

Readings: Acts 5: 12 - 16; Ps. 117 (118) 1- 4, 22 - 27; Apocalypse 1:9 -13,17-19; John 20: 9 – 31.

Today's second reading come from the last book in the New Testament. Its Greek title means 'uncovering' or 'revelation' – which explains its English title. In this book things which were hidden from ordinary human sight are revealed or uncovered to John.

During Eastertide we shall hear six passages from this book – the first three come from the early chapters. It is worth reading the whole of the first chapter to understand the background.

John is exiled on the Island of Patmos – tradition says that this was during the persecution under the Emperor Domitian at the end of the first century – and he is unable to join in the Church's worship on *the Lord's Day*.

He tells us that he was *in the Spirit* and heard a voice and saw a vision of Christ, who is described as *like a Son of Man*. This title recalls an earlier vision, described in the Book of Daniel [chapter 7, verses 13 &14] in which the *one like a Son of Man* was given authority over *all peoples, nations and languages*. John explains that in his vision he is told to write down what he sees, which will include both things as they now are *and things that are still to come*.

Many commentators have tried to match the details of John's visions – especially those in chapters 6 to 20 – to particular events in history, and even to predict when some of the *things that are still to come* will occur. The years 1000 and 2000 produced many examples of that kind of teaching. But we should remember that much of the book is teaching about how things really are, despite the apparent dominance of the powers of this world.

That is particularly true of the passages we hear today and on the next two Sundays.

Today the glorified Jesus says of himself: *It is I, the First and the Last; I am the Living One. I was dead and now I am to live for ever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and of the underworld.*

This is the truth, hidden from ordinary human sight, which is revealed to John, so that he can write it down and send it to the seven Churches of Asia, which are being persecuted for their faith.

And John's writing has been preserved by the Church so that his message can also be conveyed to those in our time who are persecuted and to us and all others who live in a world of pain and sorrow and need to know and believe that Jesus is *The Living One*.