

## Scripture Reflection: November. Christ the King

The second readings in November are taken from the Letter to the Hebrews. It's a beautifully written document of the first century by an unknown author, but St Thomas Aquinas suggests that St Paul wrote it in his later years, with the help of St Luke as his secretary. To understand this letter, it's important to remember that it was written for those Jews who were persecuted followers of Jesus and uses terms of which they would have had a very specific religious and historical understanding. Different perhaps than gentile Christians and perhaps us today. The letter calls Jesus "The King" or "The great high priest". These terms originate from an ideal time in Israel's history when the young tribal nation was a theocracy: ruled by God (Yahweh) and the 12 tribal leaders who met annually at Shechem.

As the tribes grew into a nation, around 1000 B.C. they wanted a king like other nations, despite the warnings of the prophet Samuel. Eventually he gave way and anointed Saul and David as the first kings of Israel, David's son Solomon built a temple to Yahweh and so the institution of a priesthood was initiated with a high priest over all. The structure of power though was different from other nations: God was the first power authority, then the high priest and prophet as intermediaries between man and Yahweh, and then the King who was supposed to be the servant of the people. He was supposed to be their redeemer from slavery, a dispenser of justice and overall judge.

By the time of Jesus, the king was a mere puppet of the pagan Roman Empire and the high priest was a corrupt, exploiter of the people. He exacted high taxes for temple sacrifice and skimmed off money for himself. He murdered Jesus, several of the apostles and members of the early church.

Jesus' ministry started with the announcement of the arrival of the Kingdom of God. A new spiritual age had arrived. God had taken back his rule and saved his people. As a continuing part of creation, God had entered humanity and restored his law and order. He was to be King again and no longer would the corrupt king and sacrifices of a corrupt temple be tolerated. He was to give himself, as man-Jesus, as the perfect sacrifice to forgive sin and restore a loving relationship between himself and his creation, man. Only *he* could be this divine person to unite man to himself. He became the perfect High Priest as well as King of his people and all creation. The letter to the Hebrews sets out to convince the Jewish Christians how Jesus' life, death and resurrection made sense and was a fulfilment of all their cherished Law and scriptures. They were not betraying their past, but entering into the new kingdom with God rightly restored as King of all and man's intercessor was Jesus Christ, who had made the perfect sacrifice, which restored the loving relationship with man: the relationship which we see between God and Adam in the perfect setting of Eden.

The Jewish Christians were being persecuted and this letter was to inspire them to continue following Jesus as Lord of all. The reflection for us during November is to think what are the temptations in our society which pull us away from God's loving relationship?



"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Heb. 11:1



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"We cannot get closer to God because God is already within us" James Blanchard Cisneros