



December 2, 2018 - Come Again Given by Pastor Mattei

[Lk 21:25:36](#)

Cosmic signs of the end of times, earthquakes and tsunamis, crises of persecution, famine and war, impending salvation and judgment, exhortations to specific actions in the midst of suffering: One can hardly reconcile these apocalyptic announcements with the beginning of the Season of Advent, when we prepare ourselves for the joyful anticipation of Jesus' birth. Yet the harsh colors and the loud sounds that the poetic language evoke root us immediately within a local and global historic reality of suffering that justifies the intervention of our saving God. It is within a crimson red bloody reality of crime, torture, madness and cruelty that God incarnates. Bucolic images of sheep covered hills and crackling fires warming and feeding tired shepherds, an angelic choir and oriental wise men in search of the human phenomenon announced by astral signs have their proper meaning and place in the Lukan story of the birth of Jesus. But Luke does not want us to anesthetize the brutality of the world in which Jesus is born and the Son of Man comes to redeem. Jesus' humble birth, his compassionate life, shameful death, redemptive resurrection and restoring ascension are all part of a divine regenerative love of a world marred in pain and ignorance. Our God listens to the cry of the poor, rescues the afflicted and redeems the violent.

When the people of Israel were first announced about the Son of Man's coming in the clouds ([Daniel 7:13](#)) they were in their turn waiting for a change of horizon. Subjugation by a foreign power and forced exile were only the beginning of the suffering of Israel. They were forced to assimilate and adopt the local traditions and religious system in an environment of shame and humiliation. The message to Israel in the Book of Daniel was to remain faithful to the true God in the midst of an adverse and idolatrous culture. The authority of the Son of Man will be made manifest when all nations will bow to Him.

Luke clarifies that the coming in the clouds is a manifestation of the Son of Man's power and great glory never experienced on earth. In fact, the Son of Man's style of power and glory will upset and overturn the usual understanding of reality and its universal structure to the point that the power-to-be who have a stake in the way things are will be shaken at their core and will lose their hold. The inauguration of God's Rule in Jesus' first coming will have its completion in his second coming when "justice and righteousness" will be executed in the land ([Jeremiah 33:14-16](#)) and all things will be presented to the feet of God ([1 Corinthians 15:20-28](#)). And so what is left for those who suffer abuse is to persevere in hope knowing that this world is God's world, their redemption is near and their chains will be broken: they must raise their head and not let it hung low for the Lord is faithful ([Luke 1:46-55](#)) and his Word remains forever.

This is a word of hope and an encouragement for all of us. Those who are aware of Jesus' first coming in their lives (and not just his historical first coming two thousand years ago) are also conscious of the way his Word has brought about a spiritual, psychological and ethical revolution in our lives without which our life has no meaning and cannot survive. We are also aware of how far we have yet to travel on our journey, and how much we long for Jesus to come again and help us be the person God wants us to be. So we cry: come, Lord Jesus! Amen.