

Reflection on Mark 13: 1-8

The stones of the Western Wall of the Jerusalem Temple, which can still be seen standing today, were and are rather impressive. In fact, some are 30 feet long. These were surely the stones to which Jesus' disciples were referring. Jesus uses their observation about the stones to springboard into a prophecy concerning the nation and people who were dear to him. This is appropriate in the context of his approaching execution. While modern Western people often speak of life "flashing before our eyes" before death, ancient Near Eastern people believed that in the days before death one gained powers of prognostication. Jesus exhibits that here. What follows from Jesus is an example of apocalyptic thought and discourse. "Apocalyptic" was a literary form common in the biblical period (see, for example, the Book of Daniel and Revelation), but alien to those of us in the modern world. Apocalyptic literature uses certain vocabulary and imagery, in this case earthquakes, wars, famines, etc., to convey a larger truth. Jesus is telling us to beware and persevere in times of hardship and trial, because no power can prevail against the power of Almighty God.

Where/how do you find spiritual comfort/nourishment in Jesus' apocalyptic discourse in today's gospel?

How do you relate, from your own experience, to what Jesus says in verse 8, "This is but the beginning of the birth pangs"?