

**Readings:** *Isaiah 6: 1 – 8; Psalm 137 (138); 1 Corinthians 15: 1 – 11; Luke 5: 1 – 11.*

Today and on the following three Sundays we shall almost all of one of the most important chapters in Saint Paul's letters – Chapter 15 of his first letter to the Christians of Corinth.

Chapter 18 of the *Acts of the Apostles* describes Paul's first visit to Corinth, lasting about eighteen months, which probably happened between the winter of AD 50 and the summer of AD 52.

Scholars suggest that this first letter was written from Ephesus about the Passover of AD 57.

As with most of Paul's letters, this one was written in response to problems which had arisen in the Corinthian Church. The early chapters speak of divisions within that Church, and there were moral and theological issues to be dealt with. Among these theological issues was resurrection. It is clear from the verses we shall hear next Sunday that some members of the Church were *saying that there is no resurrection of the dead.*

Paul begins his treatment of this issue by going back to his first visit: *I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, the gospel that you received.* Then he goes on to make it clear that what he had taught was not his own theory, but *what I had been taught myself.* The two Greek words which are here translated 'taught' literally mean 'handed over' and 'received'. This is one of two references in this letter to the tradition of fundamental actions in the life of Christ, which earlier believers had 'handed over' to Paul and which he in turn had 'handed over' to the Corinthians. The other reference is to the institution of the Eucharist in chapter 11.

Paul then sets out the heart of the Gospel he had preached – only twenty years after the events

- *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the (Old Testament) scriptures;*
- *he was buried;*
- *he was raised to life on the third day according to the scriptures;*
- *he appeared on several occasions to apostles and others, and*
- *last of all he appeared to Paul.*

These are the basic truths of the Christian faith, and Paul ends today's reading by claiming that he and the earlier apostles preached the same things – *and this is what the Corinthian Christians believed.*