that he speaks to **our generation**, as well.

**To his own, Jesus states that** “*This generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.*” The Temple which Herod built was one of the wonders of the world. It was begun in 20 BC and in the time of Jesus was not yet completely finished. It was built on the top of Mount Moriah. The ancient historian Josephus tells us that some of the stones making up the Temple were 40 feet long by 12 feet high by 18 feet wide. Its porch consisted of a double row of Corinthian pillars all 38 feet high and each one cut out of one solid block of marble. Its front was covered with massive plates of gold and that when the sun shined upon them, the reflection was so great that people had to turn their eyes away, as if it were the sun itself.

It seemed so vast and solid that it would last forever. And Jesus predicted that the day would come *that not one of these stones would stand upon another* – its reflected glory of the sun would be darkened and all they believed in would fall as stars from the sky. That generation would witness the awful terror and the siege of Jerusalem and destruction of its great Temple.

It was in 70 AD that Jerusalem fell to the besieging army of Titus, who was the emperor of Rome. The horrors of that siege form one of the grimmest pages of history – a time of *great tribulation*. The people crowded into Jerusalem from all over. It was then that Titus decided to starve the city into subjection. Within the city there were sects and factions fighting among one another. The city of Jerusalem was being torn without and within.

Josephus tells the story of the terrible siege: 97,000 were taken captive and 1, 100, 000 perished by slow starvation and sword. “The upper rooms of homes were full of woman and children dying of starvation. The lanes of the city were full of dead bodies of the aged. The children and young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with famine, and fell down dead wherever their misery seized them.

Some persons were driven to such terrible distress to search the common sewers and old dunghills of cattle, and to eat the dung which they now used for food...men were found gnawing the leather straps of shoes...others eating their dead.” The prophecy that Jesus made of terrible days ahead for Jerusalem came most abundantly true and his warning of judgment realized.

**And yet he also speaks of the end of time, the final judgment** when *the Son of Man will be seen coming in the clouds with great power and glory, with his angels gathering the elect*. It will be a time of judgment for the entire living world – dictators and evil regimes will fall and wars will cease. For those who love him, it will be a day in which their tears will be wiped away. Others will crouch in fear, knowing.

As you might recall, in the resurrection of Christ, he did not come as a spirit, but glorified flesh and blood. It is our belief that when he returns a final time, the bodies of

those who died loving God will rise from their graves to be united once again with their souls. (I might even gain a few inches in height!).

It will be a time when at last we shall know what it is to be a fully human, for the union of soul and body will exist with no rebellion on the body's part to diminish the union. *"Matter will be once more the extension of spirit, not its limit."* (Christopher Dawson).

**Of course, Jesus' words are also a reminder of our own mortality, when our individual lives come to an end.** The signs are not found not with fig trees, but before us when our hair *grays* and our steps become *slower* as the years pass in age or sickness.

(To the students): When I was your age, I thought I was indestructible - I had a horse double kick me straight in the chest - knocked me out, but I was back at it few days later. I must say, I never thought I would ever be middle age - and now I have plenty of reminders that this body is not indestructible - I can throw the back out opening a window. On the positive, I'm a bit closer to hopefully seeing the Lord with each passing day.

For some, there will very little warning. +A number of years ago a Japanese airliner crashed into a mountain, killing 520 people. Minutes before crashing, the passengers were told the plane was going down. Among the debris of the crash site, rescuers came across a tiny calendar, whereby a man wrote hasty notes as the final minutes ticked away: *"I'm sad! To think our dinner last night was the last time we would be together."* And to his three small children, *"Be good, work hard, and help your mother."*

And yet because of Christ, there will no longer be any last times together - no families are separated for long, even in death.

Whatever the ending, the outcome will be the same, in which we will be accountable for every act, every word spoken whether in silence or among others. All will be seen and revealed as we will no longer rationalize or justify, as I am certainly guilty of doing that myself. Even the most extraverted among us may finally find themselves speechless!

On earth we never see the face of God - usually it is God's back we see, as He passes through our lives. But when our time comes, we will see the face of God and we will be shown that we were never ever left alone.

**And yes, we see that the apocalyptic words of Christ do have some relevance with us today, but his words are not limited to the end time of life.**

Metaphorically speaking, many here have experienced much of what Jesus predicted. Sometimes the very foundation of our faith in heaven is shaken, as we have to endure the sufferings of one we love so very much. Some of you, who have put your faith in someone, loved them, only to see them fall like a star from the sky.

We've all felt alone at times, as if the "Son" has been darkened from our lives. Yes, all have had those "end of the world days". And yet all of you are here, your light still shines, as your faith tells you, his light never stops shining. Even in my darkest days, I know he will always come for me, be it clouds of glory or the kind words of one He sends to lift me up.

+Early in my priesthood, I visited a parishioner who was homebound and in the hospice program. She told me she was not afraid, all on account of something that happened a long time ago with her grand-daughter. Her family grew up on a farm and on one dark day, her 11 year-old granddaughter came staggering into the kitchen, looking ashen before her mother and grandmother.

She looked up at her mother and said, "*Mom, I'm sorry, but I fell off the horse.*" Then she paused, saying "*It will be okay, Mom. You will never have to worry about me. Please know I love you and will always be okay.*" A few minutes later, en route to the hospital, she died

"*She knew*", said the grandmother to me. "*And she was not afraid.*" Yes, she knew what awaited her and all of us who live in the Light. Our gospel today really is not about the End, but about a new beginning; a beginning where a Father awaits to embrace his faithful Children of the Light, Children of the Son.