

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE – A

The gospel reading is usually called the Last Judgement, it is a parable about the Son of man coming in his glory and he separates the peoples of the world as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. Judgement follows with those worthy, 'you whom my Father has blessed,' taking as their heritage 'the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world,' those unworthy are banished 'to eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' The first reading teaches that the Lord will be a true shepherd to his people. In the second reading Paul compares the one man Adam, through whom death came into the world, with Jesus Christ through who comes resurrection from the dead.

The **First Reading** is from the prophet Ezekiel, one of the major prophets of Israel. It is thought his whole ministry was among the exiles in Babylon. The Exile lasted from 587 to 538 B.C. Called by God to maintain the faith of the Israelites during this traumatic period of Jewish history, Ezekiel's entire teaching centres on inner conversion: we must achieve a new heart and a new spirit, see Ezk.36.26. The Temple was his ruling interest and he holds the Law in veneration. Ezekiel is primarily a visionary, his four visions occupy a substantial part of the book. The Messiah is not to be a king but a shepherd who will look for individual rather than collective reparation. The book is divided into four parts: 1. Threats and reproaches addressed to the Israelites before the siege of Jerusalem. 2. Proclamations against the nations. 3. Comfort during and after the siege of Jerusalem. 4. Provisions for a new political and religious constitution after the Exile.

The reading, 34.11-12.15-17, depicts the Lord as a true shepherd of his sheep and comes from the section in which the prophet comforts the Israelites after the siege of Jerusalem. The chapter begins with a condemnation of the shepherds of Israel meaning the kings and lay leaders of the people so God takes from them their flock that they have ill-treated and he himself becomes the shepherd of his people which is where the reading begins. The reading goes on to say that this shepherd will 'take care of my flock' and 'rescue them from wherever they have been scattered.' The reading then speaks in medical terms of the attention this shepherd will give his sheep. The last line of the reading gives us an echo of the beginning of the gospel reading. Read the whole this wonderful chapter 34 if you have time. In verse 23 we have 'I shall raise up one shepherd, my servant David' a reference not to king David who has been dead many years but to Jesus called in the gospels the son of David. This chapter gives us an outline of the parable of the lost sheep and an outline of the allegory of the Good Shepherd in John's gospel.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 22.1-3,5-6, is the well-known psalm the good shepherd. The opening line is a personal act of faith in the Lord and the second verse illustrates the shepherd's care, notice it is personal care. In verse three the Lord is my host at the messianic banquet and the conclusion confirms that I have a home in the Lord's house forever.

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul evangelised the church at Corinth between A.D. 50 and 52. His policy was to establish the Christian faith in a centre of population, and here he chose the great and populous port of Corinth, so that the faith could spread to the whole of the province of Achaia. The Christian community grew strong composed mainly of poor people, but Corinth was a centre of Greek life, philosophy and religions. It was also a notorious centre of immorality which was to cause problems for the newly converted. In 1 Corinthians Paul addresses urgent problems that faced the church there and the decisions that had to be made to address these problems such as moral conduct, marriage and virginity, liturgical and Eucharistic meetings, charisms, matters concerning the Church and the world, appeals to civil courts, eating foods sacrificed to idols. Paul's religious genius enabled him to use all these problems as a vehicle to expound the profound doctrines of Christian liberty, the sanctification of the body, the supremacy of love, union with Christ. Paul teaches the Corinthians that there is only one master, Christ, and only one message, the cross which is the one true wisdom.

The reading, 15.20-26,28, comes from the chapter on the resurrection from the dead. Paul is teaching about the fact of the resurrection. He has just been asking, 'how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead' and the consequences that flow from this belief. The reading begins boldly stating, 'Christ has been raised from the dead the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep.' Those who are asleep will awaken. Paul explains that, 'Just as all die in Adam so in Christ all will be brought to life.' Christ's exaltation reverses the fall of Adam. Christ the first-fruits at his coming will be followed by 'those who belong to him' in their whole person and then the kingdom which Christ has won will be handed over to God the Father. All beings hostile to the sovereignty of God will be abolished and the final enemy 'to be done away with is death.' The work of Christ our king is accomplished.