

A reading from the book of the prophet Daniel.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

At that time Michael, the great prince,  
the protector of your people, shall arise.  
There shall be a time of anguish,  
such as has never occurred  
since nations first came into existence.  
But at that time your people shall be delivered,  
everyone who is found written in the book.  
Many of those who sleep  
in the dust of the earth shall awake,  
some to everlasting life,  
and some to shame and everlasting contempt.  
Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky,  
and those who lead many to righteousness,  
like the stars forever and ever.

Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Every priest stands day after day at his service,  
offering again and again the same sacrifices  
that can never take away sins.  
But when Christ had offered for all time  
a single sacrifice for sins,  
“he sat down at the right hand of God,”  
and since then has been waiting  
“until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.”  
For by a single offering he has perfected for all time  
those who are sanctified.  
Where there is forgiveness of sin and lawless deeds,  
there is no longer any offering for sin.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – B 33

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

Jesus spoke to his disciples  
about the end which is to come.

“In those days, after the time of suffering,  
the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light,  
and the stars will be falling from heaven,  
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.  
Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’  
with great power and glory.

Then he will send out the angels,  
and gather his elect from the four winds,  
from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

From the fig tree learn its lesson:  
as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves,  
you know that summer is near.

So also, when you see these things taking place,  
you know that he is near, at the very gates.

Truly I tell you,  
this generation will not pass away  
until all these things have taken place.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But about that day or hour no one knows,  
neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son,  
but only the Father.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### Reading I: Daniel 12:1-3

Apocalypses follow a regular pattern. The apocalypticist first recounts, under the guise of future prediction, a selected series of historical events up to the moment of writing, then indicates future historical events rather vaguely, and finally, becoming airborne as it were, foretells the cosmic events of the End: resurrection and the last judgment, the cosmic consummation.

Our present passage comes precisely at this last transition. “Trouble” is vaguely historical, but the deliverance that follows is the point at which history yields to cosmic eschatology. The deliverance takes the form of resurrection.

Daniel 12 is notable as one of the earliest passages in the Old Testament that speaks of resurrection. Then follows the final judgment, in which the righteous and the wicked are separated, the former passing to eternal life, the rest to eternal “shame and everlasting contempt.”

Note that the resurrection life involves a radical transformation: the redeemed will shine like the brightness of the firmament and like stars. This apocalyptic concept of radical transformation is taken up in the New Testament, where the synoptic Jesus speaks of it as a life like that of the angels in heaven (Mark 12:25 par.) and where Paul speaks of the spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:21).

It is important to note that the resurrection is understood, not as a resuscitation to the same mode of existence as in the present life, but as a complete transformation.

What that life is like can only be described in poetic terms, as here, or in Paul’s more abstract but question-begging phrase, a “spiritual body.” It means entrance into a totally transcendental mode of existence.

### Responsorial Psalm: 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

This psalm expresses a devout individual’s trust and hope in YHWH to deliver him from Sheol and the Pit. It can hardly have meant resurrection from the dead in the apocalyptic sense, but, as so often in the Old Testament psalms, deliverance at death’s door.

Later this passage will be taken up into early Christian apologetic and applied to the death and resurrection of Christ (see the kerygmatic speeches in Acts 2 and 13). This is not a falsification of the psalm’s original meaning but a deepening of it.

It is in this latter sense that we are invited to understand the psalm as a response to Daniel 12, though it is further extended to cover the hope of the general resurrection and not only Christ’s resurrection.

## Reading II: Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Marking the conclusion of the theological core of Hebrews, this passage contrasts the high priesthood of Christ with the Levitical priesthood. The author reiterates his point about the repetition of the Levitical sacrifice.

Last Sunday's reading, in making the same point, spoke of the yearly offering on the Day of Atonement; here the writer turns to the daily sacrifices offered, not by the high priest, but by the ordinary Levitical priests.

"He sat down" must not be pressed to mean that Christ has no further priestly work in heaven, as is suggested by some commentators. The heavenly session is only an image conveying one aspect of the truth, not an exclusive definition.

In relation to his death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ's work is completed; therefore he can sit, waiting for the full effects of his victory to be gathered in at the parousia ("until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet"). But in relation to the ongoing life of the Christian community, his priestly work continues.

He still makes intercession for us and still appears in the presence of God. That could be expressed by the image of standing (see Acts 7:56), which does not contradict the other image of sitting.

"Perfected" does not denote moral perfection. It means rather that the beneficiaries of Christ's sacrifice have been completely initiated. They are privileged, through Christ, to enter the heavenly sanctuary through liturgical worship while here on earth, and thus to attain already here, by anticipation, the goal and destiny of human life.

"There is no longer any offering for sin": Christ's sacrifice can never be repeated. But this does not rule out its constant application through his heavenly intercession and his appearing in the presence of God on our behalf.

Gospel: Mark 12:38-44 (long form); 12:41-44 (short form)

This excerpt from Mark's "Little Apocalypse" starts at exactly the same place as the reading from Daniel—at the point where the apocalypse moves from future historical events vaguely conceived (cf. Mark's "tribulation" with Daniel's "time of trouble") to a series of cosmic events.

Here the latter are expanded with imagery drawn from other parts of the Old Testament: the failure of sun, moon, and stars. Then comes the last judgment; here Mark differs from Daniel in the role given to the Son of man (this figure has appeared earlier in Daniel, in chapter 7, a passage that will be read next week).

Mark's portrait of the Son of man is, however, more precise than that in Daniel. In Daniel he appears as a symbol and personification of the people of God at the End, whereas in Mark he is an individual figure who performs the eschatological judgment.

Some seek to assimilate Mark's Son of man to Daniel's by harmonizing the two figures. They argue that the Son of man in Mark 13 does not descend from heaven to earth but, as in Daniel 7, is manifested in heaven—in other words, it is not a parousia but an exaltation scene.

However, in view of firmly established Christian tradition, discernible as early as 1 Thessalonians 4:16, this seems most unlikely, and we are on surer ground if we take it to refer to the parousia.

The Son of man comes from heaven to earth on the clouds with power and great glory, and sends out his angels, who accompany him to gather the elect and escort them to heaven.

Clearly there has been a development of the myth of the Son of man between the Book of Daniel (165 B.C.) and the New Testament. Such a development is attested in Enoch 37-71, though it is not certain whether that part of Enoch predates the New Testament.

That Jesus himself spoke of the Son of man in this developed sense as the eschatological judge and savior is most probable, but that he painted elaborate apocalyptic pictures as in Mark 13 is improbable.

Jesus proclaimed that the Son of man would judge people according as they accepted or rejected his own eschatological message. He thus reduced the Son of man to the status of a rubber stamp for his own word and work.

After the resurrection Jesus was manifested as himself, the heavenly Son of man—in other words, as his own rubber stamp, ratifying his own word and work. The early Church then expanded the apocalyptic imagery to express its faith that the Son of man would come again as Jesus.

In the synoptic apocalypses there is a tendency for eschatological parables to be collected at the end, and so here we have the parable of the fig tree—undoubtedly a genuine parable of Jesus, which in its original setting spoke of his ministry as the dawning of the shortly-to-be consummated kingdom.

It is placed here to assure Mark's readers that the apocalyptic events just described are near at hand. Mark's Gospel was written in the sixties, before the hope of the imminent end had begun to fade, with a consequent deferral of the parousia.

After the parable come three sayings. The first (v. 30) could well be an authentic saying of Jesus in which "these things" referred to something other than the apocalyptic denouement—perhaps to the vindication of his own word and work.

The second saying (v. 31), also probably authentic, expresses similarly Jesus' certainty about the validity of his eschatological message. Placed here by Mark, "my words" again refer to the apocalyptic events.

The final word (v. 32) has caused much debate, centering on two questions: (1) the authenticity of the saying; (2) Jesus' disclaimer of knowledge about the date of the final consummation.

As for (1), many would agree with Schmiedel, for whom this was one of the "pillar passages," that is, indubitably authentic precisely because of its frank admission of the Son's ignorance. But did Jesus explicitly call himself the Son? (That he had a unique filial consciousness is beyond doubt; see his use of "Abba.") This verse seems to lie somewhere along the trajectory leading from the cry of jubilation (Matt 11:25-26 par.) to the Johannine sayings about the Father and the Son.

(2) Whether this saying goes back to Jesus or to the early post-Easter community, neither party shared the perspectives of Chalcedonian Christology. Therefore, we should not approach this text with the assumption of later Christology. Historically, Jesus' knowledge comprised what was sufficient for the performance of his eschatological mission, no more.

As we look back over the "Little Apocalypse" of Mark 13, we see that it was developed by combining authentic eschatological sayings and parables of Jesus with traditional apocalyptic material, for example the saying about the coming of the Son of man.

Thus, a very different impression is created from Jesus' own proclamation that spoke of the inbreaking of the kingdom and the certainty of speedy vindication of his message.

We may believe that this apocalyptic elaboration spoke meaningfully to Mark's Church, beset as it was by temptations of a divine-man Christology and by persecution.

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