



***Christ the King 2006.***

***Daniel 7: 13-14 Revelations 1 5-8 John 18: 33-37***

“As the visions during the night continued, I saw one like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, he received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away; his kingship shall not be destroyed.”

It is not surprising that this dream of the prophet Daniel has become a metaphor for Christ in glory. This dream throws into high relief the passage from John selected for today’s Gospel. “Are you King of the Jews?”

John sets this scene before Pilate, at dawn. As day breaks, the Jewish leaders present Jesus, the Lamb of God, before the throne of Pilate. John contrasts the leaders’ care to observe ritual purity on the eve of Passover with their desire to bring about the death of the Lamb of God.

“Are you a King then?”

The concept of *King* as a metaphor for Christ is one that raises difficulties for some modern Christians. We know from the ancient stories that Israel struggled with the symbol knowing the problems that it would present. On the positive side, kingship represents power and authority, and on the negative side, oppression, power struggles and instability. All these experiences were available from their own history and certainly from their contact with other empires.

It may be helpful to consider some of the theology that John presumes we have some knowledge about. On the ceiling of the Sistine chapel there is a picture of Creation. Adam comes from the hand of God but there exists a space between Creator and creature. In Jewish theology there is no space dividing God and humanity. The Jews believed that God could be “touched” in a variety of ways. The most important of these was the Torah. The cult was another mode of mediation, They also believed that the King could be a mediator of God. As Kings failed to live up to the ideal of manifesting the Kingship of God, theology looked for ways to make sense of the contradictions.

Two images from in the writings- *the suffering servant* of Isaiah and the *Son of Man* of Daniel were taken over by the Christian community. The Christian writers sought in the pages of the ancient writings support for their belief that Jesus was Messiah. The two images seemed to answer the paradox that they faced. Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:14 used Son of Man in a royal, political context, in Christian theology it has become a title of Divinity.

The concept of the Suffering Servant was easier to relate to Jesus because of his passion and death and went a long way to providing a way of coming to terms with the grief and shock that the community experienced in the period following Jesus' death.

As the feast of Christ the King occurs in late spring in the southern hemisphere we might take an image from the prayers of the day which links the feast to our seasons. "You make all things new" and again "Your Son reconciles mankind". May our pray this day be for a greater reverence for all creation and a constant striving to gather scattered humanity into a genuine love for one another that respects difference in creed and culture.

Patricia Stevenson rsj.