



### **Session 3. 'Your Kingdom Come and Will be Done, here on Earth as in Heaven'**

Talk of Kings, and Queens, for us in the UK and we are filled with thoughts of our monarchy. In other parts of the world, France for example, talk of Kings is quite a foreign concept today—literally something they have concerns for in other countries, not in France.

When Jesus gave our prayer to the disciples the phrase 'Your Kingdom come and will be done here on earth as in heaven' was filled with both religious and nationalistic overtones as well as implications for the lives of those who prayed the prayer.

Israel were the people gathered together by God, as His people. They had been held captive in slavery under a royal system in Egypt where Pharaoh ruled as a god and king. It was from this slavery that God delivered the people through the night of death that would become Passover. The people gathered and were led by the Spirit through the wilderness into the land promised for God's blessings and the fullness of life. But as the people settled they also looked at all the other nations and decided they needed a king so they could be 'like everyone else'.

Many years had passed, many kings and rulers had been in place for good, or ill in the nations, but now as Jesus gives this prayer there is foreign rule, there is foreign occupation and Israel is no nation at all. There is a desire for deliverance, for independence and for some, to have their own home grown king. For others there was a desire to be a theocracy, to be a people once again led by the God they worshiped through the wisdom and direction of the Spirit of God. It is safe to say this was a time when both spiritual and political expectations and desires ran deep.

Place yourself in the group of disciples Jesus gives these words to, and wonder what they meant for each of them. I wonder if Simon the Zealot heard these words and thought to himself, 'come the revolution'. What of John, ready with his sword? What of Andrew or Simon Peter?

Many of the psalms are thought to have been generated during the age of the kings of Israel; David is accredited with quite a number of psalms. Many, like psalm 99 for example, seek in an age where the people arguably looked to the king from benevolence, point our thoughts to a greater truth—'The Lord is King'!

God is king, not simply of the nation, but over all creations—'let the peoples tremble', 'let the earth quake'. There is an acknowledgment, as we will have just prayed before this sentence of the Lord's prayer, that God is Holy. Israel is called by the psalmist to remember who is king; not any human leader. And they are reminded to seek the rule, the direction, the leadership of God. Israel

are first and foremost to be the people of God, living within God's leading and provision (more on that in next month's reflections).

As those today who acknowledge in our prayers 'the Lord is king' we do so pointing to the reality that we are the new Israel, not geographically defined, but in all the earth seeking the will of God, the realm of God's Christ to become a reality.

This is no small matter, after all it has planet wide expectations and possibilities. This is a corporate enterprise, to be the people of the Lord's reign in Christ Jesus. And yet it is also deeply personal. As much as we pray for the kingdom, the rule of God to come 'on earth', there is also a sense we pray for it 'in earth'. In earth, in Adam, in the very earth bound, planet earth generated lives we live. Herein, is the majesty of the incarnation of God in Christ, of the Son sent to redeem all by being 'God with us, with our humanity'.

As Jesus says these words I wonder if he points us to the 'now', for in his words and actions he brings to reality the will heaven on earth. But more, through death and resurrection we glimpse the 'not yet', the first fruit of the full kingdom we pray to be coming into the earth as in heaven. Our praying is then from the firm basis that the kingdom has come in Jesus and, at the same time, is able to come into be being through His body, the church.

Here, in one sentence of prayer, we find the reality that as we look heavenward to God our father, as we worship his holy name, we are instantly called on to offer our souls and bodies in service, as living sacrifices in the power of the Spirit, to be the agents of bringing the kingdom in reality we pray for.

Loving neighbour is then 'like' worship of God in heart, mind, souls and human resources. We worship God when we look in love for justice and equity in the world—heaven and earth meet as we live each day in worship of the Lord who is King of all the earth.

There is much to reflect on again in this session:

1. What might life be like on earth if everyone acknowledged God as King over all?
2. What ways might your personal life, 'your earth' be transformed today to better serve the purposes of the kingdom?
3. Where might God be calling your church community to work to see the kingdom come on earth as in heaven?

