

Readings: *Jeremiah 33:14 – 16; Ps. 24 (25):3,4, 7-9,13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2;*
Luke 21: 25 – 28, 34 - 36.

The prophet Jeremiah lived and prophesied at a time when the people of Judah and Jerusalem had great reason for fear. During the seventh century the whole region had been dominated by the powerful empire of Assyria. Judah had remained independent and under king Josiah had experienced a religious reform. But now new powers were growing – Egyptian, Median and Babylonian – and Judah was caught up in their battles. Shortly after Jeremiah's call to be a prophet King Josiah was killed in battle, and the Assyrian Empire was replaced by Babylon. For the next thirty years Jerusalem was under threat, until in 586 BC it was taken, and the temple was destroyed.

Today's first reading is a prophecy of hope probably spoken during the siege of Jerusalem. The LORD promises that the present troubles will end, a king will come who *practices honesty and integrity*, and the city itself will be given a name which proclaims that the LORD himself is the source of its just government.

Our political condition is not as desperate as Jerusalem's was then, but if we look at the world-wide situation we see tyranny, war, terrorism, famine, disease and poverty affecting many people. And in our own country there are questions about the honesty or integrity of some politicians, some who control social media, and some with financial power.

Like Jeremiah's contemporaries, we need a message of hope, a message which is more convincing than party-political promises – from whichever party – and, ultimately, we need a message which looks beyond whatever turns out to be the end of civilization and our world.

Advent provides us with just such a promise.

It is, first, a reminder that the *upright king* of whom Jeremiah spoke has already come, and in a month's time we shall celebrate his birth.

But it is also a reminder of Christ's promise of another coming – at some unknown time in the future – to pass judgement on the whole of human history. For that coming we need to be prepared. *Stay awake (Jesus says) praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.*