

**I pray that I may speak in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.**

Our readings this week all speak of the so called end times. I guess we are all looking forward to the time when Brexit is no longer a daily news headline and as we approach the end of the churches year we get the opportunity to look at some long expected news of the day when Our Lord returns, what a headline that is going to make. But what does it mean to us who are living out our faith at this time.

Daniel living 500 years before the birth of Christ had a vision of these end times where those who had died and those who were still living were raised to everlasting life but just as in the parable of the sheep and the goats only some would have eternity in heaven because they have chosen to have faith in God. This is the only reference to a resurrection in the Old Testament and probably why Martha, Lazarus' sister believed in the resurrection, but what she didn't know at that time was that Jesus was the one to make it all possible.

Jeremiah had predicted it and Daniel had experienced being captured by Cyrus and taken off by the Babylonians into exile. For him may be this was part of the end times. Daniel saw the Archangel Michael protecting the people of God but he also foresaw the destruction of the Temple and Herod's Temple wasn't destroyed until 70 AD.

Our gospel reading finds Jesus using the Temple and the view from the Mount of Olives as the setting for his discourse on the Coming of the Son of man. Today only some of the foundations of the West wall of the Temple remain. Some of the pure white stones of the Temple were indeed massive 37ft long, 12ft high and 18ft wide. Jesus' prophecy that not one stone would be left was accomplished by the Romans under Titus when totally destroyed it. Stone were even prised apart to collect the Gold leaf that had been melted by the fire.

Climbing up the Mount of Olives, which was some 200ft higher than the temple on the other side of the Kidron Valley, with Jesus were Peter and Andrew, James and

John, those Galilean Fishermen who were the first recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah. They wanted to know more about this pending disaster as they probably thought that the destruction of the Temple was one of those events that would herald the end times. What would be the sign?

Many have tried to predict these, some thought that our two world wars were signs, certainly we have had earthquakes, famines and fires. But Jesus said to his closest disciples: Watch out, be on your guard, be alert to the dangers of deception.

2000 years have passed and who knows how many are still to come. But one thing we do know is that Jesus' work on earth is done, he accomplished all that he was asked to do which was to open the way to heaven for each and everyone one of us.

The passage from Hebrews makes a clear distinction between the work of the priests to sacrifice under the Old Covenant which was a recurring duty that needed them to stand and that of Jesus our great high priest under the new covenant who sacrificed himself and made all further sacrifice unnecessary and therefore was able to sit down at the Right hand of the Father.

Our reading at the Remembrance Service from John recalled Jesus' words that no greater love is shown than when one lays down one's life for ones friends. But when Jesus laid down his life for you and I he made a way to God the Father which had previously been closed to the likes of you and I under the old covenant but through the new covenant established by Jesus the curtain that had previously separated the holy of holies was torn from top to bottom, total transforming our relationship with God.

But there are still conditions for drawing close to God: we need a sincere heart, full assurance of faith, hearts clean of guilt and bodies washed with pure water. This is not just the physical sign of baptism but the inner spiritual cleansing through the

Holy Spirit working in our lives. This is expressed figuratively in a similar expression for the washing of priests under the Old covenant.

When Isobel and I were in the Holy Land recently it was easy to see some the rules of the Old Covenant, the Shabat, the wearing of hats, and clothing but the saying of the Shma in Hebrew in Christian church on the last Sunday before we came home was a powerful reminder that we have a common ancestry.

**Shma Israel , Adonai Eloheinu ,** Hear O Israel The lord Is our God,

**Adonai ekhad** the Lord Alone

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. This is repeated twice daily as part of their liturgy.

This is what the writer to the Hebrews was getting at when he said we must be unswerving, without fear or doubt. We should not be tempted to return to our old ways. We need to be sure of the Hope that we profess. Hope in God’s promise and God’s oath given to Abraham.

To persevere in our journey through life to its end, we need an anchor for our soul which guarantees our safety, the writer of the Hebrews pleads with us not to give up, not to desert or abandon our faith but he exhorts us to encourage each other as the Day of the Lord approaches.

There are two processes that go on in the lives of those who have accepted Jesus a Lord and Saviour. One is Sanctification which allows us to have a clean conscience before God and the perfecting our hearts and minds which are continuing process. But Doubt, Fear, and wilfulness are all things that can draw us away for God. This was as true for the disciples and it is for us today and the same solutions are just as effective, Faith, Hope and Love are our protection in these times and I pray that we may all have full assurance of Faith.

So whether we die or live to experience the Day of the Lord we can be sure of our place with him for eternity and experiencing his love for ever. What a glorious hope we have.

Amen. Words [1115]