

WHAT KIND OF KING?, ZECHARIAH 9:1-10, JOHN 12:12-19

◆ I saw a president of the US in “real life” once. I was in Washington for the inauguration of President Jimmy Carter. He walked down Pennsylvania Avenue, right in front of us. We didn’t see him right away. First there were motorcycles, and police, and horsemen, and black limos, and dignitaries from Congress, and agents all around, eyeing the crowd. It was a pretty big deal. Parades for notable people have always been like that. There’s an old practice called the Roman Triumph in which the returning General would parade into town. The towns folk would go out to meet him. He’d ride a war horse, and there’d be plumage, and what not. Captives would straggle behind. When Judas Maccabeus, (The Hammer) rode into Jerusalem in 165 BC it was on a war horse. He went straight to the temple to rid it of Greek idols that the Greek ruler Antioches IV has erected there. The celebration of Hanukkah has commemorated it ever since. After that Israel would enjoy being a free nation after 500 years of being occupied by first Babylon, then Persian, then Greece. They celebrated and put palm branches on their coins. But after a short century Rome would come and annex Israel yet again, under Pompey the Great in 63BC.

◆ So, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, while under Roman rule, you can imagine that there was a lot going on in the minds of the Jewish people. They are hoping for a conqueror, a Joshua of old.

◆ They shouted Hosanna, which means literally “save us”.

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- ◆ They wave palms remembering The Hammer, and freedom.
- ◆ They quote Psalm 118 calling Jesus blessed, but they add the title “King of Israel” which is not in the Psalm. Perhaps they remember stories of Alexander the Great conquering Israel in 332BC, because that’s who the prophet Zechariah was talking about 150 years before it happened in the chapter promising a coming king on a donkey’s colt. It was Alexander that destroyed the famous island fortress of Tyre (Zech.9:4). Had the king come that Zachariah prophesied?
- ◆ Palm Sunday was indeed a statement that Jesus was a king, THE king, but not the kind we usually look for.
 - ◆ “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9:9, NIV.
- ◆ **1. Jesus is the righteous king.** *“your king comes...righteous...”*
 - ◆ **A.** Jesus came to be more than a military king. What does it mean to be righteous? We don’t hear that word these days much. Maybe a surfer dude might use it of a really cool wave, or souped-up roadster. Well, we’ve seen quite a bit about it since we began studying Romans in January. To be righteous means to be on good terms,(holy terms, perfectly pleasing terms, just)with God. That’s who this king is. He is a holy man. A non-sinful man. In fact the only one in all of history.

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◆ *"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (ouch, that's probably a problem for you and me, am I right?) Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:13-15, NIV.*

◆ To be right or righteous is to be legally without fault. In the right. How you should have been. Your record is clean of demerit, and your record is full of admirable, and meritorious credit!

◆ **B.** It is important to know that this king riding into Jerusalem on Sunday was in fact the Righteous One. For he will have died on a Roman cross by Friday. But a spiritual transaction was taking place there in Jerusalem.

◆ *"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit," 1 Peter 3:18, NIV.*

◆ The Old Testament prophet Isaiah spoke of him 700 years before he rode into Jerusalem...

◆ *"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us*

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peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all... by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”” Isaiah 53:5, 6,11 NIV.

◆ If Christ had not been righteous his life would not merit the forgiveness of the human race. There have been other great kings but there has never been a righteous King who always did the right thing even in the eyes of God himself. Israel’s greatest King, David, was also a great sinner and he knew it well. Alexander the Great was known for his superb ability to kill and destroy. Julius Caesar was a guilty leader. All the Pharaohs of Egypt, and the Czars of Russian, and the Presidents of the US have been sinful people. There is only one sinless person who ever lived. Only one. One. The Righteous One.

◆ *“But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:1, 2, NIV.*

◆ Bow your heart before him today, friends. Love him, thank him, repent to him. Only he can overpower sin and evil you face at school, or home, or work. You and I cannot. He can. The gospel

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promise is that he will give you his righteousness when you trust him in faith.

◆2. Jesus is a saved king. *"your king comes...having salvation"*

◆Here's another thing the prophet Zechariah said about the coming king. Our English translates "having salvation", and others make it "bearing salvation" which sounds like it's something that he's coming to give to people. While that is true enough, Zechariah's words here are in the passive tense (niphil) meaning salvation is done to him. He is the "saved king", i.e. the continuing king, the lasting king, the undying king, the resurrected King that cannot die! Isaiah 53 said of him...

◆*"Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."* Isaiah 53:10, 11, NIV.

◆A. Jesus came to do more than be a historical king. Such a figure might give you peace for a while. But no kingdom lasts. All we have of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon is ruins. The supposedly impregnable city Tyre was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar for 13 years and lasted. But then Alexander destroyed it later. All we have of ancient Egypt

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and the Pharaohs are a few huge stone triangles impressive as they are. All we have of Rome, the longest reigning world power is excavations of broken down temples, theaters, and remnants of roads. Do any of us really think the United States of America will be any different than any other kingdom? No. Nothing lasts. Nothing lasts, except the grace of God and his kingdom. When the Roman governor Pilate asked a bound Jesus (later in this Holy Week) if he was a king he said,

◆“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”” John 18:36, 37, NIV.

◆B. There it is friends. If you want that hope that somehow life will turn out right, or righteous, you need to hook your wagon to this lasting king. The saved King. Do it today! Only this king has a rule that will last forever. This king can lead you through suffering with joy and hope, and even bring you back from the dead.

◆“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate,

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though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this." Acts 3:13-15, NIV.

◆ *"But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." Acts 2:24, NIV.*

◆ As Nebchadnezzar of Babylon put it in around 530 BC of Daniel's God, "For he is the living God and he endures for ever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end." Daniel 6:26, NIV. What power are you leaning on to change your life? Where are you hoping for improvement? Jesus is the king you want, the saved one that also brings salvation! Choose him.

◆ "so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Hebrews 9:28, NIV.

◆ **3. Jesus is a humble king.** *"he comes...gentle and riding on a donkey."*

◆ Recall that the context of Zechariah is all about destructive forces and warriors. In the middle of a passage about arrows, and trumpet blasts, and storms (v14) the prophet inserts a prediction of a prince of peace, "gentle" and "riding on a donkey". That's how we know he is humble.

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Proud warriors ride horses. About a thousand years before Christ, when King David's son Absalom wanted to usurp the throne from his father, he got a chariot, horses, and 50 men to run before him! (2Sam.15:1) It looks important that way. He told everyone he was better than his Dad.

◆The term "gentle" means "lowly" or "meek." It is not weakness. Meekness is power under kind control. Can you imagine the Mighty Thor walking behind a push-mower to help a friend? Or Iron Man waiting on tables at a restaurant? Or Captain America, shield on back, loading laundry into a washing machine? Each a powerful person not concerning himself with making a big deal out of himself. That's the kind of king that rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

◆A. Jesus did not come to make himself a famous king. Oh he is famous. There is no one whose fame is greater, but herein lies the paradox of it all. In all his greatness he turns his attention to everyone else! His every move was gentle love -from the throne room in heaven, to a crying baby boy in Bethlehem on Christmas morn, from a peasant girl, in a sheep shed, to a builders occupation, to a criminals death.

◆"Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he

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obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:5-11, NLT.

◆B. What is humility except love? Pride cannot truly love. It is always about itself! Proud people don't really notice anyone else. They look through you when they speak with you. But love is not proud, and therefore it isn't rude, or self-seeking. It is not easily angered and it keeps no records of wrong (1Cor.13:5). It sees you when speaking to you. And here we find the solution God calls us to in a world of sin and evil. "The first natural appeal to which the heart leaps is to strength, to manifest strength. The first hero is the warrior king (Hastings)." But Christ's humble, willing suffering of love is what overcomes evil. No war is ultimately won by strength, power, might. These battles may make people obey, but they don't change their hearts. The enemy still hates and fears. Abraham Lincoln is quoted as saying the best way to defeat your enemy is to make him your friend. **Pharaoh** did not change humanity. **Caesar** did not alter the hearts of men. It was Christ, absorbing our evil into himself and calling us his friends, that saved us. And it is our giving of love for evil that will bring life out of our battles (Rom.12:21).

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◆ Where are you trying to win by force, or pressure, or aggression? Take a clue from the humble king.

◆ **Conclusion:** So what kind of king is this? What must we see? We must see here the greatest of men and the worth he ascribes to your naked soul. In Christ we see the value God gives to the human life. That you have a creator that is intensely invested in your existence.

◆ How do you know? Because he is King. Your King. The King. And he comes righteous, saved and full of salvation, yet gentle and riding on a donkey. Riding on to die so your soul could join him in eternity. The empire of mankind belongs not to greatness, but to true goodness, not to power riding roughshod over men, but to love riding a donkey to give himself as a sacrifice for men. What kind of king is this? This is the Christ King.