

# Behold the King! – Zechariah

## Pastor Colin Rieke ~ April 13, 2014

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. <sup>10</sup> I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.



Dear fellow redeemed in the blood of the lamb,

What a day! What a day that first Palm Sunday would have been. What a day it would have been for Jesus, for his disciples, for the crowds, for the Pharisees. That was the kind of event that people would be talking about for a long time. Something special had happened, something amazing. From our gospel this morning we are told Jesus told two of his disciples to go and gather a donkey, untie it, and give the owners reason for their task, **“The master needs it.”** The disciples place their cloaks on top of donkey and Jesus gets up on it. Matthew makes sure to mention this is to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah. Then they began their short march to the city gates of Jerusalem. Crowds greeted them from Jerusalem shouting **“Hosanna in the highest...blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”** The whole city was made aware what was going on, and they asked who this was. **“It is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”**

But this event is not restricted to a certain time or a certain place. This was a time and place that was looked forward to by Jews for 400 years. And we can rejoice just as much as those first Palm Sunday worshipers. We can look forward to Palm Sunday and the Messiah arriving in Jerusalem just as much as they were. This grand procession was not limited by time or place because this king whom was worshiped was a far different than they knew or expected. That’s why we can BEHOLD THE KING!

1. A different kind of king
2. A different kind of kingdom

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Here is one very important thing to understand about the Jewish religion. It is all based around the promise of a Messiah. It was a promise that God gave in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve when they fell into sin. It was a promise that was repeated again and again. As the years went on, this promise became more and more specific. These specific attributes for the messiah were prophecies given by God so his people could recognize the Messiah when he would come. You can imagine there were some who tried to manipulate the crowds and convince them they were the Messiah. But with Jesus there was no manipulation. He was the Messiah, and throughout the duration of his life he proved that. One of the prophecies from the Old Testament even spoke about Palm Sunday. That is the prophecy we have before us in Zechariah.

Zechariah was one of the last of the Old Testament prophets. Much of the Old Testament had already been recorded. All of the people of Israel had been captured and deported – the ten northern tribes by the nation of Assyria never to be heard from again, and the two southern tribes of Judah had been captured by the Babylonians. But as God promised through earlier prophets, a remnant of Jews would return to the promised land and could rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Zechariah was around during that time, when the Jews returned to Jerusalem. His very name means “remember the Lord” or “the Lord remembers.” And throughout his ministry he reminded the people of both of these things.

And this prophecy we have before us was to give his people hope. Because they had lost it. Yes, they had returned Jerusalem, but things weren’t what they expected. The temple still hadn’t been rebuilt. The Israelites who had returned had a difficult time, and they may have even wondered if it was all even worth it. Zechariah reminds them why it was worth it. He points their eyes forward again to the Messiah who would make it worth it. And this is what he says,

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The prophecy of Zechariah was not lost on the people of Jerusalem when they saw Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. They were drawn back to this prophecy, they were drawn back to another prophecy from Isaiah, “**Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him.’**” And by his entry, Jesus showed not only that he was the Messiah, but that he was a different kind of king. A different kind of king than they were expecting.

First of all you must understand what they were expecting out of the Messiah. Based on the Old Testament prophecies, they were expecting a king, they were expecting a prophet, they were expecting a priest. And so they expectedly looked to their own examples of kings, their own examples of prophets, their own examples of priests, and concluded the Messiah must be like one of them. They were expecting an earthly king, an earthly prophet, an earthly priest. Someone who would throw out the dreaded Romans, someone who would feed them, someone who would do stuff for them is really what it boiled down to.

Jesus did not come to do any of that. Yes, he did miracles, but those were to point ahead to what he did come to do. He came in a humble and lowly way, there was nothing to draw us to him, we heard about that in the second lesson, about Jesus humility. He chose this humility even though he had every right to come in splendor and glory. He was born in a stable, to parents who were so poor they could only offer the most meager offering in the temple. In his ministry he served people. He constantly put the needs of other people above himself when he taught when he was tired, healed when he was exhausted. He never had a place to call home, all his earthly possessions he carried with him on his back. This is certainly a different kind of king.

He came to make peace, not looking to make war. This is brought out by Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey. It wasn’t that a donkey was just a poor man’s animal, it represented peace. A normal king

would ride into a city on a horse, representing his superiority in battle, Jesus didn't do that. Throughout Jesus' whole ministry he talked about peace. But not just a peace between nations, but a peace with God. This is certainly a different kind of king.

And finally what makes this king different is that he comes to you! Zechariah said, **"See, your king comes to you."** Don't overlook that simple phrase. Again, a usual king would sit on his throne and make his subjects come to him with their requests and their troubles. Instead, Jesus comes to you! He came to you, because he knew that you couldn't come to him. Not only did we not want to come to him, but we couldn't because of the vast gulf of sin which separated us from God. No, Jesus came down from heaven and came to you. This is certainly a different kind of king.

He didn't come with a "try harder next time" of "you should have listened to me" approach. He didn't come to make all of your problems disappear. He didn't come so that we could flaunt it in the faces of unbelievers. He came for when you and I didn't want him or didn't approve of him. He came for when you and I rejected him and his plan for us. He came for when you and I are feeling beaten down by life. He came not to make all our problems *disappear*, he came to make our Problem disappear. For what good would a perfect life on earth be if we didn't have eternal life? The Problem separating us from eternity was our sin. This is what makes Jesus a different kind of king.

He asks nothing from you, he makes no demands. He simply asks us to trust him. Because that humble, peaceful, coming-to-you king is God himself wrapped in human flesh. I remember hearing a story around Christmas time about a beggar in Iowa. In return for any change passing motorists gave to him, he handed them an envelope with a letter in it. The letter explained this beggar was in fact a CEO of a local company, and thanked them for their generosity. He would donate any of the proceeds he made as a beggar to a local shelter. At the bottom of the letter was a bill – ranging from \$10-\$100. The point of the story is not that we must give our change to God so we can be blessed by him. But instead, it's that God appeared as something he was not, to give us something we could never earn. This is a different kind of king.

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It would only be expected that a different kind of king would have a different kind of kingdom. And that is absolutely true. This kingdom is not as you or I might envision it. His kingdom is not what we would imagine our perfect government to be like. It's something different even from that.

Jesus' kingdom is different in that force is not used. Zechariah says, **"I will take away the chariots...and the warhorses...and the battle bow will be broken."** The usual things which we associate with a kingdom and a functioning society he will not use. It would be as if Jesus said today, "I will take away the police force and the firefighters and the military." Our first reaction might be, "Are you crazy, don't you know what people are going to do?" But in Jesus' kingdom, force will not be used, only his Word. This will make sense if you listen further. This is a different kind of kingdom.

Jesus' kingdom is different in that peace will reign from sea to sea, it will be proclaimed to all the nations. Certainly peace is something every government would want, but rarely sustain. Much of the peace we have in our world today is peace forged by fear of punishment. This isn't the peace God is talking about. The peace God is talking about is a special peace. It's peace the way the world should be.

It's peace the way God intended it. It is peace which is aligned with God and his ways. This is a different kind of kingdom.

The only problem with this different kind of kingdom is that it could never operate in the world as we know it. It could never happen in the world as we know it because the sinful nature runs rampant in this world and creates all of the problems we face in the first place. And so this kingdom is different in that it is not of this world. God certainly does have the power to create a kingdom in this world, but he has chosen not to. Instead, he has chosen to work in the hearts of believers – the true Israel, the true Zion. He has chosen people to be his own. And he has given them hope, the same hope given to the people in Zechariah's day.

BEHOLD THE KING who comes to you, righteous and having salvation, humble and riding on a donkey. This king is so much more than he appears, and his kingdom is far greater than we can ever imagine here on earth. It is a kingdom he talks about in Revelation 21, **"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"** He who was seated on the throne said, **'I am making everything new!'"** This is the king we wait for, this is the king we rejoice in! Hosanna in the highest! Amen.