



**Desert Creek House**  
802 Desert Creek Road - Numbugga  
BEGA - NSW 2550 - AUSTRALIA

Phone: ++61 (0)2 6492 8498  
E-mail: yumorsier@skymesh.com.au  
Website: [www.desertcreekhouse.com.au](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au)

## 6<sup>th</sup> of June

# Kingdom versus God's Kingdom

### Prayer

*Maranatha, come Lord Jesus.*

### 1) The doer and the witness

**1 Sa 8:1-22**

*1 When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.*

*(...)*

*3 Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.*

*4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah,*

*5 and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations."*

*6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord.*

*7 And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.*

*8 According to all the deeds which they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.*

*9 Now then, hearken to their voice; only, you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."*

*10 So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking a king from him.*

*11 He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots;*

*12 and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots.*

*13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.*

*14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants.*

*15 He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants.*

*16 He will take your menservants and maidservants, and the best of your cattle and your asses, and put them to his work.*

*17 He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves.*

*18 And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day."*

*19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No! but we will have a king over us,*

*20 that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles."*

*21 And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord.*

*22 And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to their voice, and make them a king."*

When the Israelites settled down in the Promised Land, Yahweh was their God and their King. They had no other king but God himself. But soon they asked to have a king, as other nations did. Saul was chosen as their first king. The king of Israel, like in many traditions, was considered to be the son of God. David and Solomon were seen as glorious kings who were faithful to God. Later, many kings mislead the people of Israel towards idolatry. Yet there always remained a meaning to being the chosen people who were faithful to God.

Our human understanding of what a kingdom is implies the use of power and strength. The Kingdom is a State, with a Government which enforces a Law. The power of the King is proportional to his capacity to have control over his subjects. One kingdom means in general one state, one nation, one official language, one monetary system, one measuring system. A kingdom dreams of wide-ranging conquests. The Empire seems to be the fully accomplished form of the kingdom, especially when it unifies diversity or even makes different people more uniform under the same law, the same dominating culture and language.

Yet, in more traditional societies different nations used to live side by side on the same territory. This was very clearly the case in Canaan before the time of the kings: on this tiny piece of land, there were, according to the book of Genesis, about 12 nations<sup>1</sup> which shared the same territory. This diversity was often a cause of conflict but it was also a cause of complementarity because these different nations had different traditions and know-how. In Australia, it was the same before colonisation: there were about 800 aboriginal languages.

The institution of the Church, that is, the official administrative structure of the Church, is built on the same model as the Empire. It is a centralised institution aiming at control and conformity. Yet the Body of Christ, as a living community, remains free, because it is lead by the Spirit.

---

<sup>1</sup> Canaanites, Hittites, Sidonites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, Hamathites (Gn 10:15-18)

The Kingdom of God, as it is described in the gospel, seems to be very different from our understanding of a human Kingdom and of a dominating Empire. Instead of top-down control, it seems to be the space for bottom-up search and offering. Instead of uniformity, it seems to be a space for diversity. Instead of a place of power, it is a space of love and sharing. In our lives we strive for mastery, for control; but in fact we are not the doers. We are mainly the witnesses of what happens in us and around us. God is the only doer and our role is to be aware of his presence and of his guidance. God helps us to grow in our diversity. He does not control us, but wants us to find the way to Life in order to express our own vocation. He is a non controlling guide. He nourishes us. He gives us everything we need for our growth. This growth happens bottom-up, as the rising life within us.

### **Time of personal reflection**

When are we the doers, and when are we the witnesses in our lives? As a simple help, I propose we make two lists of our attitudes and actions, the ones we adopt as doers and the ones we adopt as witnesses. What do these attitudes mean in regard to the (be)coming of the Kingdom of God?

### **Sharing**

### **Prayer of offering**

Knowing that the journey of Faith is one of learning to open ever greater areas in us to God so that we may heal and grow, let us now offer all those tendencies where we want to be in control over to God. (5 minutes in silence).

## **2) Christ the King, the Messiah and the Son of God**

### ***Dn 7:13-14***

*13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.*

*14 And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*

### ***Rev 1:5-8***

*4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,*

*5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood*

*6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

*7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.*

*8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*

*Zech 9:9-10*

*9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.*

*10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

***Mt 26:63-66***

*63 But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."*

*64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

*65 Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy."*

*66 What is your judgement?" They answered, "He deserves death."*

***Jn 18:28-37***

*28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was early.*

*(...)*

*33 Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"*

*34 Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"*

*35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?"*

*36 Jesus answered, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world."*

*37 Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."*

Jesus Christ is the King, the Messiah and the Son of God. These 3 titles are narrowly connected.

**First about the expression *Son of Man* or *Son of God*:** the expression *Son of Man* is often used in the old testament; in most of the cases, it means a member of the human race. Jesus speaks very often about himself as being the Son of Man. It does not seem to be a special way of describing the specificity of Jesus Christ as God made flesh, as God among us, having adopted our human form. It seems, on the contrary, to be a kind of very broad expression which describes simultaneously our true nature as sons and daughters of God made in His Image, as well as being members of the human race. Jesus is our link with God; he reveals to us that God is love and that God is the most intimate and personal source of our being. He shows us the way of how to be in touch with our source, and this is the reason why we are at the same time sons and daughters of God, yet also sons and daughters of Man. The life of Christ incarnated in Jesus shows us our destiny, the path of our human and divine vocation to become fully human while being rooted in God. Both expressions *Son of Man* and *Son of God* express our most natural destiny as human beings and yet also our most extraordinary vocation as beings of divine origin. Isn't it the core of the Christian message?

**Then about the expression *Christ* or *Messiah*:** *Christ* means in Greek the same as *Messiah* in Hebrew, it means the *Anointed One*, as reference to the King. Kings in Israel were anointed when they were consecrated i.e. when they received the Spirit of God, as sons of God. In the Jewish tradition, the Hebrews were waiting for the coming of the Messiah ever since Nathan had prophesied that the descendants of David would accomplish the promise of God for the people of Israel. At the origin of this hope was a very secular expectation but it soon took on a very deep and spiritual meaning. Most aspects of the emblematic figure of the Messiah are contained in the different descriptions found in the 3 successive Isaiahs. The tradition in Israel itself had different understandings of the awaited Saviour.

- 1) The Pharisees believed in an impersonal Messiah; the Kingdom of God takes shape for them where people convert themselves to the strict observance of the Law.
- 2) The Sadducees believed in an elitist group or minority (the remnant) which, as a person or as a group, would be the saviour/s of the world and would show the way. They believed in a prophet who would be the righteous king, humble, riding on a donkey, as a poor one of God. He is the good shepherd. This prophet-shepherd-Messiah will be the suffering servant, the one who has been pierced through. His presence generates a transformation of the hearts. This Messiah could in fact be very well the people of Israel; Jerusalem or Zion being the place for this renewal.
- 3) The Essenes believed in the Son of Man as described by Daniel. The new Jerusalem transports itself to heaven; this is the closest perception to the Christian one. The Kingdom of God is open to us now, beyond time and space.

**And finally about the expression *King of the Jews*:** this expression is of course narrowly connected with the expectation of the coming of the Messiah. The inscription INRI, which means 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews', was the inscription on the cross above the head of Jesus which indicated why he had been crucified. This had a double meaning: on the one hand as the reason for his condemnation, but on the other hand also as a prophecy: Jesus is the king of the coming kingdom. For the Pharisees and scribes, the main issue was of a religious nature; it was to know whether Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. For Pilate, the main issue was of a political nature; it was to know whether Jesus was a king who could be a threat to the Roman Empire, but it became clear to him that this kingdom was of another nature than political. The priests and scribes played on the ambiguity between these two levels. Jesus always feared to be misunderstood, because the Jewish tradition insisted, wrongly, on the secular and political role of the coming Messiah, and Jesus did not want to be accepted as a political leader. Even his disciples had difficulties to understand his role as a Messiah without any political power. In fact, his mission was much deeper than a social and episodic role linked to a historical context: he was the expression of the deep nature of God who is the source of us all. It may be why Jesus forbade his disciples to say he was the Messiah.

### **Personal reflection**

This Jewish and Christian expressions of the nature of the Son of God - Messiah - King of the coming Reality, are very rich. They present the image of a humble king whose power rests solely on his love. Who is this 'powerless' king in my life who, because of his 'powerlessness', becomes our saviour and our path into life? How is he a king?

### **Sharing**

## **Prayer of adoration**

Contemplation and adoration of Christ the King. In silence.

We will now have a time of what used to be called in the Early Church “Pure Prayer”. That is we are not speaking to God or thinking of God in a complicated way, but we drop through all the agitation and engagement with the world into that quiet place where we just allow ourselves to be.

It is in line with the way Jesus taught us in Matthews gospel, CH 6, where he told his disciples who had asked him how to pray, to “go into the inner room and there pray to the Father in that secret place in sincerity and from the heart”.

Sit comfortably - check that your body is at ease, close your eyes gently, bring your attention to your breath, just as it is. Don't change it in any way, but just feel it, observe it, let it be.

In this prayer of and in the heart, we let go of the complexity of our thoughts, of our worries, of our anxieties, of our preoccupations, and we simply live with awareness this present moment.

We are not trying to change the world, or change others, or even ourselves. The first principle of pure prayer is not that we are going to change the world but that we are open to be changed, and that is what makes for sincerity in our prayer, giving attention to the stillness within, where God speaks his eternal word I AM

*God of love,  
You have raised our Lord Jesus Christ from death to life,  
resplendent in glory  
as King of Creation  
Open our hearts  
we rejoice in your peace  
we rejoice in your justice  
we live in your love  
Amen*

## **3) The growing seeds in the Church**

### ***Mt 16:13-23***

*13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?"*

*14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

*15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

*16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

*17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*

*18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.*

*19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.  
21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.  
22 And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you."  
23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men."

**Jn 13:1-15**

1 Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.  
2 And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,  
3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,  
4 rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel.  
5 Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.  
6 He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"  
7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand."  
8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me."  
9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"  
10 Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not every one of you."  
11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "You are not all clean."  
12 When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"  
13 You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.  
14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.  
15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

**Lk 23:39-43**

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"  
40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"  
41 And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."  
42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."  
43 And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Peter recognises Jesus as the son of God; yet, immediately after his act of recognition, he tries to prevent Jesus of following his destiny. What a contradiction! and yet it shows us how the nature of Jesus Christ remains a deep mystery for us. Nobody can ever see God but Jesus makes God visible to us. Yet this way of seeing God remains deeply fragile, because it depends on how much we

remain rooted in God. The revelation of God's love is so subtle that we cannot grasp it. In the same way, the scene of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples seems to be a deep contradiction; Peter again reacts strongly and does not know how to behave. We feel the same kind of surprise and mysterious grasping at what cannot be held onto. The third story we read about is of the good thief who recognised Jesus as the Christ and King, despite his apparent defeat, and shows us also the ambivalence and deceptiveness of appearances.

Most of the parables about the Kingdom of God are about growing: it is what the images of seeds, yeast, vines express. It is about our transformation. We need to be transformed in order to understand this other Reality. This is certainly the striking effect of Jesus' ministry: it opens to us another reality which brings us back to life. His teaching about the Kingdom of God establishes his authority as King. His kingdom becomes tangible, its proximity invites us to be transformed. Our conversion and transformation become possible and even necessary. There is no life without going on this path of transformation..

Between the resurrection of Jesus and the glorious return of Christ, the Church is the testimony of this other reality. The Church is the living reality which expresses this invisible dimension. It is also the space for our transformation, where we experience the enthusiasm as well as the despair of Peter, where we try to practice the washing of the feet, or where we learn to acquire the clear-sightedness of the good thief. The Church is the workshop of the Kingdom of God where we work on the raw material of our lives.

This process starts in our heart. It is the work of the Spirit in us, escaping any control by any power, but yet building the Body of Christ in unity. We are the workshop for the Spirit.

### **Personal reflection**

How are we a workshop for the Spirit? How is our parish a place for transformation? Is it a workshop of the Kingdom?

### **Sharing**

### **Prayer of intercession**

For the seeds we wish to grow in us: we ask the Holy Spirit we seek, in one word, like love, trust, etc. We leave space and time between each request.

## **4) Here and now - the Return of Christ**

### ***Mk 9:1***

*And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."*

### ***Rev 21:1-4+9-11+22-23***

*1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.*

*2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;*

*3 and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them;*

*4 he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."*

*(...)*

*9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."*

*10 And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,*

*11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.*

*(...)*

*22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.*

*23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*

On one hand it is said that the kingdom of God is close at hand, can be attained here and now and in fact even seems to be the deep meaning of the Christian message. We do not have to wait for happiness. We have access to the Real Life here and now. The Kingdom is in us. Christ is present in us and links us to the Father. He leads us to God. This experience of the extreme proximity of God in ourselves, here and now, is the striking aspect of Jesus' message.

Yet, on the other hand, the New Jerusalem is a vision of the future. We are also waiting for the return of Christ in his glory. The peace we can experience in ourselves will be made an universal reality at the end of times when God's glory will become one with the whole creation.

### **Personal reflection**

Here and Now, yet a vision of the future: how can these two aspects of the Kingdom be compatible? How can this tension between now and our expectations for the future be experienced in our lives?

### **Sharing**

### **Prayer**

O God, we believe that Jesus,  
your Incarnate Word and King of Creation,  
lives in you and in us.

Strengthen our faith, hope and love  
that your Reign will be proclaimed in our lives  
and the presence of your Spirit be manifested in our thoughts, words and actions.  
Amen.