**Scripture:                   Matthew 24, 1-14**

If I did a straw poll of popularity of the books of the new testament, I would probably find that the parts with greatest familiarity would come out as parts of the main synoptic gospels; perhaps John 1 or Luke 2, so familiar at Christmas or the great Easter passages in Matthew or Mark.   Paul’s letters would rate highly, passages like 1 Corinthians 13 becoming de rigueur at weddings.   Maybe some people would cite passages from Acts and Peter’s letters may even get a look in.   Hebrews is much less likely and poor old Jude would never even get a look in.

The book that most people would remember but the fewest people would have read is probably Revelations that wonderful, powerful visionary dream of John telling of the details of the second coming.   It’s a book that I think makes us feel very uncomfortable.    For a start it’s a bit wild eyed and out of control and secondly it’s asking us to face up to some very uncomfortable realities about our faith that perhaps we would rather not be reminded of.

For all our desire to avoid the truths of Revelation, it permeates our existence both Christian and secular with its images of the lamb of God, the four horsemen of the apocalypse, a new Jerusalem.    Today’s gospel from Matthew reminds us of the importance of the final judgement and the second coming directly from the mouth of Christ.

The disciples are leaving the temple with Jesus

Comment on splendour - all temporary - will fall (did 40 years later)

Later on Mount of Olives disciples ask “When is end of age and what will happen”

Warns of dangers ahead - Big Point - Don’t be Fooled

* False Christ’s - religious (Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Science)
* False Christ’s - secular (politics, humanism, patriotism)
* Conflict
* Natural Disaster
* Persecution
* Cynicism - lack of morals

Pressures on our faith

Those who withstand will be rewarded

Second coming will come.   Revelation, Matthew and elsewhere tells us.

Are we prepared?

Would we prefer to ignore it as an uncomfortable aspect of our faith - treat faith like a box of Quality Street

Not a mix and match religion.    Jesus will come and judge us all.   It will be terrible and we must be ready.

**Tom Crotty**