

Preaching notes:

Christ the King Sunday is observed the Sunday prior to Advent for good reason. This year, in recognition of the fundamental importance at this time of knowing Jesus as King, we have extended the special occasion over two Sundays as we consider “Christ as King” in prophesy and “Christ as King” in fulfilment. Advent is our joining with the people of long-ago Israel in the waiting, longing and expectation of the birth of Messiah whilst at the same time looking forward to the time that Jesus will come again (the prophesied second coming). “Christ as King” recognises that in the foretelling (prophesy) of his coming and at his birth in Bethlehem, he is born King. Psalm 72 is our entry point to this truth of Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, the King.

As with all prophesy of the Bible it is God speaking through people. In the case of Psalm 72 it is believed that it is Solomon (son of David) who is writing. Is he writing as a prayer, asking God to bestow on himself the justice to judge his people or foretelling that one coming (Messiah) will judge with righteousness? My answer and that of most good Bible commentators is “yes and yes”, yet as we progress through the Psalm it becomes an ever greater “yes” for the Messiah and less of a “yes” for himself. As we reach verse 11 “may all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him” we recognise that this is no longer Solomon being spoken of but Messiah.

There are strong “good kingly” themes that emerge from this Psalm. The themes that we would hope and pray that our leaders (kings or prime ministers or presidents) would embody. Justice (verses 1,2), Compassion (verse 13), Prosperity (verse 16), Salvation (verse 12) and Redemption (verse 14). These are the answers to the worldwide human conditions of guilt, loneliness, fear, dissatisfaction and emptiness.

To fully appreciate the all-encompassing nature of prophesy in regard to the birth of Jesus consider the words of the kings (or wise men) travelling from Babylon to Bethlehem: “we have observed his star at its rising” (Matthew 2:2). Why do they say, “his star” and what do they mean by “its rising”? It’s a very long and arduous journey to undertake without a sure outcome in mind (4 or 5 months). Numbers 24: verses 15 onwards may hold the answer: “the oracle of Balaam...one who hears the words of God...I see him, but not now, I behold him, but not near, a star shall come out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel”.

Where do you “enter into” the story? Is it at the physical birth of Jesus in Bethlehem -at the beginning of the New Testament- or is it at the real beginning. In our Creation Time series, in talking of Jesus: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation” (Col:1:15). Who starts a story halfway through? To fully understand and appreciate the full story and the intent of the author you surely need to start from the beginning. **Amen.**