

Readings and Jerome Biblical Commentary

Christ the King, Year B

Reading 1

[Dn 7:13-14](#)

As the visions during the night continued, I saw
one like a Son of man coming,
on the clouds of heaven;
when he reached the Ancient One
and was presented before him,
the one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship;
all peoples, nations, and languages serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

9-14. The description of the celestial court scene at which the fourth beast is condemned and destroyed is all from the primary stratum, except 11a.**12. *the other beasts:*** The second and the third; the first had already been taken from the earth (v. 4). Although they lost their “dominion,” i.e., empires, Media and Persia still remained petty kingdoms. *they were granted prolongation of life for a time and a season:* They were allowed to linger on for a short indeterminate period.**14. *one like a son of man:*** An image appeared in the vision resembling a human being, just as the first four images resembled different beasts. These came from the great abyss below, i.e., from the powers of evil; he comes from above, “on the clouds of heaven,” i.e., from God. Just as the beasts are figures of the pagan kingdoms, so also the son of man is a figure of the kingdom of “the holy ones of the Most High” (v. 18). In the context, therefore, the son of man is not a real individual but a figure of speech. However, because in Dn the thought of “kingdom” often shifts imperceptibly into that of “king,” the concept of the “son of man” eventually shifted from a figure of speech for the theocratic kingdom into a term for the messianic king himself. This change appears in *Enoch*, written a century or two before the time of Christ (on Jesus’ application of this term to himself, → Aspects NT Thought, 78:28-30; → Apocrypha, 68:15).¹

Enoch *First Enoch* (in Ethiopic) (→ 68:9-15)

NT New Testament

¹Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. *The Jerome Biblical commentary* (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 93:1, 1-2, 5](#)

R. (1a) **The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.**

The LORD is king, in splendor robed;
robed is the LORD and girt about with strength.

R. **The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.**

And he has made the world firm,
not to be moved.

Your throne stands firm from of old;
from everlasting you are, O LORD.

R. **The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.**

Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, for length of days.

R. **The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.**

Ps 93. A hymn of praise, commemorating Yahweh as king (→ 6 and 9 above); see comment on Ps 47 concerning enthronement Pss. Structure: 1-2, acclamation of Yahweh as eternal king and creator; 3-4, even, the waters of chaos bow to his power; 5, the conclusion acknowledges his decrees (the Torah). **1.** *the Lord is king*: The cry of enthronement does not preclude his kingship from being eternal (cf. Ps 47). *world*: The reference to creation is a consistent feature in the enthronement Pss. The firmness of creation accords with Yahweh's eternal and firm "throne" (2). **3-4.** *floods*: The waters of chaos, which could possibly destroy creation, are held in check by divine power (cf. O. Kaiser, *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel* [BZAW 79; Berlin, 1959]). **5.** *decrees*: The Law; this verse at least suggests the Feast of Tabernacles as a possible life setting (cf. Dt 31:10ff.).

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BZAW Beihefte zur ZAW (Berlin)

ff. and the following verses

²Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. *The Jerome Biblical commentary* (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Reading II

[Rv 1:5-8](#)

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness,
the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father,
to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.
Behold, he is coming amid the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him.
All the peoples of the earth will lament him.
Yes. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, " says the Lord God,
"the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

Epistolary Salutation (1:4-8). The author begins and ends (22:21) with the Christian epistolary formulas; between chs. 4 and 22, however, there is no further indication that the Ap is a letter. In agreement with the current formula, the author names himself, then those to whom he writes, wishing them "grace and peace." The thanksgiving follows, of a liturgical type, addressed this time not to God, but to Christ (vv. 5b-6). Finally a prophetic announcement, solemnly sanctioned by God (v. 8), proclaims the central theme of the Ap (v. 7). **4. *the seven churches in Asia:*** Besides these seven churches (1:11), there existed at that time, in the proconsular province of Asia, other churches: among them, Colossae, Troas, Hierapolis, Magnesia. Through the seven churches, John wanted to reach all the churches of Asia and perhaps the universal Church (→ Johannine Theology, 80:48-54). *who is and who was and who is coming:* See 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5. The name of God, as his person, is unchangeable; instead of being in the genitive after apo, the expression remains in the nominative. This description of God proceeds from a long tradition that goes back to Ex 3:14. Familiar to Jews and Greeks, it tries to express the eternity of God by means of the human category of time. John has adapted this title to his message by replacing the usual "he who will be" by "he who is coming" in history. Such a title suits perfectly the beginning of a book revealing the meaning of the present in the light of the past and the future. *the seven spirits before his throne:* Either the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Is 11:2) communicated by Christ to the seven churches, or more likely angels, who, strengthened by divine power, act in the name of God (→ Johannine Theology, 80:56). "Before his throne" is a Hebraism signifying that they are the servants of God. These angels (3:1; 4:5; 5:6) are probably the angels of the presence (8:2ff.; 15:1ff.), well known in Jewish angelology.**5.** This kerygmatic formula expresses the essential content of the faith: The three titles evoke the passion, the resurrection, and the exaltation of Christ. *the trustworthy witness:* See 1:2; 3:14. Jesus was witness during his ministry because he revealed the Father perfectly (Jn 3:11, 32) and crowned this testimony by the sacrifice of his life (Jn 18:37; 1 Tm 6:13). *first-born of the dead:* Cf. 1 Cor 15:20; Col 1:18. Jesus, the first resurrected, guarantees that the era of the resurrection of the dead is inaugurated and summarized in his person. *ruler of the kings of the earth:* Cf. Ps 89:28. The glorification of Christ, consequence of his resurrection, confers on him all power over all creation (Mt 28:19;

Rom 14:9; Phil 2:11; Eph 1:20-23). His domination over the kings who threaten the Church (19:12, 16) ought to strengthen the confidence of the Christians.

20 5b-6. This doxology contains three parts: Christ's love for us, the negative and positive effect of his love, and finally praise. *to him who loves us:* Cf. Jn 13:1; 15:9; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25. The pres. tense indicates that Christ's love is perpetual and goes beyond the historical event of the redemption (*lysanti* and *epoi sen*, in the aorist; → Johannine Theology, 80:25-26). *who freed us from our sins by his blood:* Affirmed as an essential fact by the Christian creed (1 Cor 15:3; Gal 1:4), this liberation is often expressed through the metaphor of purchase (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; Gal 4:5) by the blood of Christ (Rom 3:25; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:20; 1 Pt 1:18f.). *a kingdom, priests:* See 5:10; 20:6; 1 Pt 2:9. This messianic promise had been developed, beginning with Ex 19:6. The persecuted Christians participate now in the abasement of Christ, but they are assured that they will reign with him soon (2:26-28; 20:4; 22:5; cf. Dn 7:18, 22, 27). By reason of their union with Christ the priest, through baptism, they can fulfill the priestly service (Heb 10:19-22; 1 Pt 2:5). *to God his Father:* The Ap affirms the sonship of Jesus (2:28; 3:5, 21; 14:1); but in order to respect the divine transcendence it reserves a similar intimacy between Christians and God for the hereafter (21:7). **7. coming with the cloud:** Primitive Christianity saw in Dn 7:13, the prophecy par excellence, the announcement of the glorious coming of Christ in judgment (14:14; Mt 24:30; 26:64; see R. B. Y. Scott, *NTS* 5 [1958-59] 127-32). *those who pierced him:* The Jews who put Jesus to death. *all the tribes of the earth:* All unbelieving nations are equally guilty, for in persecuting the Church, they show their hostility toward Christ. Suffering true sorrow, all will wail. *even so. Amen:* The repetition, in Greek and Hebrew (22:20), underlines the solemnity of the prophecy, in which the Christian assembly believes. **8. Alpha and Omega:** Equivalent expressions, "the first and the last," "the beginning and the end," reappear concerning God (21:6) and concerning Christ (1:17; 2:8; 22:13). Isaiah (41:4; 44:6; 48:12) had already affirmed that God was "the first and the last," the creator and the end of everything. Under Hellenistic influence the symbolic value of the alphabet was gradually assimilated by Judaism; the first letter associated with the last, signified totality. *the Almighty:* Proper to the Ap in the NT, except 2 Cor 6:18. The complete expression, "the Lord God Almighty," is borrowed from the LXX and corresponds to *Yahw h 'elôhê 'eb 'ôt* (Hos 12:5; Am 4:13; 9:5). The third title summarizes the two preceding: God's enemies can stir themselves and persecute his people, but all power resides permanently with him; he began history and he will terminate it.

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NTS *New Testament Studies*

NT *New Testament*

LXX *Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT)*

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Gospel

[Jn 18:33b-37](#)

Pilate said to Jesus,
"Are you the King of the Jews?"
Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own
or have others told you about me?"
Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I?
Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me.
What have you done?"
Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world.
If my kingdom did belong to this world,
my attendants would be fighting
to keep me from being handed over to the Jews.
But as it is, my kingdom is not here."
So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?"
Jesus answered, "You say I am a king.
For this I was born and for this I came into the world,
to testify to the truth.
Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

33. *are you the King of the Jews?*: Nothing in the preceding narrative has prepared us for this question that Pilate asks of Jesus; obviously John presupposes that Pilate had obtained more precise information about Jesus than is contained in the words of the Jews in v. 30f. (cf. Lk 23:2). Events such as those John has described in 6:15; 12:12f. could have been used as a source of denouncing Jesus as the leader of a nationalist movement, the only charge that would be taken seriously by the Romans.**34-35.** *is what you say your own idea...?*: Jesus offers Pilate the opportunity of assuming his own attitude toward the light, rather than simply serving as the channel of the hatred that the world has consistently shown it. Pilate's contempt for "Jewish" matters is, however, completely serene (cf. the similar attitude of Gallio in Acts 18:14f.).**36.** The interchange permits Jesus to explain the nature of the kingship that indeed is his. *my kingdom does not belong to this world* [see 1:10]: Though the idea of Jesus as king has not been given much emphasis in Jn, it was a common conception from the Syn tradition and early Christian preaching that reflects Jesus' own identification of himself as the fulfillment of the OT messianic kingly ideal. Much more clearly than the Syn parallels (see Lk 23:3; Mk 15:2; Mt 27:11) does this statement in Jn define the completely nonpolitical and nonnational character of Jesus' kingship (in the Syn, which feature the kingly idea, the same teaching has already been brought out in earlier passages); "this saying, attributed to Jesus by the Gospel of John, cannot be imagined in the mouth of a *Jewish* Messiah, not even a Messiah of the more spiritual type portrayed in the Psalms of Solomon" (J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* [N.Y., 1955])

Syn Synoptic Gospels *or* Synoptic writers

OT Old Testament

392). *if my kingdom were...*: Jesus offers the best proof of the spiritual nature of his kingship, in terms that Pilate can appreciate. As does any other king, Jesus has his “minions” (**hyp retai**, the word used for the Temple guards in v. 3), but they engage in no political action on his behalf. (In Mt 26:53 Jesus speaks of the angelic assistance he could command were his desire to fight the world on its own terms; the word **hyp retai** refers to the apostolic ministry in Lk 1:2; Acts 13:5; 26:16; 1 Cor 4:1.)³⁷. As Pilate still presses for a direct answer, Jesus gives the same qualified affirmation that appears in Mk 15:2 par. *you say that I am a king*: In Pilate’s sense of the word, Jesus is not a king; thus Pilate’s use of the title for Jesus represents another instance of Johannine irony (→ 29 above). In another sense, as Jesus has already implied by speaking of his kingdom, he is a king. He is not a worldly king, but a king who has “come into the world,” and the essence of his kingship is “to testify to the truth” (see comments on 1:14; 3:11, 32). *everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice*: Again (cf. v. 34) Jesus implicitly calls on Pilate to take a stand, to range himself on the side of truth and life (cf. 5:25⁴

par. Parallel pasage(s) in the Synoptic Gospels

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