



The Judgement of Jerusalem

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Christ's warning to Jerusalem is a warning to us.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with much power and majesty; and He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds.

THIS TALK WHICH Our Lord gave to the apostles about the end of the world and the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem took place very close to His own death. No doubt it was because of the impending death of Our Lord on the cross that He was speaking about the last things. He was speaking about the end of time and the end of the old Jerusalem, the destruction of the world and His own second coming. That would be fitting. He was with the apostles in the precincts of the Temple and He left with them. They went across to the mountain which overlooks the city of Jerusalem and, because the apostles had marvelled at the Temple of Jerusalem, Our Lord told them that the day was coming when all of this would be destroyed because men did not recognize Him. If, in fact, the

Jews and their leaders wholeheartedly and enthusiastically as a body had recognized Christ as the Messiah, Our Lord, in effect, was saying that Jerusalem would not have been destroyed. He did not desire the destruction of Jerusalem. On the contrary, He desired the preservation of Jerusalem. And we know this because He wept. He wept when He told the apostles what was going to come. He did not tell them with any relish.

A Matter of Justice

Sometimes, when people do not act correctly toward us and something happens to them, we have to restrain ourselves from being happy about it. There is that tremendous temptation to say: "Well, justice was done. Isn't it great that they got it? They got theirs!" That is a very powerful temptation. In fact, in a certain sense, it is not always a matter of petty vengeance; it is a matter of justice. For example: if someone commits a terrible crime in society against an innocent person, let us say, he is arrested, tried and convicted. It is not wrong to say, "It is a

good thing that this was done." In the case of very serious crimes, for example the shedding of innocent blood, it is not wrong at all. In fact, it is negligence on the part of the state not to put to death capital offenders! It is wrong! It is not merely an Old Testament prescription that those who shed blood should themselves be punished by the shedding of their own blood. Attached to that decree of God in the Old Testament is the reason. The reason is as valid now as it was then, because human nature is the same. Almighty God says that he who sheds innocent blood, by man shall his blood be shed because man is made in the image of God.

It is such a terrible crime to shed innocent blood that the state, which is the instrument of God, has a duty to enforce justice. It does not mean that you do not work for the repentance of the person who committed the crime. Neither does it mean that, because one is forgiven the eternal punishment, that he is not obliged to a pay a temporal penalty. For example, God forbid, we commit a mortal sin. We go to confession and confess the sin to the priest. The priest absolves us and we receive forgiveness of the eternal punishment. There are two punishments attached to mortal sin: eternal punishment, and a temporal punishment which God forgives according to the degree of our sorrow. If we have a wondrous degree of sorrow, then He would be more disposed to forgive the temporal punishment.

Temporal Punishment

However, on the other hand, we have many cases in which God does not forgive the temporal punishment. He did not forgive Moses the temporal punishment for his lack of faith. In the Old Testament, Moses was forbidden

by God to enter the Holy Land, and that was the punishment for one incident in which Moses hesitated in his faith. God forgave him the eternal punishment of that sin, but He would not forgive him the temporal punishment. The temporal punishment was that he could not enter into the Holy Land. Temporal punishment must be paid. It is one of the things that is done in purgatory. The external order of justice must be satisfied even though the eternal justice of God is itself satisfied by the Blood of His Divine Son.

In this case, Our Lord left the Temple and saw that the leaders of His people would reject Him and conspire to put Him to death. He saw how these very same religious leaders, who were always preaching the coming of the Messiah, would undermine everything He said and did. They would not welcome Him with open arms. He saw that they despised Him, hated Him, and were jealous of Him. They were filled with envy because many of the people recognized at least to some degree that He was the Messiah. And as some of the people loved Him, honored Him and followed Him, He saw further that instead of the Scribes and Pharisees and the overwhelming majority of the Jews following Him and rejoicing that the Messiah had come, they rather sought ways to put Him to death.

When Will This Be?

Because of this rejection of the Messiah, Jerusalem would be destroyed. Our Lord looked at Jerusalem and saw that it would be destroyed years later in the year 70. Our Lord did not say, "They'll get theirs!" He did not say, "They deserve it because they rejected Me." Our Lord wept. He was filled with great sorrow that this would have to be be-

cause He had been rejected. When Our Lord spoke about it, the apostles seized this opportunity to ask Him, "When will this be?" Peter, James and John took Him aside. "When will this happen?" Their minds quite naturally went to the end of the world. "When will this happen and when will Your second coming be and what will be the signs thereof?"

Our Lord then proceeded to tell them what would happen. He told them first of all that there would be a very great tribulation. "You shall see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the Prophet standing in the Holy Place. Then they that are in Judea let them flee to the mountains and he that is on the housetop let him not come down to take anything out of his house." It will come so suddenly that as soon as it begins to come, flee. When the sight of the Roman legions would appear before Jerusalem, Our Lord said not even to go downstairs and take your coat. Waste not a second. If you waste one minute you may be caught in the city and if you are caught in the city, you probably will be put to death. So as soon as these things happen, flee from the city. Not only flee from the city, but pray that it does not happen in winter. It was as if Our Lord was saying it is scheduled to happen in winter, but if you pray it won't happen in winter and then your chances of survival will be much greater.

Then Our Lord said it would be a sad day; a very sad day for mothers with little children who have to flee from the city. It would be a terrible tribulation; in fact, it would be so bad that nothing like it would have ever been seen since the beginning of time. We know, of course, that that is exactly what happened. The Roman legions surrounded the city and, as you've

heard many, many times, they utterly, completely, totally destroyed it. The reason they did it, was that they were teaching a lesson to all of their subject peoples—if you should attempt to throw off the yoke of imperial Rome, this will happen to you.

Then Our Lord said that another sign—not for the end of Jerusalem, but for the end of the world—would occur. There were many who went around claiming to be instruments and agents of God. When the Romans were approaching, many people appeared who said, "We are of God; listen to us." Our Lord said not to pay attention to them. And so it shall be at the end of the world.

Then and Tomorrow

There is a parallel between what happened at the destruction of Jerusalem and what will happen at the end of the world. For, as you know, most of what happened in the Old Testament is a parallel to what happened in the New Testament. Most of the great figures of the Old Testament were figures or types of figures of the New Testament. Judith, for example, was a type of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Judith who delivered the Jews, was an actual, historical character, but, nevertheless also a symbol of the Blessed Virgin. Judith crushed the enemies of the Jews; the Blessed Virgin Mary shall crush the head of the serpent. Moses is a type for Christ. Moses led the Jews from slavery in Egypt through the desert to the Promised Land. Christ leads us out of the slavery of the devil through the desert of life to the Promised Land of Heaven.

False Prophets

So we have in the fall of Jerusalem a type or symbol of the Second Coming of Christ. And just as false christs and

false prophets arose at the fall of Jerusalem, so will false christs and false prophets arise at the end of time. I do not say necessarily that we are in those times—we very well may be—but there are false christs and false prophets everywhere. And I am specifically thinking about these fundamentalist Protestant preachers who spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year to preach their Christ and their gospel. They are effective precisely because some of the things they say are true and some of the things they stand for are good. And so they are perfect “to deceive even the elect, if it were possible.” They do not believe in the same Christ Who died on the Cross, rose from the dead, and established His Church. They do not believe in that Christ. They rather believe in a Christ who has been manufactured from the self-will of man. They do not believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They rather believe in a false gospel created by men who are little more than instruments of the devil, in order to deceive the elect. There are many, many false christs and many, many false prophets.

There was a terrible persecution at the fall of Jerusalem. There will be a terrible persecution before the Second Coming of Christ. There were wars and famines and there was pestilence at the fall of Jerusalem. There will be a great distress of nations at the end of the world—terrible distress. There was a great tribulation at the time of the fall of Jerusalem. There will be a great tribulation at the end of the world in nature itself.

The abomination of desolation probably refers to many things. There is the false worship established in the Temple of Jerusalem. There is the shedding of innocent blood in the precincts of the Temple. That is a sign of the destruction of Jerusalem. For us, the sign of

the Second Coming will be the sign of the Son of Man, the sign of the Cross in Heaven. Also at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, there was an escape made possible for those who had accepted the Faith and the degree of persecution was lessened because of their prayers. So, too, at the end of the world, the degree of calamity will be lessened for our sake that we may not lose our souls.

Prelude to Judgment

We are preparing for the birth of Our Lord at Christmas time. Of course we know that Our Lord was born once at Bethlehem. He will never again be an Infant in that sense. That coming of Our Lord at Bethlehem is a prelude to the coming of Our Lord at the end of the world. As we prepare to celebrate the innocence and sweetness of the Birth of Christ at Bethlehem, the Church says to prepare for the coming of Our Lord by a realization of the coming of Our Lord at the end of the world as the just judge. Do whatever is necessary to prepare yourself for a merciful judgment.

St. Basil says: “When the inclination to sin comes upon you, I wish you would think of this dread and awful tribunal of Christ—for Christ will come as a judge—where He will sit and judge on His throne on high. There every creature will appear and stand trembling in His presence and there shall we be led one by one to give an account of the actions of our life. Immediately afterward, those who in life have wrought much evil will be surrounded by fearful and hideous angels who will throw them headlong into a bottomless pit wherein impenetrable darkness burns a fire which gives no light. Fear these things, and pierced by this dread, use it as a bridle to help your soul from being drawn into sin.”