

Last winter, at Sony/Columbia Records HQ in New York, an audio tape was found in the archives that had lain there incorrectly labelled, and completely forgotten, since August 1962.

The jazz artists on the recording were the Dave Brubeck Quartet, and the singer Tony Bennett: earlier this year it was brought out on a CD called 'The White House Sessions,' as it was a concert in the grounds of the White House given at the invitation of President John F Kennedy.

It's a great recording, and I listen to it a lot in the car: but what, you may ask, has it got to do with today's Gospel?

Well, it made me remember the musical, 'Camelot,' and this lyric from one of its songs: "Each evening from December to December, before you drift to sleep upon your cot don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot for one brief, shining moment that was known as Camelot." Alan Jay Lerner & Frederick Loewe: Camelot

In 1960, when John F Kennedy became President of the United States, his Presidency, and Administration, became known as 'Camelot.'

The hope, that despite the 'Cold War' and the 'Iron Curtain' across Europe, America and the world, was entering a golden age.

Yet in the midst of it was the Cuban Missile Crisis, which, for 13 long days, brought the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation.

And, after only 1000 days, 'Camelot' came to a bloody end when President Kennedy was shot to death outside the Book Repository in Dallas.

That Camelot was lost, just as King Arthur's Camelot was lost.

I remember when I entered St. Peter's Basilica for the first time in 1970 for the Canonisation of the 40 Martyrs of England and Wales, how I was overcome and overawed by its magnificence, just like the Disciples in the Temple.

But, I wonder what my reaction would have been if a man next to me said: "The days will come when everything you see will be torn down. Not one stone will be left standing on another." Lk. 21: 6

How could it be that this wonderful building, which had stood on that spot for centuries, would be lost for ever?

How could God allow such a thing to happen?

For the Jews it was unthinkable that the Temple, where the very presence of God dwelt with His people in the Holy of Holies, could be reduced to a burning ruin.

But in 70AD, a few short years after Jesus spoke those words, the Roman army entered Jerusalem, completely destroyed the Temple and the city, and massacred everyone in them.

We all construct our own little Camelot's in our life – both materially and spiritually - thinking we're safe; thinking they'll last for ever, don't we?

But, unless we build on the foundation of: "Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone." Eph. 2: 21 they'll crumble and fall.

Jesus says to His Disciples; "Take care not to be deceived." Lk. 21: 8

But, do I let myself be deceived by: "That ancient serpent, the Devil, the deceiver of the whole world." Rev. 12: 9 and, almost unawares, let go of the Lord's hand, and put my hand in his, to build my own Camelot?

If I do, I might feel secure, believing that all is going well, only to find myself in the dark down a blind alley?

When I had a secular job, I ran the Bookstack at the Bodleian Library.

It had 11 floors, about 6 million books, and 30 staff: there were no windows at all, only artificial light. If you've ever seen the film 'Ghostbusters,' the opening scene takes place in the basement of the New York Public Library. That's just like the Bookstack!

I remember that one day, the main lighting, and the emergency lights suddenly failed; it was absolutely pitch-black.

Even though I knew the place like the back of my hand, I became completely disorientated, and couldn't find my way out.

I stumbled about, lost, until people came in with torches to find me.

That's a vivid illustration to me of what life lived without Jesus is like.

But if we hold tightly to Him, then we won't be deceived; for He came: "Into the world as the light, so that no-one who believes in him should stay in darkness." Jn. 12: 46

Yet, so often, we've: "Loved darkness more than the light." Jn. 3: 19

And, as Jesus says: "If the light you think you have is really darkness, how deep that darkness will be." Mt. 6: 23

So let's not be deceived into thinking that the Devil is something from a bygone age when people, we think, were more gullible.

No: The presence of the Devil is on the first page of the Bible; and the Bible ends as well with the presence of the Devil, but with the victory of the Lamb who was slain, over the Devil.

"When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. [Jesus says] There will be great earthquakes, famines and plagues, and fearful events and great signs from heaven." Lk. 21: 9 – 11

Outward manifestations of the spiritual battle that's being waged in the world; just as Jesus says in John's Gospel: "Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, [on the Cross] will draw all people to myself." Jn. 12: 31 – 32

As the great C.S. Lewis wrote: "When a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead... death itself would start working backwards."

C.S. Lewis: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe; Ch. 15

In these last days in Ordinary Time, the Lord, through His Word in Scripture, prepares us for Advent.

That season when we're called to reflect on the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time; and to prepare us to stand before the Lord, and face His judgement on us then, or at the hour of our death – whichever occurs first.

But let's not face that moment with fear in our hearts, because: "In this hope we were saved." Rm. 8: 24 that, yes, I'm a sinner; but I'm standing under the mercy of God, washed clean in: "The precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God." 1 Pt. 1: 19

Knowing that: "He saves us with tenderness, He saves us with caresses, He saves us with His life [laid down for us.]"

Pope Francis: Meditation during Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae Chapel; October 22 2013

So let's stand confidently, but humbly, under the merciful gaze of Jesus, remembering His word to us this morning: "Stand firm, and you will win eternal life." Lk. 21: 19