

Jesus and the Eternal Kingdom
Joh 18:33-37 Rev 1:4b-8 Dan 7:9-10, 13-14

I have to admit that I've never been very impressed with most of the pictures I have seen of Jesus.

My teenage years were in the 1960s, and frankly many of the Jesus pictures looked like a hippy from that era.

Others have this sort of doe-eyed, gentle Jesus meek and mild, who looks as though he wouldn't hurt a fly.

The Jesus I read about in the Bible doesn't sound like that at all. Sure, he had compassion, he helped a lot of people, and he even cried at his friend's grave.

But he had a group of fishermen who gave up everything to follow him.

He often had nowhere to sleep.

He stood up to the Pharisees and called them whitewashed graves full of dead men's bones.

Crowds flocked to hear him.

This was a man with authority, power and charisma!
He only had to say the word, and the dead were raised, people were healed, a storm was stopped and miraculous things happened.

In his lifetime he caused such a stir that the Jewish religious authorities had him arrested and brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

Pilate's particular interest in Jesus was to know whether he was likely to lead an uprising against the occupying Roman army.

So he asks Jesus, "*Are you the king of the Jews?*"

And Jesus answers to the effect: Is this something you want to know for yourself, or is what others have reported to you?

Pilate is rather affronted by the question. "*Am I a Jew?*" Why would I be interested in you? It's your own people who have reported this to me. So what is it that you have done to stir them up?

³⁶Jesus said, "*My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.*"

³⁷"*You are a king, then!*" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "*You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*"

³⁸"*What is truth?*" Pilate asked.

So Jesus addresses Pilate's concern.

"I'm not out to make war on Rome."

My Kingdom is in the spiritual sphere and it is there that I am king. But the reason I am in this physical world is to let people know the truth.

(Obviously here Jesus is claiming pre-existence!)

And Pilate who has seen the worship of many gods cynically replies, "What is truth!"

He is like so many people today who believe that you can't really find ultimate truth.

So what *was* the truth that Jesus was witnessing to?

In the Gospels we read that he witnessed to the Kingdom, of which he was (and is) The King.

Jesus preached the Kingdom of God

Jesus demonstrated the Kingdom of God

And Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of God, when on that same day he died for the sins of the world, so that all who put their faith in him can enter the Kingdom.

Claiming to be a king was not some delusion of grandeur on Jesus' part but a fulfilment of thousands of years of prophecy. Jesus was speaking the truth, and those who knew the truth of the prophecies gave him a hearing.

One of those prophecies about God's Kingdom comes from the book of Daniel.

Daniel was a young Jew who was taken in captivity to Babylon 597 years before Christ's birth.

He has visions and is given messages which amount to the following:-

In Daniel's future there would be kingdoms which would rise and fall, but then God would set up a Kingdom which would never end.

The prophecy is expressed in terms of the parts of a statue, and also of four great beasts (in the passage we read today).

The four beasts are identified as four great nations.

We can readily identify these as...

Babylon
Medo-Persia
Greece
& Rome

There are two particular references to a power which would follow these four empires.

Dan 2:44-45 (Concerning the Statue)

⁴⁴*"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.*

Dan 7:13-14 (Concerning the Four Beasts)

¹³*"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his*

presence. ¹⁴He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Then at the End of Daniel 9 there is a prophecy that there would be a period of 483 years from the time the Jews were allowed to rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of a Messiah.

The time appears to correspond to the coming of Jesus.

Now of what relevance is this to us, today?

Just this:

Daniel lived in a time when everything seemed to be lost for God's people, living in Exile, with Jerusalem destroyed.

The future held predictions of war – of the rise and decline of terrifyingly powerful empires, leaving a wake of destruction.

The encouragement to Daniel was that God foreknew what would happen, and would usher in a Kingdom which would outlive all the others.

A Kingdom, ushered in by Jesus Christ, which would go on for ever!

When Jesus died on the cross, he paid for the sins of the world to reconcile us to God.

To create a people who would receive eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus died and rose again he ushered in a new age and a new Kingdom.

This is God's purpose in history.

This is what the prophets foretold.

This is what Jesus both preached and achieved.

And one day that Kingdom will come in all its glory, and every king, every nation, every person will bow before Jesus, the King and Messiah.

It was not Babylon that held power (that was obvious from reading Daniel)

It was not the Medes and Persians.
It was not Alexander's Greek empire.
Nor the Roman Empire.

It is not the USA which controls history today.
Nor China. Nor the European Union.
It is not the banks or the huge corporations of this world.

All of them will bow before Jesus Christ.

The Cross of Jesus Christ and his resurrection are the crossroads of history.
There is no greater or more important event, ever.

So here is the question for you today...

Who are you going to serve?

And

Who will we teach our children and grandchildren to serve?

Will it be the great Australian dream of the big home, with the prestige car, a boat and a pool?

Will it be a good education with a fulfilling career?

Will it be the life of leisure?

Will it be success and wealth?

Will it be ultimately be yourself that you serve?

All of those things will go the way of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. They are going to come to end.

Jesus said, *Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. Mat 10:39*

Bob Dylan once wrote **Gotta Serve Somebody**

You may be an ambassador to England or France,
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance,
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world,
You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls

*But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody,
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.*

You may be a state trooper, you might be a young Turk,
You may be the head of some big TV network,
You may be rich or poor, you may be blind or lame,
You may be living in another country under another name...

You may be a construction worker working on a home,
You may be living in a mansion or you might live in a dome,
You might own guns and you might even own tanks,
You might be somebody's landlord, you might even own banks...

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In Revelation John sees a vision of Jesus...

*¹²I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me.
And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵His feet were like*

bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

So...

Who are YOU going to serve?