

THE TRAGEDY OF JESUS



The Christ in the desert (Ivan Kramskoi)

Few people understand the tragedy of Jesus and the reason for which the Jews refused to recognize in Him the awaited Messiah: He refused to restore a Jewish Kingdom because, as he had revealed, the Kingdom of God "is not of this world" (John 18,36). Thus, a Jewish State is as damnable by God as a Christian or Muslim state.

Indeed, God is for all believers, whereas States belong exclusively to their respective citizens, believers and unbelievers.

1. Zionism against Judaism

The tragedy of Jesus is Zionism, the politicization of Judaism. The whole problem lies here!

The essence of Judaism is spiritual. This faith in God began with Abraham, 4000 years ago, to whom the Creator revealed Himself, in order to make Himself known, through him, **to all men**. The divine intention was not to set up a limited Jewish political movement, but to spread the knowledge of the unique God. Along the centuries, Zionism suffocated Judaism to the point of reducing it into a Jewish nationalism. The Hebrews thought that they should express their faith by creating a national State. Judaism, is it a faith or a State? From God's point of view, the two are incompatible. All the tragedy lies here!

2. History of the politicization of Judaism

Judaism took a political turn in the XIth century BC, after the Israelites entered Palestine. Since this time, the Jewish community wanted to transform itself into a kingdom: "The men of Israel said to Gideon: 'Rule over us, you, your son and your grandson...'; Gideon replies: 'I will not rule over you, and neither will my son, because God is your Ruler'" (Judges 8,22-23). Gideon perceived the danger of such a political dynasty and rejected the project, just as Jesus did after him, in declaring that God is the unique King.

A second attempt took place one century later under Samuel. This time, a Jewish Kingdom was established with Saul as its first king, but contrary to God's explicit will and of the prophet Samuel's. In fact, God considered himself dethroned by the Jews and declared to Samuel: "... It is not you they have rejected, but Me, not wanting Me to reign over them anymore" (1 Samuel 8,7).

After Saul's enthronement, Samuel invited the Israeli community to repentance and to recognize its wrong in choosing a man as king: "Clearly understand what a very wicked thing you have done, in God's eyes, by asking for a king" (1 Samuel 12,17). And the Jews confessed: "To all our sins we have added this wrong of asking for a king." (1 Samuel 12,19). The politicization of Judaism is thus condemned, from the beginning, by the very people who instituted it.

Centuries later, the prophets reminded the Jews of their deviation towards politics. God says through the prophet Hosea:

"They (*the Israelis*) have set up kings but without my consent, and appointed princes but without my knowledge... (Hosea 8,4) ... Israel, you have destroyed yourself, though in Me lies your help. Your king, where is he now to save you and your governors of whom you once said: 'Give me a king and princes'. I gave you a king in my anger and took him away in my wrath." (Hosea 13,9-11)

Effectively, the kingdom was removed from Israel after the Babylonian invasion under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. The Temple of Solomon was destroyed, the Jews were deported to Babylon, and its royalty, the dynasty of David, ceased to exist ever since (2 Kings 25,8-12 / 2 Chronicles 36,17-21).

From henceforth, the Israelis were nostalgic for this Davidic kingdom, totally forgetting that the sole King is God. During the centuries that followed the Babylonian invasion, they often tried to restore their kingdom in Israel. They saw in the Messiah, the only person capable of restoring this Davidic kingdom. This earthly kingdom became their obsession. Just as the old-aged Simeon and Anna; they waited for, with all their strength, this "consolation of Israel", this "political deliverance of Jerusalem" (Luke 2,25-38).

In the first century B.C., under the Roman Empire, the Jews managed to restore a kingdom with the help of the Romans. The first king was Herod the Great. He did not obtain the people's consent, was not of David's lineage, but a descendant of the Maccabees (from the tribe of Levi). Moreover, Herod was just a puppet at the service of the Romans, enthroned by them to calm the Jews eager to have a kingdom.

Yet the Jews wanted an autonomous kingdom led by a **dynasty issued of David**. Their aim was therefore, to provoke a rebellion against Herod and the Romans to restore this kingdom. But they believed that the Messiah should first appear, so to mobilize the people for war against the Romans. This nostalgic belief of an Israeli kingdom totally eclipsed the spiritual dimension of Judaism. The Messiah, was solely awaited to "save" Israel militarily, in order to restore a vast Jewish empire, a "Greater Israel", similar to that of Solomon.

3. John the Baptist

At the sight of John the Baptist attacking Herod (Mark 6,17-20 / Luke 3,19-20), the nationalists took him for the Messiah and followed him in mass numbers. But he told the masses that another, more powerful, and more important than he, will appear (Matthew 3,11 / John 1,26-37). Yet for John the Baptist, this Messiah to be followed, could only be a liberating warrior. He himself did not understand Jesus' behavior, and "when John had heard in prison what **Christ was doing**, he sent his disciples to ask Him: 'Are you the One who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?'" (Matthew 11,2-3). He expected that Jesus assemble the people for war. Yet "the works" of Christ, which John heard of, were those of a man of mercy who forgives, and a healer, not of a revolutionary Jew. These spiritual works could not satisfy the nationalists, which John was part of.

This is why, without doubting Jesus as a divine envoy, John sent some disciples of his to ask Him if He was the expected Messiah, "or are we to expect someone else" as Messiah to lead the revolt? He had not yet grasped the spiritual dimension of the Liberation. This is the reason why Jesus had said that John the Baptist is, because of his materialistic conception of the kingdom, smaller than the least one in the Kingdom of God, the latter having understood that this Kingdom is internal, in the soul. John the Baptist himself, did not understand this (Matthew 11,2-11).

Today too, all those who do not grasp this dimension, also expect this "other Messiah" to restore the political kingdom in Israel.

4. Jesus

In Jesus' time, the Jews had already lost the spiritual notion of salvation. The best among them understood this fact politically. To them, the Messiah should come from a family of high rank, or the rich and powerful of Jerusalem, and capable of mobilizing the people for combat. Paradoxically, Jesus came from a modest family in the remote village of Nazareth: "From Nazareth, can anything good come from there?" (John 1,46)

A poor carpenter did not convince the proud expectations of the Israelis. His main mission was to restore Judaism to its original purity -spiritual- liberating it from politics: "My Kingdom is not of this world", says Jesus (John 18,36). Through Jesus, God would reconquer his Throne in the hearts of believers. This Kingdom should not be limited to Jews only, but to all men of good faith in the whole world.

Jesus appeared speaking of the Kingdom of God. The Jews believed in Him when they saw Him performing miracles, but they saw in Him, a political and military liberator. Instead of responding to his invitation to repentance, their reaction to his miracles was nationalistic.

They wanted to force Him to become the political king of Israel, to restore David's kingdom, He who issued of David's lineage. In fact, John, in his Gospel, tells us that the Jews, after the miracle of the multiplication of bread, believed in Jesus, since they said: "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world". Yet their reaction to this miracle was not spiritual, since John adds:

"Jesus, as He realized that they were coming to take Him by force and **make Him king**, fled away to the mountain alone." (John 6,14-15)

We must pay attention to this fact which often passes unnoticed: "They were coming to take Him by force and **make Him king** ... but He fled away". The Jews did not come to "solicit" Jesus, nor did they "offer" Him the Israeli kingdom, but to impose it on Him. He had no choice but to flee from what betrayed his mission. Had He not already refused such an Israeli empire from the devil's hand? (Matthew 4,8-10).

The tragedy of Jesus appears in these verses because, after Jesus' persistent refusal to restore the kingdom of Israel, in their turn, the Jews ended up rejecting Him as Messiah.

The nationalists were angry with Jesus and judged him unpatriotic because He had not put His miraculous power at the service of the nation and the throne. This is why they accused Him of "leading the people astray" (John 7,12). What the Jews were fed, by His acts and speeches, were false hopes of a national restoration: "We had hoped that He would be the one to liberate Israel", said two of his disciples after His death (Luke 24,21). Seeing that Jesus did not satisfy their political aspirations, the Jewish leaders concluded that His miracles were made by the power of the devil (John 10,20 / Matthew 12,24-28). They finally got Jesus crucified because, through his spiritual messianism that galvanized the masses, He had become an obstacle to the realization of their political and nationalistic goals (John 7,37-52 / 12,10-11).

And yet, Jesus is not the first Jew who had refused to establish an Israeli kingdom, knowing that this was contrary to God's Will. Gideon, Samuel and God Himself, had they not themselves spoken against the realization of such a kingdom, "God being the unique King"?

Jesus suffered greatly in explaining to his most intimate friends about His Spiritual Kingdom. On several occasions, He prepared his Apostles on his crucifixion; not on fighting Herod and the Romans. The Kingdom He spoke to them of never had anything to do with politics, and his language was never that of a nationalist. He never spoke of David's kingdom, but of the Kingdom of Heaven. They expected to hear Him say, for example: "People of Israel, you the proud descendants of Jacob and inheritors of the Land, follow me, do not hesitate to take up arms and liberate the land of your ancestors, etc..." However, his discourse was of this genre: "Happy are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs ... Happy are the meek ... Happy are the merciful... (Matthew 5,1-12) ... The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field... (Matthew 13,24) ... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." (Matthew 5,43-45)

To the Pharisees who asked Him "when the Kingdom of God was to come" (according to them, the Davidic Kingdom), Jesus replies: "The coming of the Kingdom of God will not be observed and no one will say: 'Look, it is here! Look it is there!' for the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17,20-21). Since this Kingdom is internal, it was no longer necessary to wait for another that is external. No one in Israel expected this type of kingdom, nor this messianism. The nationalistic wave had seduced all the Jews, including the Apostles.

In order to institute this Divine Kingdom, the idol of a political messiah had to be broken. Jesus knew that He could only succeed at the price of his blood. He therefore prepared his Apostles to this tragic outcome: "The Son of man is going to be delivered into the power of men and they will put Him to death". Hearing this "a great sadness came over them" (Matthew 17,22-23), because, still seeing in Him a nationalist Messiah, they could not imagine that Jesus be defeated, put to death, without restoring David's throne and dynasty.

The Apostles had a hard time grasping the spiritual dimension of the Kingdom, although Jesus stayed with them for three years. After his Resurrection, He had even shown Himself alive to them and, "for forty days he had continued to appear to them and speak to them about the Kingdom of God" (Acts 1,3). Despite this, they continued to believe that this kingdom is political and ask Him, just before the Ascension: "Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1,6). It is only after receiving the Holy Spirit, that they began to understand the Master's intention (Acts 1,7-8 / 11,15-18 / 15,7-11).

Jesus wanted to replace, in His Apostles' mentality, the notion of a zionist messiah with that of the spiritual and universal Messiah. It is a subtle exorcism He had to operate. He waited two years before starting this delicate operation. Firstly, He wanted to be sure that His Apostles indefectibly believed in Him as Messiah. He had to manifest his power through miracles to give the disciples confidence in Him (John 2,11 / 6,14). Only then, in effect, did they believe in Him. Only then, did He ask them: "You, who do you say I am?" And Peter, he alone, had the courage to answer: "You are the Christ". Jesus praised him, telling him that this revelation came to him

from God (Matthew 16,15-17). The first step, to guarantee their faith in Him as Messiah, was thus overcome. Nevertheless, for Peter and the Apostles, the messianism of Jesus could only be nationalistic; He is the messiah, yes, but the warrior Messiah! Peter still carried his sword when Jesus was arrested! (John 18,10-11).

The second step to overcome, and the most delicate, was the revelation of his spiritual messianism; the apostles could not even imagine this. Jesus, after having secured from his disciples, for the first time, their recognition in his virtues as Messiah, could take this second step of presenting them His true face: a spiritual, non-nationalist Messiah. He did so by declaring to them, for the first time, that he would be shortly put to death. He declared this to them "from that day", whence they recognized Him as Messiah, not before, says Matthew (Matthew 16,21). It is to say: I am the Messiah, yes! But I will not restore a political kingdom. For you to understand this, I will be delivered to death.

The spontaneous reaction of Peter was to reject this unexpected declaration: "Taking Jesus aside, Peter started to remonstrate with Him: 'Heaven preserve You, Lord, this must not happen to you!'" But Jesus severely reprimanded Peter: "'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'" (Matthew 16,21-23). Peter's reaction is due, justly, to the fact that the disciples could not at that moment, conceive that the Messiah, the future king of Israel and the savior of the nation, ends up on a cross like a vulgar criminal, when they already imagined Him on Israel's throne, inaugurating the new dynasty of David. The Messiah, the King of Israel, dying on a cross?! Never! He who would dethrone Herod and expel the Romans! The Apostles "did not understand what Jesus said; it was hidden from them so that they could not understand the meaning of his words." (Luke 9,44-45)

This nationalist conception, anchored in the Apostles' mentality, appears in their intimate discussions. Arriving at Capernaum, Jesus asks them: "'What were you arguing about on the road?' They said nothing, because on the road they had been arguing which of them was the greatest." (Mark 9,33-34)

The Apostles' silence reveals their embarrassment facing this question. They understood, by the way it was posed, that "Jesus knew what thoughts were going through their minds" (Luke 9,46-47). And that, by His glance, the Master reproaches them. They realized the abyss which separates their Messianic conception from that of Jesus'. They were silent by shame.

Later, on His entry to Jerusalem, Jesus repeats for a third time of his placement on the cross. Immediately after its announcement, and far from sympathetic, James and John's mother "came with her sons to make a request of him, and bowed low... 'Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom'" (Matthew 20,20-21).

It should be stressed that this woman's approach came **immediately** after the third announcement of Jesus' Passion. In fact, He came to reveal to them: "Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified; and on the third day He will be raised up again" (Mat 20,17-19).

The Evangelists reveal to us that these words of the Passion did not penetrate the opaque mentality of the Apostles: "but they did not understand what He said; it was hidden from them so that they should not see the meaning of it, and they were afraid to ask Him about it" (Luke 9,45 & Mark 9,31-32). To the extent that Luke even adds immediately after: "An argument started between them about which of them was the greatest" (Luke 9,46). The Master's sufferings were clouded by their temporal ambitions.

This misunderstanding of the Apostles reappears up until the moment of Jesus' Ascension. After having supported them "for forty days telling them about the Kingdom of God... they asked Him (*again*): 'Lord, has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1,3-6) If I insist on this point, it is because it is important. The abyss that separates the Apostles' mentality from

Jesus' Spirit should be well understood. It was not until they received the force of this Holy Spirit that they understood. They were then worthy of being dignified witnesses of Jesus "in Jerusalem, throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1,6-8).

Do believers still understand today, that the Messianic Kingdom is **in us**? It is neither in political States, nor in human glory. The Vatican, in proclaiming itself a State in 1929, following the example of other temporal States, initiated its betrayal, a betrayal confirmed by the recognition of the State of Israel in 1993.

It was necessary that the Apostles undergo a real brainwashing on the part of the Master, a "baptism". He could not change their mentality save on the cross. The concept of a zionist messiah in which they believed in had to die. Jesus had to die without restoring an Israeli kingdom. So, their faith in Him as Messiah - no longer nationalist, but spiritual and universal - should continue living in them; which they did understand, in fact, only later, after the crucifixion of Jesus.

Therefore, through the death of Jesus, the zionist idol crumbles in the spirit of His disciples. Through His death, Jesus triumphs over death, that is nationalism: "I have overcome the world", says Jesus on the eve of his crucifixion (John 16,33).

Effectively, after Jesus' death, the Apostles went on believing in Him as the Messiah. They thus discovered the spiritual and universal dimension of salvation. God is no longer a Jewish monopoly, but belongs to the whole world: "Is God the God of Jews alone and not of the pagans too? Of the pagans too, most certainly!" (Romans 3,29). On the contrary, the hardened nationalists, to whom Jesus was "a cause of falling" (Matthew 11,6) and a "stumbling-stone" (Romans 9,30-33), were shocked by his lack of "patriotism" and rejected Him.

It is necessary to distinguish between a culpable religious nationalism, created in the name of a faith - this is condemned by God - and a legal patriotism independent from faith.

Note that the Zionist Messiah represents any materialistic and domineering spirit. This spirit has seduced an innumerable number of Christians along the centuries. These have understood nothing of Christ's Cross. All the materialists follow the spirit of the Zionist Messiah and die in their sins. It is the case of the Jews who refuse, in the past, and who also refuse today, to believe in Jesus (John 8,21-24). Jesus also repeats today to all: "If you do not believe that I Am (*the Messiah*), you will die in your sins." (John 8,21-24)

5. Judas

As for Judas Iscariot, the so-called apostle who betrays Christ, he never followed Jesus by spiritual conviction, but by material interest. This comes out in the words of John about him: "He was a thief; he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself from what was put therein" (John 12,6).

Judas believed that Jesus was the nationalist Messiah. His unique ambition was to see the restoration of the Davidic kingdom by Jesus, in order to have a prestigious position (minister of finance for example). Jesus' miracles and spiritual discourse left him spiritually indifferent. He only saw it as a means in re-establishing the political kingdom and to realize his proper materialistic ambitions.

His masked indifference vis-a-vis the words and works of Christ appears in Jesus' judgment on Judas after the miracle of the multiplication of bread and his discourse on the Bread of Life:

"'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset those who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him... After this, many of his disciples left him went and stopped going with him. Then Jesus said to the Twelve: '... Do you want to go away too?' Simon Peter answered: 'Lord, who shall we go to? You have the Message of Eternal Life...?' Jesus replied: 'Have I not chosen you, you Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.' He meant Judas

son of Simon Iscariot, since this was the man, one of the Twelve, who was going to betray Him" (John 6,64-70).

It would have been better for Judas to leave at this moment with the unbelievers like himself. If he stayed with the group, it was still, and uniquely, in the hope of realizing his material ambitions. When Judas had the certitude that it was not in Jesus' intention to establish a political kingdom, and that he could no longer draw anything out of Jesus, he decided to betray Him (John 13,2).

The materialist interest of Judas prevailed over all other considerations. It is self-evident in his desire to deliver Jesus by drawing, at least, a certain pecuniary profit. In fact, "he went to the chief priests (*who were looking for the occasion to arrest Jesus cunningly*) and asks them: "What will you give me and I will deliver Him unto you?" And they agreed with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Matthew 26,14-15).

Judas is the concretization of the tragedy of Jesus.

6. The Apostles after the Cross

The pilgrims of Emmaus were dismayed after the crucifixion of Jesus, disappointed by his death as they said to themselves: "We hoped that He would be the one to **liberate Israel**" (Luke 24,21). They still awaited a political liberation.

At the Ascension, the Apostles, "when they saw Him, they fell down before Him, though some hesitated" (Matthew 28,17). What was the nature of this hesitation? They doubted Him as Messiah because He did not restore the Kingdom to Israel. This is why, at this moment, they asked Him again: "Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1,6).

7. The Jews of today

Today, the tragedy of Jesus renews itself with the resurgence of Jewish nationalism, incarnated in the State of Israel. This State has seduced the Christian masses to support it blindly. And this, despite of Jesus' warnings: "Take care that no one deceives you... When you see the abomination of desolation stand in the Holy Place (*Holy Land, Jerusalem*) ... do not follow them..." (Matthew 24,4-15 / Luke 21,7-8). And Yet, they follow!!

How is it possible to convince the Jews - and particularly the Zionists among them - that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah they are waiting for?

How to convince them that the reign of which they aspire to, is spiritual, and in favor of all humanity?

How to convince them of renouncing a political Zionist state, through which they want to rule the world?

Blessed are those among them who hear the voice of the crucified Messiah, the One and Only capable of giving them true Peace.

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