

ZECHARIAH'S MESSIAH ON PALM SUNDAY
JESUS, THE KING OF PEACE – ZECHARIAH 9:9-10 & MATTHEW 21:1-11

INTRODUCTION:

The prophet Zechariah prophesied approximately 500 years before Jesus was born. He prophesied about many of the events of Jesus's life. His name means, "The Lord (Yahweh) remembers." "The Lord" is the personal, covenant name of God and is an ongoing testimony to his faithfulness to his promises.

In Zechariah's own day God would "remember" his covenant promises and takes action to fulfil them. He prophesied that God would restore his people after their exile in Babylon. He would also help the restored community rebuild the temple.

But Zechariah looked far ahead, past the events of his own day. His prophecies looked forwards hundreds of years to the day that the Messiah would come, and he prophesied about what God's messiah would be like and what he would come to earth to do.

Over this holy week, particularly at the main days of our celebrations – today [Palm Sunday] and then Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday we'll be looking at Jesus' life through Zechariah's prophecies, through Zechariah's eyes as it were.

PALM SUNDAY

We start today to see what Zechariah prophesied about Palm Sunday:

Let's **Read Zechariah 9:9-10** and it's fulfilment in **Matthew 21:1-11**

Zechariah prophesied about Jesus' Triumphal entry on a young donkey into Jerusalem. We call it Palm Sunday because one of the things that people did on that day was wave Palm branches in the air and lay them on the ground as part of their excitement of this big event that took place during the Jewish feast of Passover.

There are many truths that God would teach us from this passage. I'll focus on one lesson that I believe that Jesus exemplified in His life and that he would have us imitate in our own lives. The lesson is that we don't need power to rule the world. Fame isn't very useful either. The citizens of Jesus' Kingdom – the Kingdom of God would learn to walk in humility and peace. In this way, they would co-operate with Jesus to extend the influence of Palm Sunday far beyond the few hours of Jesus' journey in and out of Jerusalem.

Jesus was a King that came in power. And in fact the people in his last week thought that he would be the messiah that would restore power to the Jewish Nation. That power would enable them to throw off the yoke of Roman rule and become their own united, independent country. You see the Jews had been defeated and taken into captivity from 733BC. First by the Assyrians, then the Babylonians ruled them, then the Persians and Medes, then the Greeks, and now the Romans. For hundreds of years they had never known independence. They were tired of being oppressed. Now they had witnessed how one empire after another defeated each other. It had always been with war and war machines. They had high hopes that now

their time had come. Like David who took the tiny nation out of obscurity by military conquest, this Messiah, the son of David would do the same.

Now Jesus was a King and had come to set up His Kingdom. The kingdom of God. But boy oh boy were they in for a nasty surprise when he revealed what His kingdom would be like and how he would set it up. They expected him, aided by God, rise to power and conquer their oppressors. They were right about his power, but wrong about how he would use it.

We have many ideas of what power is. One way that we think of power is strength; might; brute force. Something that is stronger than others. The opposite of this is to be weak, feeble. In the establishment of their kingdoms, people use this type of power to rule others. It is used to overpower others. In war they defeat each other. They felt that that is all that the Romans would understand. The Messiah needed this type of power to establish God's Kingdom. Maybe he would not oppress anyone, but once he had established his kingdom, the whole world would think twice about messing with the Jews. They would enjoy decades of peace and prosperity.

But there is another way to think of power, and that is power is influence. The ability to shape people's thoughts, their behaviour. It can be a negative influence, but we'll focus on the positive aspect of power as influence. The word 'influence' is an interesting word. One origin is from Latin. The Latin word, 'influere', from in- 'into' + fluere 'to flow'. One of its uses was in astrology. In late 14c., it was used as an astrological term where it described the "streaming of otherworldly power from the stars when they were in certain positions into people's lives, and acted on character or destiny of men,". That's where the ideas of astrology comes from – primitive medieval people once believed that the movements of the stars and planets somehow caused strange power to flow towards people on earth and shaped their characters and destinies – i.e. they were being 'influenced' by the stars. Strangely in our modern age, people still believe in horoscopes and astrology.

Now as we use the word today, the word influence has been stripped of its astrological superstitions and describes a type of 'power' - the power to exert some control over something and someone. This is the power that Jesus had come with. He intended to use his power, the power of his position, and his example to shape a world whose ideas of power had been perverted by associating power with might and strength. Let's jump into Zechariah's prophecy and see what Zechariah said the Messiah, Jesus would come to do:

HIS POSITION – HE IS THE KING

- “See, your king comes to you” – Zechariah 9:9

A king is usually a monarch that rules over a kingdom. A kingdom is a very specific kind of government. It's the rule by one individual – the king. Zechariah prophesied that God would send them a king – His king, and what was more it would be his kind of king.

Zechariah called Jesus 'your King'. He was called the King of the Jews. He was called the king of Israel – their one true king.

In a Kingdom a king has all authority. It was not a democracy where everyone had a voice. In general there was only one voice – the voice of the king. Now that is a lot of power to be concentrated in one person. In fact it was downright dangerous – if that king was a wicked or cruel king. He could oppress his people, and plunder the coffers. Now in recent history we

may not have had 'kings' but we have had dictators who exercised totalitarian control. In one lifetime they managed to ruin their own countries. The Jews had kings like that in the past. But that would not be the case here because of the second thing that Zechariah prophesied about this King – He would be a King who was both 'just' or 'righteous', and 'gentle' or 'humble'.

HIS CHARACTER – RIGHTEOUS AND HUMBLE

1. The King Would be Righteous

- righteous [just, lawful, righteous] and having salvation ['he comes triumphant and victorious' – GNB]

He was a righteous king. The whole of human history is littered with the reputations of leaders who were evil. Israel itself in the chronologies of its kings had a really mixed bag of leaders. Some were good and some were just downright wicked. Jesus, on the other hand loved righteousness. He is the righteous King.

- Hebrews 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

Another way of translating the word here is 'just'. He would see that there would be justice for his citizens. There would be no class wars. No person preferred above another. There would be equality for everyone. All would be treated with dignity.

2. The King would be Humble

- gentle ['humble'; 'lowly'; 'poor' – NKJV] – Zechariah 9:9
- gentle – Matthew 21:5. Mild; meek, humble

Humility is a rare commodity today. Zechariah prophesied that the King would "have salvation". That phrase can also mean as the GNB says – "he comes triumphant and victorious". That's the kind of achievement that can produce arrogance and pride in one's life. But Jesus, despite his many accomplishments would not allow any of this to change his character. In everything he would remain gentle and humble.

Now Jesus wanted to make a statement on Palm Sunday, and Zechariah prophesied that he would make a grand statement. How would Jesus do this? Would he call for the angels to appear in the skies and give him a trumpet blast? Pamparumpumpahhhh! No. He would act out a parable. It's like Jesus was playing a game of charades . It was a live object lesson. That would be the Status Symbol that Zechariah's King would use. I wonder if given the status symbol of anything in the world with unlimited power and access to all of the world's wealth, what we would choose today? Many would choose fancy clothes; expensive clothes. We may drive big expensive cars. We want people to know we've arrived. We are successful. "Sit up and take notice of us", we may be tempted to say. "Give us the respect and recognition we deserve". Instead of this, Jesus's grand statement would communicate his humility. In a world where we want our leaders to dress up, Jesus dressed down.

- Isa 53:2 He had no dignity or beauty to make us take notice of him. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing that would draw us to him.

What then was his 'status symbol'?

HIS STATUS SYMBOL – A YOUNG BEAST OF BURDEN – HE HAD COME TO SERVE

- “and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” – Zechariah 9:9

Zechariah predicted that the king would come riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. A colt is a young male donkey. Here is a picture of a foal with it's mother.



It's actually quite cute. Even grown donkey's are not very fearsome. Compare this picture of a donkey to that of a horse.



There's quite a difference in size. I'd be intimidated by a horse, not by a donkey, let alone a foal. Here's a picture of what was common in society, a military leader on a war horse.



Look at the how that horse makes that general look ten times more intimidating. That man would not look so fearful without that horse. Now look at the picture of Jesus.



You see, the reason that Jesus used the donkey as a 'status symbol' is that it was an animal that matched his own temperament.

The phrase 'the foal of a donkey' in Matthew 21:5, literally means "son of a beast-of-burden". It was a beast used to carry people's burdens. Note the irony here: the foal was the 'son' of a beast of burden, Jesus too was a 'son' who had come to bear our burdens – the burden of our sin. There were many more parallels between that donkey and Jesus, all of which communicated the type of King that he had come to be. He was one without status, as defined by us. Donkeys were known as the wheelbarrows of the ancient world. They were animal servants employed by people. Jesus himself said he had not come to demand our loyalty and put us to work. Instead he had come to serve. He lived his life finding out what needs people may have and then he met those needs as only he could. As Jesus rode that young donkey, he would not have been raised very far above the crowds that surrounded him. An average-height person would be able to look him in the eye. He had not come to 'lord it over people'. He was one with us. He was the Saviour of the common man. God was now within reach of every one of us. All these qualities and more Jesus was communicating in his live object lesson as he rode into Jerusalem. He had not come for war, but for peace. He had not come as a proud, intimidating, high-minded nobleman. He had come to serve us. He was gentle, and he was humble.

HIS FUTURE MISSION – WORLD PEACE

Now all of the gospels end the prophecy with Zechariah 9:9, though Zechariah 9:10 is directly linked to it. It reads as follows:

- Zec 9:10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses 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.

1. **Disarmament:** “Zec 9:10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem,
2. **Proclaim Peace to all nations:** Mic 4:3 He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. He will help countries with long history of war be reconciled to each other.
3. **A global rule:** His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.” – Finally what miss Congeniality wanted in the movie by that title, ‘**world** peace’

CONCLUSION:

Now we consider the question we looked at in the beginning. What type of power had Jesus come to rule with. It wasn't strength or might as perhaps we would if we were in his shoes. He had power over the wind and waves. He commanded the armies of heaven and had an army of mighty angels at his disposal all through his life. As God he occupied the highest, most, important, most glorious position that exists. Yet he did not choose this as the way in which he would exercise his power. He would use his influence for the good of others. He would use the power of his character. The power of his example. He refused to use violence in any form to further his purposes. He refused to use his incredible might to oppress those who disagreed with him. He never beat anyone into submission. He refused to use the opportunity of his position for self-enrichment. These are all things that customarily we as human beings have a history of being unable to resist when we are handed large amounts of power.

The real test is, has Jesus' approach been effective? As we look at the world today, we hardly want to imagine a world without Jesus. What would the world have been like if the gentle Galilean had not intervened? The prophet Daniel predicted a world at war. For centuries there would be one empire ruling after another and using military might to accomplish their conquests. But then there would be a kingdom, established by God himself that would bring to an end the oppression of human rule and offer us an alternative (Daniel 2:44). That was the kingdom that Jesus had come to establish.

Has it changed humanity? I believe it has. Here's one example from the life of Dwight Moody:

“D.L. Moody was the most famous evangelist in the world in the late 1800s. People came from around the world to attend his Bible Conferences in Northfield, Massachusetts. One year a large group of pastors from Europe were among the attendees. They were given rooms in the dormitory of the Bible school. As was the custom in Europe, the men put their shoes outside the door of their room, expecting them to be cleaned and polished by servants during the night.

Of course, there were no servants in the American dorm, but as Moody was walking through the halls and praying for his guests, he saw the shoes and realized what had happened. He mentioned the problem to a few of his students, but none of them offered to help. Without another word, the great evangelist gathered up the shoes and took them back to his own room where he began to clean and polish each pair. Moody told no one what he had done, but a friend who interrupted him in the middle of shining the shoes and helped him finish the task later told the story of what had happened. Despite the praise and fame he received because of God's blessing on his life and ministry, Moody remained a humble man”.

I believe that many people who follow Jesus today have made similar decisions like Dwight Moody to follow Jesus' example. That's why we know that Jesus in all his wisdom came with great power, the power to influence us to walk with humility on earth as citizens of his Kingdom.