

Christ the King

November 30, 2003

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things to your beloved Son, whom you anointed priest forever and king of all creation: Grant that all the people of the earth, now divided by the power of sin, may be united under the glorious and gentle rule of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

{9} As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. {10} A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened... {13} As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. {14} To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

9. thrones were set in place: These thrones were probably for the heavenly court (see verse 10) or council sitting in judgment. Descriptions of the heavenly throne room are found in 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 10:1. In Matthew 25:31 the Son of Man sits on his throne to separate the faithful from the unfaithful. Paul asks, as it were something well known, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" in 1 Corinthians 6:2. John the Seer has a vision of thrones occupied by those who were given authority to judge (Revelation 20:4).

an Ancient One: Hebrew, "ancient of days," signifying one who is eternal, Yahweh or some manifestation of Yahweh.

his clothing was white as snow: "Compare the angel at the tomb in Matt 28:3 (' his appearance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow'), the radiant whiteness of Jesus at the transfiguration (Mark 9:2), and the linen dress customary for angelic figures (Ezek 9:2; 10:2; Dan 10:5; 12:6-7). According to Rev 3:5, ' he who conquers will be clad thus in white garments.'" [1]

the hair of his head like pure wool: The description of the hair is transferred to the "one like the Son of Man" in Revelation 1:13-14.

his throne was fiery flames...wheels were burning fire: "The fiery wheels on the stationary throne..undoubtedly derive from Ezekiel' s Merkavah vision (Ezek 1:15-21; 10:2)." [2]

10. a stream of fire: Psalm 97:3, "Fire goes before him, and consumes his adversaries on every side" (compare with Psalm 50:3).

A thousand thousands...ten thousand times ten thousand: For the heavenly court see 1 Kings 22:19 and Isaiah 6.

The court sat in judgment: See verse 9.

the books were opened: These are the heavenly records upon which judgment is to be rendered. See Psalm 56:8; Isaiah 65:6; Malachi 3:16. "This motif is distinct from those of the 'book of truth' (Dan 10:21) and the 'book of life' (12:1)." [3] This motif is developed in detail in 1 Enoch 89:70; 90:20.

One like a human being: Literally, "one like a son of man." "It is often used in parallelism with a generic word for humanity, for example, in Job 25:6: 'how much less man.. a maggot/the son of man, a worm.'" [4]

14. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship: This one is to act as regent or steward for Yahweh. Nebuchadnezzar received these gifts in Daniel 2:37, only to be found wanting (Daniel 5:18-21).

his dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away: The kingdom delivered to the one like a human being is indestructible and everlasting.

Psalm 93

{1} The LORD is king, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed, he is girded with strength. He has established the world; it shall never be moved; {2} your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting. {3} The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. {4} More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the LORD! {5} Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O LORD, forevermore

1. The Lord is king: "Ps. 93 positions this confession thetically at the beginning ('Yahweh reigns as king') and supports it with a tripartite hymnic textual section dealing with Yahweh's victory over the waters of chaos (vv. 1aβ -δ ,3,4, probably preexilic), with a reference to creation cast in the style of a prayer (the earth is Yahweh's everlasting throne; vv. 1b-2 [v. 1b is a displaced verse; cf. Ps. 96:10]), and with praise of his manner of ruling through his decrees ('edot) and through his presence (the holy temple. In this way the various aspects of Yahweh's rule (creation, cosmic order, and revelation) are encompassed and appended to the confession itself as concrete examples, whereby the polemical fundamental character of the formula comes to expression." [5] The formula "Yahweh reigns" occurs thirteen times, and Yahweh is qualified with the epithet "king" an additional 41 times. Of these only two (1 Samuel 8:7 and 1 Samuel 12:12) occur in prose contexts. [6] In these two passages Yahweh declares the establishment of the Israelite monarchy is a rejection of his direct kingship over the people, but Yahweh gives explicit approval and encouragement to it (1 Samuel 8:22).

2. your throne: The picture of Yahweh enthroned occurs in a variety of contexts. For example, 2 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26; Daniel 7:9. The Temple was the place of Yahweh's throne on earth, Jeremiah 17:12. (In Matthew 5:34, heaven is God's throne.)

3. *the floods*: The primeval waters of chaos and disorder which was overcome and given order by God's creation. All uncontrolled water was thought to participate in the nature of the primeval watery chaos, and was therefore a threat to the ordered creation (remember especially the flood in Genesis 6-10).

4-5. *More majestic...mighty waters...is the Lord*: However powerful and fearful the chaotic floods may be, Yahweh is more majestic; his (creation) decrees are final.

Revelation 1:4b-8

{4b} 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 firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, {6} and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. {7} Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. 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.

[4a. *John to the seven churches that are in Asia*: This passage is an introduction to the letters to the seven churches in 2:1-3:22.]

4. *him who is and who was and who is to come*: "...probably intended to be one word, an indeclinable noun, a paraphrase of the tetragrammaton, Y-H-W-H, "He who is." [7]

the seven spirits who are before his throne. The spirits are variously interpreted as 1) "the seven mighty throne angels of Jewish tradition," 2) "the Holy Spirit, called seven because of his seven gifts," 3) "the 'Chief Princes' of the angelic hierarchy who offer seven words of blessing." [8]

5. *Jesus Christ...the firstborn of the dead*: This attribution occurs in Colossians 1:18.

the ruler of the kings of the earth: In 1 Timothy 6:15 Jesus is identified as the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (see also Revelation 17:14 and 19:16).

6. *[he] loves us and freed us from our sins*: This is the work of Christ throughout the New Testament.

by his blood. "To the Hebrews blood was synonymous with life. The baptized person is spiritually immersed in the blood of Christ by which he is cleansed or freed from sin and given supernatural life." [9]

a kingdom, priests: John paraphrases Exodus 19:6. If "we" are a "kingdom," it is Christ who is the King. Those who are made a kingdom and priests by incorporation into Jesus, who is priest and king, by baptism, "became also mediators of the new covenant." [10]

7. *So it is to be. Amen.*: Literally, "Yes! Amen!" "We have here the Greek and Hebrew forms of affirmation side by side... Here Christ is represented as the personalized divine Amen, the guarantor in person of the truth declared by Him." [11] The expressions "are here purposely combined to express the same ideas as in xxii.20, ' It is so, Amen.' " [12]

8. *I am the Alpha and the Omega*: "Among the later Jews the whole extent of a thing was often denoted by the first and last letters of the alphabet, ' *τ* [aleph, tau]... Hence it is not improbable that "Alpha and Omega" is a Greek rendering of a corresponding Hebrew expression. See Isaiah 44:6, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no God."

the Almighty: In Greek [*pantokrator*]; "ruler of the universe." It is used nine times in Revelation and once in 2 Corinthians 6:18. It is used "in contrast to the Roman Emperor' s self-designation as *autokrator*." [13]

John 18:33-37

{33} Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" {34} Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" {35} Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" {36} Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." {37} Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that 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."

33-87. *"Are you the King of the Jews?"*: The title "King of the Jews" is used of Jesus only in the stories of his birth (Matthew 2:2), and of his passion (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18). Jesus is seated on a throne to judge the people in the last days (Matthew 25:31).

Jesus' response is first, to reject the political significance of the question, "My kingdom is not of this world," and next, to declare that his non-political kingship is to bear divine revelation, "to testify to the truth," and finally, to claim that those who await the revelation listen to him, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." "' Truth' in Johannine thought means the reality of God as seen through his revelatory and redemptive action." [14]

34. *Do you ask this on your own*: Even in this last confrontation with the forces ranged against him, Jesus plays by the rules of honor, seeking to force Pilate to acknowledge Jesus' authority.

36: Jesus implicitly admits that he is a king, but that his kingship is not an earthly one. "Christianity, as the Evangelist understands it, is not a political movement and therefore makes no use of political means." [15]

37: Pilate does not explore what an non-earthly kingdom might be, but seeks to force Jesus to answer his original question, "So, you *are* a king?"

to testify to the truth: Jesus defines the nature of his non-earthly kingdom. It is to testify to the truth, which implies that the world is a witness to untruth. "In Jesus the ' truth' presents itself to men in incarnate form (14:6). Whoever is of the truth belongs to the kingdom of truth; the one to whom God has granted new existence hears his voice." [16]

Reflection

Several titles for God and Christ occur in the readings: Ancient One, king, faithful witness, king of kings, Alpha and Omega, Almighty. Each tells us something about God. Today we celebrate Christ the King, Christ who as King rules and judges the created order and everything and everyone in it.

The final establishment of Christ' s kingly rule is yet to be fulfilled, when he will have dominion and glory, when all things will be subdued under his feet, and when all peoples, nations and languages will serve him. Still, even now his kingly rule is among us. As our King Jesus testifies to the truth of the Gospel, he loves us and frees us from our sins. He makes us to be his kingdom, to serve the Father as his priests.

Being Christian, following Jesus, being forgiven and having eternal life are not so much about what affects us, but how we live as servants of God and how we affect the lives of others. May God grant that the sin that divides us from one another may be overcome, and that we may be united under the gentle and glorious rule of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Hymns [17]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

520 --E--Give to Our

171 --D--Rejoice, the Lord

27 --II--Lo! He Comes

42 --II--Of the Father's

386 --G--Christ Is the

315, 525, 705s, 377,

179, 740v/740s, 631v,

744v, 801v/771s

Prayers of the People [18]

We listen O God, for the voice of Christ in all of our moments. David points us to the promised one. John's Revelation offers hope in the promised one. Pilate discovers and avoids the promised one. Help us in our journey of life that we might follow Jesus with confidence and courage; for he is Lord of lords and King of kings. God of our future **hear our prayer.**

Bless our journey into Advent. What is that time about? Help us to patiently wait and watch in those days before Christmas so that we can hear your message to us about life, about Christmas and about our celebration of the Nativity. Give us joy, peace and anticipation in

Advent's delayed and counter-cultural movement toward Christmas. God of our future **hear our prayer.**

Or [19]

Presider or deacon

Let us pray to our God through Jesus Christ, king of kings and ruler of the rulers of earth.

Deacon or other leader

For *N* our bishop and *N* our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for mercy, justice, and peace among all peoples.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth, and peaceful times.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

For all those in danger and need: the hungry and the thirsty, strangers and the naked, the sick and those in prison.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead. For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need. Lifting our voices with all creation, with the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

God of all peoples, nations, and languages, who is and who was and who is to come, hear the prayers we offer this day and enable us to serve you as faithful priests in your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

1[1] John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993, p. 301.

1[2] *Ibid.*, p. 302.

1[3] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

1[4] *Ibid.*, p. 304.

1[5] K. Seybold, “*melek*.” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren). Vol. VIII. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997, P.382.

1[6] *Ibid.*, p. 365.

1[7] J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975, p. 376.

1[8] *Ibid.*, p. 377.

1[9] *Ibid.*, p. 378.

1[10] *Loc. cit.*

1[11] R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920, Vol. 1, p. 20.

1[12] *Loc. cit.*

1[13] *Ibid.*, p. 379.

1[14] Reginald H. Fuller, *Preaching the New Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today*: Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1974, p. 453.

1[15] Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. 179.

1[16] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

1[17] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rc1b9900.txt>

1[18] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt

1[19] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>