

bringing God's order) that is experienced now, and fully when Jesus returns.

"A kingdom and priests to serve" — stating the essential difference between the Old and New Covenant ways of relating to God. Under the Old Covenant it was through rules and formal rituals, led by a special order of priests as intermediaries between people, and God who is holy and remote. By contrast, the New Covenant relationship for those who are freed from the burden and guilt of sin by Jesus' blood, is close and personal and needs no intermediary other than Jesus Himself.

7-8 "Look, He is coming with the clouds," and "every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him;" and all peoples on earth "will mourn because

SUMMARY Jesus is coming back to those who have found freedom from sin and condemnation in Him, and have the joy of being able to know God, know His love and draw close to Him without intermediaries. Others who have not responded to His grace will mourn their lack of repentance.

APPLICATION The description here challenges the stereotype of the institutional church. Challenging the common separation between some who are called clergy and others called laity, the church is comprised of believers all of whom are called to serve the Lord in worship and mission. All share the mission of representing God to those who do not yet know Him, and the pastoral role of representing them and their needs to God.

QUESTION *What should we call, and expect of, those who are set apart as preachers, shepherds and leaders in the church?*

PRAYER Lord God Almighty, majestic in holiness yet loving us without condition:

May we grow in loving You and living in awe of You.

Help us as we seek to represent You to our world, and bring the needs of our world to You.

For Jesus' sake and His glory, Amen.

of Him". So shall it be! Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega", says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty".

"Look, He is coming" — the combined quotation is like a headline to the theme of Revelation, some mourning their sin and judgment before the majestic and holy Lord of Daniel 7:13-14 (above) while others rejoice at finding the grace promised in the Zechariah 12:10 passage.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega" — in the OT "I am" is the Lord's name, and to say He is the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet includes everything in between. His actions are all-encompassing and He is in control.

• *For further study of Jesus' coming, read 1 Thess. 4:16-17.*

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PRINT EDITION

Bible readings for Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021 + commentary & references

Non-denominational Bible study for **November 21** (Revised Common Lectionary readings)

Prepare: read the Bible passages beforehand. Reflect: re-read to think about the message preached

Theme: **Christ the King. Who is Jesus and what is His authority?**

2 Samuel 23:1-7 – Final words from a renowned ruler of Israel
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 – A glimpse of the majesty of heaven for Daniel

John 18:33-37 – Jesus is questioned by Pilate about who He is
Revelation 1:4b-8 – Set free to serve God as a fellowship of priests

And also read: Psalm 132:1-18

2 Samuel 23:1-7 – Final words from a renowned ruler of Israel

David recalls God's covenant with him and anticipates the promised descendant

1 These are the last words of David. The inspired utterance of David son of Jesse, the utterance of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, the hero of Israel's songs:

"The utterance of the man exalted" — testimony to God's work in his life, from shepherd to King of Israel, 2 Samuel 7ff.

• *For further study, read God's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7.*

2 "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; His word was on my tongue.

"Spoke through me" — not presumptuous but expressing awe at God using Him prophetically.

3-4 "The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: 'When one rules over people in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth.'

"When one rules... in righteousness... in the fear of God" — David depicts a God-centred ruler (by contrast with a harsh one, vv.6-7) with allusions to Jesus Christ who he foreshadowed.

5 "If my house were not right with God, surely He would not have made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part; surely He would not bring to fruition my

salvation and grant me my every desire.

"An everlasting covenant... secured in every part" — David believes that God's promise recorded in 2 Sam. 7:12-16 will hold good, with his descendant as the Eternal King. Fulfilled in Jesus Christ vv.6-7 and note below.

• *For further study, see similar OT prophecies in Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Jer. 33:15-18; Zech. 9:9-10. In the NT, fulfilled in part, Matt. 4:14-16; Luke 24:25-27, 44-49; John 5:45-47; John 8:28-29.*

6-7 "But evil men are all to be cast aside like thorns, which are not gathered with the hand. Whoever touches thorns uses a tool of iron or the shaft of a spear; they are burned up where they lie."

"Cast aside like thorns" — worthless and needing to be shifted with determination. "Burned up" — the fate of the rebellious when the Messiah, fulfilling the Davidic Covenant, finally establishes His rule on earth, Isa. 63:1-6.

• *For further study, see Isaiah 9:18; 10:17.*

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 – Daniel glimpses the majesty of heaven and sees a throng of angels attending the throne of God
9 As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of His head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

"The Ancient of Days" — pictures God as a king of great power, righteousness and wisdom (fire,

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white clothing, white hair) giving judgment in court. Similar description to the angel in Matthew 28:3 and Jesus in Revelation 1:14.

10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before Him. Thousands upon thousands attended Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.

The court was seated, and the books were opened.

"Thousands attended" – and John also recorded that 'thousands and millions' are ministering around God's throne. Angels are spiritual beings created by God for worship and for mission (as we are) who, largely unseen, help in carrying out God's work on earth.

13-14 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

SUMMARY Two aspects of who God is, come through David's final testimony about ruling in the fear of God, and Daniel's picture of awe as he is given a prophetic insight into the heavenly court – and the Son of Man approaching the Ancient of Days. Firstly, there is straightforward fear – the consequences of getting it wrong, as in the fall of both kingdoms of Israel and the misery of the people enslaved in exile. However, this came after rejecting countless appeals by a number of God's prophets. The second aspect, of awe, comes more from Daniel's vision of the pure worship within the heavenly court, reminding us that God is love, and His overriding character qualities are mercy and truth.

APPLICATION There is a truth to mark here: how well do we really know God? As a consequence, how much do we desire to live out His character? This is the alternative fear of missing God's best, and denying God His pleasure in us. For Christians, having come to know God personally through trusting Jesus, this is about His Lordship in our lives and over our church involvements. When relationships get strained, or vision confused, it is likely that what has slipped has been the awe, or fear, of God through really knowing Him and loving His ways.

QUESTION *We can't replicate Daniel's vision of heaven, but what helps us to worship God as part of the heavenly gathering?*

John 18:33-37 – Jesus is questioned by Pilate about who He is

Jesus explains that He has no political motive but His is a spiritual kingdom

33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about Me?"

Days and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

"One like a son of man" – an Aramaic phrase 'bar enash' meaning a human being, a phrase used throughout Ezekiel e.g. Ezek 2:1,3,6,8. But this appearance is "one like a son of man". Various authors of the NT were sure this referred to Christ and may have been in Jesus' mind when He used this of Himself, Matt. 8:20. With more than one time-frame in view, the NT uses these verses to teach the manner of Christ's return at the end time to finally enforce the defeat of evil.

• *For further study: Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Mark 14:62; Luke 21:27; Rev. 1:7.*

"Are you..." – in all four gospels Pilate's first words to Jesus are the same. The answer to the question would have very different implications – was Jesus a rebel leader in opposition to Roman rule, or was He the Messiah of the Jews?

35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed You over to me. What is it You have done?"

"Pilate replied" – exasperated, not wanting to get involved with the Jews and their ways, yet seeing no real basis for their extreme animosity.

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

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

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the

SUMMARY A third aspect of who God is, recalls the Son of Man who Daniel saw approaching the Ancient of Days. There is an ironic parallel here with Jesus being brought before Pilate, who at first saw Jesus as yet another political activist in his turbulent territory. In God's providence, Pilate, a politician, who considered all truth relative in the shifting sands of people's opinions, did not see Jesus of Nazareth as a threat to Roman law and order – however he ends up supporting the Jews' grievance by allowing Jesus to be executed by being 'lifted up' and not by the Jewish execution of stoning.

APPLICATION Jesus corrects Pilate's perception that He is another zealot leading a rebel faction, by asserting that His "kingdom is from another place". Human politics on earth and heaven's purposes have different sources, often with contrasting agendas. However, we create a spiritual connection by praying down the Lord's heavenly purpose, bringing His influence into a world dominated by man's organisation and control.

QUESTION *If Jesus is king of another kingdom, discuss what it means to honour Him as king over us and practise allegiance to His rule and order.*

Revelation 1:4b-8 – Set free to serve God as a fellowship of priests

Jesus, present from the beginning, will return as the completion of truth

4 To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

"The seven churches" – the letters were addressed so they could be sent out throughout the Roman province called Asia via the Roman road which circled north of Ephesus and back again.

Grace and peace to you from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before His throne...

"Seven spirits before His throne" – or 'sevenfold spirit', symbolising completeness and perfection.

truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me."

"My kingdom is from another place" – the place of eternal and absolute truth, heaven. Jesus came as the Way, the Truth and the Life, John 14:6. Relationship with Him is the only way to God and also the only means of that life-bringing truth being revealed, which offends our human logic. Jesus came as living truth for all who would receive Him. Pilate, a politician, considered all truth relative, in the shifting sands of people's opinions, but Jesus of Nazareth did not present to him as a threat to Roman law and order.

Also a possible allusion to the "angels of the seven churches", Rev. 1:20.

5 ...and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

5-6 To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father – to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

"Who loves us... has freed us...has made us..." – stated as present-time blessings. There is a dimension of the kingdom of God (God's reign