

“The beginning of the end?” Luke 21:25-36 Populus Sion 2025

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength, and our redeemer. Amen. (Ps. 19:14)

This morning as we all know, is the second Sunday in advent Now, advent simply means “the arrival of a notable person, (or thing)” and for us, it is the period of waiting symbolically for the birth of our saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ and interestingly, the Greek word from which Advent is derived is called Parousia, which extends the meaning to include, the second coming of Christ, meaning that we should be should not only be celebrating the birth of Jesus, but also in anticipation, we should be celebrating the second coming of Christ as well.

With the birth of Jesus, we celebrate our atonement, (that our sins are all forgiven by his death and resurrection and that our lives are entwined with his, as we travel through this earth) and also with the expectancy of his second coming where we celebrate our eternal life with him in heaven.

Now with the thought of the Christmas season looming, I was happy to prepare today’s sermon, thinking the text might be about the nativity or something nice and Christmassy, then I took a look at today’s readings, and oh dear I mean Jesus said, " and on the earth distress among nations people fainting from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world and to be on guard so that our hearts are not weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the worries of this life ". Does that not just cheer you up no end? Especially with the world in the state that it’s in but please don’t be disheartened, because there are many positives to be taken from these verses as I will now explain.

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Our gospel reading this morning in Luke 21, refers to a sermon that Jesus preached about the second coming, making it clear that God has, and always will have his hands on human history reminding us that history is moving in a specific direction his direction remembering too that Jesus was also a prophet, (and the greatest prophet who ever lived) and who is teaching us that even in our worst circumstances that God has not or never will, abandoned us rather that he has a plan and a purpose for us all, but that he is waiting on us catching up with him to meet us in his plan remembering that it is his plans for us which are not normally the same plans as we have for ourselves.

Now, with that in mind, you might look around you. Just look at the state of this world today - we can be forgiven for thinking everything is out of control. Horrible things are happening in the Ukraine and the Middle East, and other areas of the world too. And if we look closer to home, we see other problems: like our economy and the general state of our country, which certainly does not seem to inspire any kind of hope.

So, how then can we proceed? How can we face this uncertain future with a certain air of confidence? Yes, it a difficult question to answer, but answer it we must. Life goes on but as we are in church today, I am assuming we are all here to looking towards God for those answers, because he has carried us all thus far. So why should he abandon us now?

We must therefore first confirm this by asking ourselves to whom do we put our trust? Do we place our trust in our government, our politicians? Or our so called “unbiased media”, our news channels? Or our social media? Our friends? To whom then do we place our trust? If we trust in the Lord, then we

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must place our trust in his word also, our bible as there is much to say in the bible if you know where to look.

Several years ago, I undertook an exhaustive study into eschatology, the study of the end times - prophecies - which was most enlightening, and that study was broken down into two main sections: fulfilled prophecies and unfulfilled prophecies, with the fulfilled prophecies giving credibility to the unfulfilled.

Now, there are over 2,500 prophecies in the Bible, and about 2,000 of these have already been fulfilled to the letter, with no errors. So, I will now mention a few of these, briefly, very briefly to prove to you their validity, most of which you will most probably know.

The first one is the fall of Babylon. Babylon in ancient times was a huge city in which modern historians declared as impregnable and indestructible, and that nothing short of the military might of the World War armies would have been able to conquer such a city. Yet two Bible prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, foretold its impending destruction, and also that the ruins of Babylon would be forever avoided by travellers, and that the city would never again be inhabited. It's a very interesting and fascinating story, but Babylon to this day is totally desolate.

Second, after leading the ancient Israelites out of Egypt, Moses prophesied that the new Jewish nation would eventually be conquered, not once, but twice. He predicted that the Jewish people would be carried off as slaves, first by the Babylonians, and second, by a world kingdom, which we now know as Rome, where they would be sold, or given away as slaves. The first conquest took place in 607 BC and the second, in AD 70. And further prophets foretold that the Jews would remain scattered throughout the entire

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world for many generations, without becoming assimilated which they did, as we know and that these Jews would one day return to the land of Israel, to reestablish their nation exactly to the predicted date of 1948 which is unbelievable and we can all testify.

And thirdly, we have the much-prophesised messiah, Jesus Christ our lord, to whom bible scholars estimate that more than 350 Old Testament prophecy's were fulfilled through him.

That is over 2000 prophecies fulfilled which are unbelievable in their accuracy but that leaves 500 or so unfulfilled prophecies still to be addressed. Again, I will mention a few, and only very briefly:

- the first, the rise of Rome, or some superstate like a modern-day Babylon, and there has been a lot of interpretations about this one, but nothing concrete.
- Next, the battle of the king of the north fighting the king of the south. Gog and Magog and Russia have been mentioned, so has northern Greece, but again, nothing really tangible.
- Next, a false messiah or false prophet has been prophesised? Do you have anybody in mind for that role remember it must be someone who is internationally popular and credible.
- Then there is the antichrist. Any sign of him or her yet?
- Which leads us to the un-holy trinity, of the false prophet, the antichrist and Satan working together, and taking us into a tribulation, not the tribulation?
- And midway through this tribulation, we have the “abomination of desolation”, where the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and shows his

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true colours forcing the Jews to be scattered again, but this time, they turn to the Lord, realizing that Jesus really is their Saviour.

- And this in turn leads us straight into the great persecution at the end of which the Battle of Armageddon is to take place.
- And then, and only then says the bible will Jesus' return in a cloud of glory.

And there are many other such prophecies still to be fulfilled, but these are the main ones for now, and although I have not done them any justice in my description, my point is this according to the bible they are still to happen.

So, we either believe the bible or not. And if we believe, we must appreciate that Israel, is and has always been in God's hands, even though the Jews rejected Jesus as their Lord. The bible is very clear that God is not finished with Israel and in fact as I mentioned, it predicts that one day, the Jews will accept Jesus as their Lord, and to do that, I believe it will be a painful time for the Jews.

So what do we do? Looking only to God for answers is our only way to go. Jesus tells us that when the world seems to be falling down around us, we are to take our eyes off the circumstances, and turn them to him, and only him.

Colossians 3:1 puts it this way, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God”. That is where we will find our answers, and if we allow him, he will remind us of how blessed we truly are with blessing that we can pass onto others.

In closing, today is a wonderful time to be alive, even if our readings this morning make things seem awful. In fact, we see the world is in a frightening state, so who then should we place our trust? If we focus on the

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here and now, and our media in all its forms, we can only become more miserable fearful and without hope.

If we turn our attention to the Lord, we then must turn our attention to his word in the holy bible and if we do that, we must look at his prophecies, both the fulfilled and the unfulfilled, noticing that the fulfilled prophecies were fulfilled as predicted. So why then should the unfulfilled prophecies not go as planned.

When we look at God in those terms, we see hope, an plenty off it and Christmas especially reminds us that God is not only in charge of this world, but living and intimately involved in our world. God has not abandoned us, and he never will. He is fully committed us and so to face the future, we only need to keep our eyes on him. After all, Jesus can give us the strength necessary to endure whatever comes our way. Amen.