

Scripture: Zechariah 9:9-10

Sermon: "Your King Comes"

Text: Zechariah 9:9b -- "Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble, and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass."

Proposition: The prophet Zechariah's description of the Messiah was fulfilled by Jesus. It points to mankind's constant struggle to maintain humility and peace while experiencing success and victory, a balance which is necessary if the kingdom of Christ is to be widely established.

Dates written: March 29-April 3, 1971.

Dates and places used:

April 4, 1971 (PALMSUNDAY) - OAKLAND PARK, FL

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For the [unclear] [unclear]

Introduction:

1. The German physicist Konrad Roentgen received a letter from a man who asked him to send him a few x-rays with instructions on how to use them, for he was too busy to come and see him personally, but he had a bad ~~throat~~ ^{disease} which needed treating.

Roentgen replied: "I'm sorry, but just now I'm out of rays. Besides, it's very hard to send them by parcel post. Why don't you mail me your thorax?"

The point that makes such a story funny, if you get the point, is that the contradictions in it are so obvious. X-rays are not tangible objects but a form of energy, and, of course, cannot be handled and mailed, any more than a man can take out his thorax, or chest part of his body, to mail to somebody.

2. The Scripture that we read, Zechariah 9:9-10, and the New Testament passages about Jesus on the first Palm Sunday, seem contradictory and impossible too. Who ever heard of a king riding on an ass, a donkey, as a sign of his kingship? The ass was about the most common poor man's beast

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in the world, then and now. Warriors and kings usually rode on beautiful and strong horses, usually called war-horses because they were trained to remain steady and not panic in battle. Because this passage from Zechariah is so closely related with the traditional Palm Sunday passages in Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:29-44, and John 12:12-15, it is helpful to us in understanding the significance of Palm Sunday if we first know more about ~~Zechariah~~ this more ancient but similar Scripture in Zechariah. To do so, we need to know

I. The situation at the time of this Scripture;

1. This Scripture was written during the time of the great warrior Alexander the Great. He had administered a decisive defeat to Darius, the Persian emperor, at the Battle of the Issus in southeastern Asia Minor in October 333 B.C. Instead of immediately pursuing Darius toward the east, the conqueror moved south through Syria, with the aim of first seizing Egypt from the Persians. Within the year all Syria was in his hands, and shortly afterward

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Egypt fell without a struggle. These are among the most important events in world history. The little Jewish community in Jerusalem, located in the hills a few miles east of Alexander's line of march, saw in them the working of the mighty hand of God.

2. The ~~XXXXXX~~ first 8 verses of the 9th chapter of Zechariah, written while all this was happening ~~still~~, point to the coming destruction of Tyre, a city which was considered almost impregnable until Alexander took it, and to the capture and destruction of other cities of the area. Most of the towns and places mentioned were ^{UNTIL THEN} parts of the Persian empire, which had oppressed the Jewish people terribly, ~~so~~ the prophet saw God's hand at work in the forces of Alexander the Great, to bring them deliverance. Part of the evidence was that the destruction of the present war so far had passed Jerusalem by. Further, the words just preceding this Scripture of today express the faith that Jerusalem will be spared. We don't need to go further into this history of the time, but to consider the way that Zechariah foresees God working to save his people

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The way God will save his people from this situation is a prelude to the way God ultimately will save all people, ~~through Jesus Christ~~ many people think the prophet was saying. This salvation eventually came about through Jesus Christ, say we Christians. Let us, then, look at

II. The relationship of Zechariah 9:9-10 to the traditional Palm Sunday passages in The New Testament.

1. ~~By~~ A businessman said to his friend, "Since I have my new car I don't have to walk to the bank to make my deposits."

"Oh," said his friend. "Now you drive over, eh?"

"No," said the first. "Now I don't make any deposits."

(from Quote, 3-28-71)

There was a definite relationship between ~~why~~ the new car purchase and why the man couldn't make any more deposits: he had to pay for the car!

2. There is a definite relationship between Zechariah's insight into the way Israel was to be saved and what actually happened in Jesus Christ, too.

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II. The relationship of Technical 9:
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Zechariah predicted that the king who would save Judah, or Israel, and its capital Jerusalem and the surrounding neighborhood, would come "triumphant and victorious", but humble and riding on a colt the foal of an ass." This was a contradiction: triumphant and victorious kings usually rode war-horses, the very best, and often were quite arrogant and cruel. This contradiction was predicted once before in Jewish scripture, in our Bible, and Zechariah probably knew of it. It is in the 49th chapter of Genesis, verses 10 and 11, where Jacob is telling his 12 sons their future. He tells Judah that he shall be praised, he shall overcome his enemies, and so on, but at the same time warns him to keep humble and close to the people and their ways: "Binding his foal to the vine and his ass's colt to the choice vine." Zechariah predicted that the king who should save Judah and/or Israel now would be a savior in that same spirit described of old. Although hailed as king, he would be humble and non-demanding for himself personally, and would live like anybody else: such as riding on an ass, or a colt of a donkey.

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3. The four New Testament accounts of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday have him riding on the same kind of animal described by Zechariah for his savior. The conditions are those toward which Zechariah looked. So Christians have seen Zechariah's words as a prediction of the coming of Christ. It may have been. ~~Evidently~~ Christ no doubt would have been well aware of Zechariah's words, as a good student of the scriptures. He certainly did not pretend to be a military conqueror who was of any threat to either the Roman government or the Jewish leaders. The people who saw him that day as he entered Jerusalem on the ass ^{PROBABLY} saw in him the figure predicted long ago by Zechariah.

4. There are some contradictions indicated in this picture of a king on a donkey. We've hinted at them somewhat, but let's look more closely now at

III. The contradictions shown in the Scripture for then and for now.

1. Victory and humility are linked in this account, as we've mentioned.

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11. The contradictions shown in the picture for then and for now.

1. Victory and royalty are linked in this account, as we've mentioned.

A king successful in guarding his people against capture by the most-dreaded conquerer of history was certainly one who could take pride in his accomplishments and who could expect much praise and recognition for his accomplishments. Yet, Zechariah saw that king coming into town like any poor farmer, on an ass, a young one at that (a foal). This is a contradiction, something not ^{USUALLY} in keeping with the total set of circumstances.

2. Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the example and leader for all mankind, the object of adoration and praise, surely would not have had to humble himself in the way he did, riding the ass. But he did. This is indeed a contradiction.

3. Even though the king whom Zechariah predicted was to be king of the Jews, and even though Jesus was described that way, they were both to be for the benefit of all mankind too. This is definitely a note in both the prophet and in the New Testament writers. This is a contradiction, in a way. In a time when mankind is divided into nations and countries, as it was then and is now, how can one king be to both

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a nation and to all mankind. One ^{Notion} might accept him but others would suspect him.

4. There are, indeed, contradictions in the type of king expected by Zechariah, and in the type of Messiah that Jesus turned out to be as shown on the first Palm Sunday. The contradictions show that things don't always turn out as you might expect them to.

5. Like the retiring president of a university told his successor: "Of course, you'll pay attention to your A and B students. Some of them may return to the campus later on as a first-rate professor. But don't ignore the C students either. Some day one of them may build you a five-million dollar science laboratory!" (Quote, 3-28-71) ~~Because~~ it often is true that the top students continue on in the academic world, while the ones with lower grades get into the rough and tumble of the competitive world and make a lot of money, thereby becoming what most people term as "successful." **This** seems contradictory, but it does happen that way quite often.

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6. ~~Such~~ unexpected ~~results~~ results come from the contradictions seen in the donkey-borne king of the Bible. Let us look now at

IV. The meaning of these contradictions for mankind (of all times), as they show God's command for a balance in life.

1. One meaning ^{COULD BE} ~~surely~~ is that he who is a leader, a ruler, and ~~an~~ official, a boss, should think of his position not as a spot in which to enrich himself or to get the thrill of exercising power. Rather, ~~his~~ ^{his} is a position ~~in~~ which to serve other people. This can be done better by identifying with ~~other~~ people. Most people live rather simply and plainly and don't show off a great deal. A successful and powerful person who can act and live similarly surely identifies ~~with~~ with the people he wants to help (much better). The way of people and animals is to lord it over ~~2~~ those who do not fare as well. ~~But~~ the way of God is not that, ~~and~~ Jesus showed us God's way, ~~for him~~ and ~~for us~~.

2. Jesus' ~~humility~~ humility on the donkey pointed out also that even in a moment

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2. Jesus' humility on the donkey
pointed out also that even in a moment

of recognition as lord and king, he was expecting to be misunderstood, and, in effect not accepted. Witness that immediately after his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he began clashing with the Pharisees, scribes, elders and priests in such ways that they were quickly successful in getting the Roman governor, Pilate, to acquiesce in having him put to death. We too need to remember that even when we feel the most exhuberant and on top of the world may be just the time when we are about to be let down the hardest. Instead of making us paranoically fearful, however, such realism should help us to be more determined to do all that we can for what we consider right in the time that we do have.

3. At his birth and on Palm Sunday Jesus was proclaimed "Prince of Peace", in some ways. Yet, peace has never prevailed for long, and didn't while he was on earth. This seems contradictory, until you remember that ^{CHRISTIAN} many people who are involved in the turmoil and wars of their times also seem calm and peaceful. Then you can see that most of such people are followers of the Prince of Peace, and that such peace is

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inward and personal. Even though we strive for outward peace, for the absence of war, ^{FOR THE REMOVAL OF} friction between individuals and groups, ~~and~~ outward peace comes as a result of the efforts of people ~~xxx~~ who are inwardly confident of their meaning to God, and who do not fight themselves of others.

Conclusion:

1. We could go on in more detail trying to arrive at ~~the~~ a historic understanding of Zechariah's prophecy ^{AS RELATED TO} and the events of the first Palm Sunday. We hope that we have made it clear that the prophet Zechariah's descriptions of the hoped-for Messiah was fulfilled by Jesus, for we believe it was.

2. We believe that this ~~Messiah~~, this king, this Christ, ~~xxxxxxx~~ this figure of a great one riding on the most humble transportation, points to mankind's constant struggle to maintain humility and peace even while experiencing success and victory.

3. A balance of success and victory with humility and peace is necessary if the Kingdom of Christ is to be ever

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4. In your life and mine, then, let us struggle to keep the common touch, as Rudyard Kipling put it, even tho we walk with kings and enjoy kingly pleasures.!

Your king comes riding on a donkey!

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