

Over the last few months, I've been pondering a question: "If the High Court of Australia was asked to decide, would it allow a Christian, to sit as a member of the Australian Parliament?"

You may not have been aware of this, last Christmas, but we certainly should know it by now, that under Section 44 of the constitution, *any person who ... is under any acknowledgement of allegiance, obedience, or adherence to a foreign power, or is a subject or a citizen or entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or citizen of a foreign power...* is not allowed to sit as part of the parliament.

And what a dog's breakfast it's been this year. Unwitting dual-citizens have fallen (one after the other)... And the political parties point their fingers at each other, and try to get each other's members of parliament dismissed... A "dog's breakfast" – that's what it is...

And of course, when Parliament first sat in 1901, they were probably all foreign citizens, but England wasn't considered a foreign power (like it is today)...

And as Christians, **we** are aliens / we are **foreigners**, not only to Australia, but we are foreigners to this world. We, are citizens of the Kingdom of God. Our allegiance, is to another ruler. In Philippians 3, we're told that <sup>20</sup> ... our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ...

Now, of course from a Christian perspective, there's nothing wrong with a Christian being involved in politics (if that is how God has called you to serve Him)... But as Christians, we should be greatly, greatly encouraged, that in time, all earthly governments will be redundant. Is anybody ready for our governments to be done away with now? The arrival of the rule and the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, will make every earthly Government redundant...

Today, we're focusing on just one verse. Matthew 2:6. Let me set the scene:

The Magi (the Wise men) have come from Persia, to pay homage to the new-born King of the Jews. And so they arrive at the most likely spot (the palace in Jerusalem), to get their directions. And King Herod, not knowing where to direct them, Googles "birthplace of the Messiah". (Well, that's what he would've done if it was today, but back then he did the equivalent [he asked the experts]), and the search brought up a quote:

(Matthew doesn't give us the exact quote – it's a bit of a paraphrase):

<sup>6</sup> " 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' "

So, are you ready for a new ruler???. Anyone want to trade in our current rulers, for a new one???

But do we even know? In our current Democracy, I'm not sure we've ever even had a ruler... What **we** do, is we **elect** people **to** rule our nation and to serve us, but it seems to me, that whenever **any** of our leaders do anything remotely like "rule", we, the Australian people 'kick up a stink', and vote them out at the next election...

- We don't like being told what to do.
- We want **self** determination
- We want to be masters of our own fate
- We want to receive more government services
- And we want to pay less taxes...

And so the Government hardly rules us at all. They pretty much give us what we want, and our children inherit the ballooning national debt to go along with it...

This of course, is one of the faults of democracy... But for all of its faults, does any of us want to give up the ability to **have** a democratically elected government? Would anyone here really prefer, to have a King; or a Dictator over them? - someone who would rule us, with unquestioned authority?

While a **good** king, or a **benevolent** dictator can be a very good form of government, they are so few and far between. I think it was Lord Acton who said, "*Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely...*"

And so, individuals who have the power to rule, tend to become despots, and aren't good rulers at all...

But there is another ruler, fit to be a king. Today, we get reminded that 2000 years ago, a baby was born, who was destined to rule.

That's something that terrified King Herod. Even at His birth, little baby Jesus divided people into 2 camps – those who were filled with praise and welcome, and those who were filled with hatred and opposition.

And it's still the same today. At the prospect of Jesus' return, there will be those who are filled with praise and welcome, and those who are filled with hatred and opposition...

So Jesus was born to rule... *Prince Charles – he was born to rule. He's been waiting a while... Peter Costello waited patiently for years for his chance to rule, but it never came... But they've got nothing on Jesus.* Jesus was born to rule, and more than 2000 years later, we're still waiting. When He was nailed to the cross, His enemies thought "He'll never rule now"... they were wrong...

Of this we can be certain: the one who was born to rule, will one day return, and rule He shall.

In the Book of the Revelation, we're told what sort of a rule He'll have. He will rule with a rod of iron.... That means, that what Jesus says, goes. No ruler, will wield as much power over the nations, as Jesus will.

And that's a good thing, because not only is Jesus a ruler, He's also a shepherd. Jesus is no "corrupt despot", out to fleece his subjects – Far from it, in fact – He is a shepherd who died for His flock...

I don't know if it's because of my "sheep" background, but I love the biblical imagery of Jesus as shepherd... It's nothing at all like how I treat sheep... I would never lay my life down for a sheep. In fact, I've killed and eaten many them. I **might** go looking for 100 if **100** were missing, but I'd **never** go looking for one. But you see, I wasn't a **good** shepherd. Jesus is.

And Jesus rules, as a good shepherd cares for His sheep.

So, this Christmas, will we be content with a little baby in a manger? Or are we ready for a new ruler? Not a ruler to be elected by the people, but an all-powerful King, who will step in, and reign in the Kingdom that is rightfully His?

King of Kings.

Lord of Lords.

Emmanuel.

God with us.

You know, usually at Christmas time, we concentrate on "Jesus came, to save us from our sins." But the Christmas story, also points us forwards, to the day when our salvation will be complete... – To that time, when all those throughout the world, who have cried out "How long?", will have their answer:

- How long, will we be ruled by a despot?
- How long, will we be ruled by self-serving politicians?
- How long, will we suffer the casualties and atrocities of war?
- How long, will our leaders lie to us?

- How long, will we endure the violence and wickedness of lawlessness?
- How long, will the obscene threat of nuclear holocaust be the deterrent to war?
- How long???

One day, Jesus will return in righteousness. We don't know when.

And even on that day, the people of the earth will be divided into 2 camps:

- Those filled with praise and welcome; and
- Those filled with hatred and opposition.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

What a blessing it is, to remember the birth of our saviour.

But we realise that our salvation is not yet complete.

Lord, we long for you to come as our ruler.

And we praise you, that although your rule will be as strong as a rod of iron,

We have nothing to fear.

You are our shepherd. Our good shepherd.

We praise you, that you laid your life down for your sheep.

That in Your great love and mercy, You are making us ready,  
As a people fit for their King.

Come, Lord Jesus we pray,

Amen.