

DOES KENYA NEED ANY POLITICAL OR SPIRITUAL BUBBLE MESSIAH?

Christmas Message 2007

JUDGES 8:22-23 & 9:4-15. MATTHEW 24:3-5

The word Bubble was first used to describe the Asian booming market economies when they burst all of a sudden in 1997.

THE PLOT: In the Bible, the idea of the Messiah did not originate from God, but from myth. After pestering God for centuries God permitted the Israelites to have a King and appointed Saul for them. The pestering started when the Israelites approached Gideon and asked him to become their first King, which Gideon categorically declined to accept (Judges 8 verse 23). They tempted him saying, “Gideon, you rescued us (from our enemies)! Now we want you to be our king. Then after your death, your son and your grandson shall rule us” (Judges 8:22). The whole of chapters 6-7 are about Gideon’s heroic defeat of the Israelites’ enemies. After all his military successes he settled to rule the people, not as King but as a federal democracy. They forgot that it was not Gideon who rescued them but the same God who brought them out of Egypt. Gideon’s temptation was just like that of Jesus when Satan offered him the whole world, which he declined. Gideon and Jesus turned down the offers to be sovereign because sovereignty is power that God entrusts to no one party, group, religion, gender or individual. God created all human beings as sovereign and equal and none deserves to be called sovereign over or on behalf of the rest. The Israelites were God’s model of the communion of all saints or stateless society, where leadership is a shared responsibility. This is what the P.C.E.A. Constitution requires – priesthood of all believers.

God redeemed the people of Israel from the tyranny of the Egyptians because the Pharaohs were sovereign and the people were his subjects and slaves, devoid of any rights. God appointed judges as awakeners, spokesmen and functional leaders, by necessity but not by heredity. God preferred governance as government by all not dominance as government by some over the rest. So when the Israelites tempted Gideon to become king they were questioning God’s central role in the redemption and governance of Israel. As it were, they were repudiating the role God had played in redeeming them from the tyranny of the Pharaohs of Egypt. While their redemption was for service to God and one another, they instead wanted to serve a King. Three hundred years since they had left Egypt, they still relied on priests, prophets and judges to help them relate with God, secure their land, economy and future. Why this new craze for a King?

DEMOCRACY: After Gideon died, Abimelech, one of his sons, “hired worthless and reckless fellows” to clear his seventy brothers out of his way so he could crown himself the King of Israel (Judges 9: 4-5). This is how the concept of a bubble king in Israel arose. Abimelech did the abominable thing of setting himself as King over Israel, which he

could not have done without quashing democracy. Judges 9: 22 says that his bubble reign ended within three years. His three-year reign wrecked the Israelite political system, a confederacy of twelve semi-autonomous tribes called *amphictyony*, established by God, through Joshua, after the Exodus. Israel never had a central and united kingdom since the abortive attempt of Abimelech to become King, except during the reigns of Kings Saul, David and Solomon, after which Israel broke into Northern and Southern kingdoms. It was therefore wishful thinking for Jesus disciples to expect Jesus to resurrect the good old days of King David. The myth of David as the ideal King gave birth to the idea of the Messiah and this was as anachronistic as the myth that Jomo and Daniel were ideal rulers and that therefore Kenyans should elect a president who is like them.

According to Judges 9:52-54 the reign of Abimelech ended tragically when he invaded Shechem on a mission to suppress an uprising and prolong his reign. “Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and drew near to the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman threw an upper millstone upon Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull. Then he called hastily to his armour-bearer, and said to him, ‘Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, ‘A woman killed him.’” The moral of the story is “easy come easy go”. Abimelech’s head burst together with his kingdom. To create resistance against Abimelech’s usurpation of God reign, Jotham called him a thorn tree, an impostor. Jotham said that there were three ways to have governance and one way to have dominance. The three ways by which governance worked were (1) Choosing representatives (Olive tree=*mutamaiyu* in verse 8), (2) people appointing their leaders (fig tree=*mukuyu* in verse 10) and (3) by God’s direct anointment as happened to Moses, Gideon and David (grape vine=*muthabibu* in verse 12). The fourth way by which dominance worked was by impostors through rigging, buying or shooting themselves into power (bramble=*mutare* in verse 14). Abimelech had chosen the latter way to make himself king. Unfortunately it is in this very way that the Jews wanted to make Jesus their king and when he refused they crucified him.

The *mutamaiyu*, *mukuyu*, *muthabibu* way of governance were symbolic of the forty years of Gideon’s reign of solid economic growth and social development. If you asked Gideon “Where is the milk and honey that you and your God promised us” he would show you cows and bees. If you asked him “Where are the fruits of independence” he would show plantations of Olive Trees, Fig trees and Grape vines. Abimelech promised the people equitable distribution of milk, honey and fruits without having a single farm or plantations. He promised people national cake without having a single bakery. It is quite unfortunate that Kenya uses as its democratic forum worthless and reckless fellows, Abimelech, who know how to bear miracle fruits and babies without the need for nature, technology, science or hard work, by relying purely of wishful thinking.

THE MYTH: The idea of the Messiah brought Jesus Christ to a similar end as Abimelech, the only difference being that Jesus did not fall into the temptation of crowning himself King. The idea of Jesus as the Messiah was based on the myth that David was a perfect King and that Jesus had miraculous power to restore the Kingdom of David. This was a bubble, wishful thinking, a castle in the air, a mirage; and when Jesus Christ failed to comply he got crucified.

It is mere wishful thinking, daydreaming, quite dangerous, that many Kenyans think of the president as a Messiah while at the same time they claim that Kenya is a nation, a republic with a democratic government. With such wishful thinking presidents tend to run Kenya as anything else but a nation, state or republic except on paper. Historically Kenya has been a de facto monarchy where the president is the king and the MPs and Judges are his “worthless and reckless fellows.”

HISTORICAL REALITY: This is not the age of Messiahs. An American economist looking at the Asian market in the mid 1990s observed that, “In Indonesia, for instance, most of the gains in living standards that accumulated during 30 years of Suharto’s regime disappeared.” Economists described the market boom that preceded the collapse as an Asian Economic Bubble. During this time of electioneering Kenya is enjoying an economic bubble of 7% economic growth. This growth makes Kenya like a boiling lake, bubbling with too many civic and parliamentary Abimelech-like messiahs, most of whom will have bust their heads, spiritual life and family fortunes by the time the Electoral Commission of Kenya announces the winners and losers. I hope that their bursting will not have the ripple effect of busting our national economic bubble.

REAL SOVEREIGNTY: Elections are based on the notion that God’s sovereignty belongs to all. I beg all Kenyans to come out in their numbers and vote but not for candidates who the book of Judges terms as Abimelech and his “worthless and reckless fellows” and who think that elections are there for God’s people to surrender their sovereignty to them. Since independence Kenyans have used elections to surrender their sovereignty and human rights to Abimelech and his “worthless and reckless fellows.” Because of being so famined and impoverished by bad politics, Kenyans are prone to surrendering their sovereignty to any tribal baron who cheats them that in Parliament and State House there are magic powers to produce miraculous *milk and honey* without *cows and bees*, and *national cake*, without bakeries and hard labor. Kenya’s future and economic success do not depend upon choosing miracle doers, on the incumbent or any of the other aspiring presidential candidates, but depends wholly upon Kenyans refusing to surrender their God-given sovereignty. Unless the Lord builds Kenya and its economy, all the builders build in vain. So, vote on the premise that God vests his sovereignty in you, as his people, but not in the hands of any party, tribe or King. Our votes are our sovereignty and our land and labor are our bakery which we will not be able to protect from being stolen without a new constitution.

KINGS DAVID, JOMO AND DANIEL: While there is nowhere in this world where elections are held without some people expecting to resurrect the dead Kings to become their messiahs, my worry is that in Kenya we do not only fail to resurrect the dead kings into messiahs but end up producing characters opposite to the messiah. Kenyans have not learned any lesson from the past: that swapping one ethnic dominance for another, with the hope of reincarnating David, Jomo and Daniel for different tribes is a dangerous bubble, a gamble.

When the Jews called Jesus the Son of David, God’s anointed One, they wished to resurrect their mythical concept of David who would install miracle water, electricity and

food in every house, and who would reduce taxes and still be able to give free education, medicine and jobs to every household, and put tarmac under the foot of every pedestrian.

The problem with such bubble Messiahs is that when you blow them with hot air they become too big, blow up and vanish or burst into personal and ethnic bubbles. In Matthew 24:5, Jesus warned those who wanted to blow him into a bubble Messiah to stop. Jesus warned them that false prophets are coming and are going to use his name to manufacture many bubbles, shadows and impostors with mouths loud enough to grab votes and get opportunities to grab our lands and taxes. **Such messiahs cannot stand the test of dying for you and rising again, as Jesus did.**

THE LIVE ISSUES: The issues for Kenya today are whether amongst all the aspirants to power there is a genuine and visionary leader, otherwise this limits our choice to who is the least evil amongst them. Failure to think things through will make you mistake impostors for your leader. Prophet Jotham warned people against welcoming impostors and compared them to the thorn bush.

Don't elect a bubble built on sand, illusion and intoxication with power. Some reckless and malicious rhetoric can send chilling messages to our freak and chancy bubble of economic growth. Remember what happened to the Asian bubble in 1997 where a slight doubt in the market sent investors on their knees.

Building castles in the air is an essential aspect of maturing but if it delays too long before it fully matures it can collapse and leave a trail of regrets. This is the story of the Kenyan independence bubble that collapsed into autocracy, DR Congo that collapsed into chaos and Israel kingdom that collapsed, Somalia style. If the promises and visions generated by the 2002 general elections could collapse there is nothing new that the political messiahs can tell Kenyans. Up to the day of elections election euphoria may deliver to you bribery, drugs, packets of *unga* and T-shirts but deliver misery one hour after the elections.

Finally, at a certain stage in the life of every person, family or nation, there is a bubble, a euphoric and ecstatic period when one dreams that nothing is impossible. At such a time one is unable to distinguish dreams and visions from reason and reality. Kenya is now in such a euphoric world of dreaming that it can have the economy of Asian tigers and America by distributing its resources and national cake without first establishing bakeries. Of course, Israel wanted to have kings like other nations and Kenyan politicians want to be the kings that Kenyans are longing for, but the reality check tells me that we have had too many false kings: it foretells me that there is no place for kings of any kind in our Kenyan society. In our modern Kenya only the people's sovereignty truly represents God's sovereignty in this world. Amen.