

## Thy King Cometh

*“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9).*

Is it not incredible that the Jews should have failed to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, especially in view of the literal and detailed fulfillment of the above prophecy? How could such a thing happen? The fact that blindness can be so deep, and darkness so dense as to fail to perceive such obvious realities is frightening. For we all share the common ancestry of Adam with the Jews, and are in no wise exempt from earning for ourselves the same strong delusion they suffered by their wicked unbelief.

Probably the single most effective factor that activated this blindness to their Messiah's presence was a materialistic expectation on their part. They had the idea of an earthly king and kingdom, with all its political power, carnal riches and glory, commercial peace and prosperity so fixed in their minds, that they were utterly unprepared to recognize or even consider the spiritual realities displayed before their very eyes. That delusion has been passed on to the Gentiles, and is yet with us today.

There are two entirely different lines of thought that flow from diametrically opposed ideas of Christ's kingdom. These lines of thought affect much more than just views of the second coming of the Lord and end-time events. They spill over into the nature of salvation itself, of the purpose and quality of Christian living, of the nature of the Christian church and its role with, and relation to, the world in which it exists. All who hold one or the other of the respective ideas do not necessarily hold to the corresponding ramifications, but that is generally because they do not think their views through to their ultimate and inevitable conclusions.

There is a system, widely subscribed to, especially in this country, popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible and Premillennial Bible conferences, which teaches that Jesus' appearance in Jerusalem on the ass's colt was only an offer of Himself as King. He was rejected, we are told, and was compelled to postpone His kingdom to a future time after the church would be taken out. At that time, He would come again, and with the saints, set up a political, visible, worldly kingdom in Jerusalem, much like the old Hebrew system, with a restored temple, with all the attendant sacrifices and rituals of a past dispensation.

One can readily see how such ideas run afoul of all sorts of truth taught in the gospel of God's grace. But it is not my purpose in this paper to focus on those problems. For the purposes of the present, I am willing to grant that such a thing might be true. I am willing to admit my ignorance and blindness in being unable to see how such a thing can be consistent with the new covenant. I must, however, confess that such a prospect brings no joyous expectation to me. The whole thing smells of the rags of Rome, vestiges of the Constantinian merger of Church and State. The daughters of the great whore still have a hankering to rule the secular affairs of a world political system like their ancient mother, and imagine that Christ will fulfill their wish. But I have no personal aspirations to take any part in any kind of political power over any part of this earth. And I am utterly unable to see how enacting such a drama and display of carnal power can in any way enhance the glory of Him Who has already triumphed over the last enemy and has put all principalities and powers under His feet. What are the rebel hearts of dust and ashes together with all their rotting and rusting earthly trinkets compared to these? To me, it seems that our risen and glorified Lord would have to undergo another humiliation to stoop to be the King of a political entity of this earth. Nevertheless, if God has so decreed that this shall come to pass, I have no quarrel with the wisdom of the Ancient of Days. So be it.

I do, however, resolutely object to the allegation that Christ's entry in to Jerusalem on the back of a donkey was *only* an offer of Himself as King and that was what the Jews rejected. The Bible gives no such testimony! His kingdom was not postponed but immediately set up. *The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified* (John 12:23). *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out”* (John 12:31). His entry into Jerusalem was not an offer (no such thing is implied in the Scriptures), but a proclamation. *“Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest”* (Luke 19:38). If any should doubt the inspiration of this divine proclamation, *“He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out”* (Luke 19:40).

The prophecy of Zechariah declares the will of our sovereign God. *“And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth”* (Zechariah 9:10). It is conceivable that an Armenian, who think feeble men may thwart the purpose of Almighty God, can believe that God was forced to back down on His word. But how can a person who believes that God conquers the stubborn will of every elect sinner, think that He is forced to compromise His expressed decree concerning His Son's kingdom? The peace of the Kingdom is immediate upon the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and His proclamation as King.

Jesus was not rejected. He was heartily and joyfully accepted by His people. There were, of course, rebels who refused to “have this man reign over them”, as there always have been and always will be. Even when rebels are compelled to bow the knee to Him, they will go to hell with rebel hearts. But the fact that a king has rebels in his domain does not invalidate his authority or weaken his dominion. Indeed, it is the essence of “dominion” to dominate those who would rise up against constituted authority. The king exists, to a great degree, because of the presence of rebellion and the need for government.

Let us make no mistake about this. Christ's kingdom exists now. It is synonymous with the Church, spiritual Israel, Zion, City of our God, Daughter of Zion. He rules as absolute Monarch in this world right now, and His redeemed elect rule with Him. All has been put under His feet except He Who put all things under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:27), and He must reign until every rebel is

subdued (1 Corinthians 15:25). The difficulty of persons to the receiving of this truth is their misconception of the Kingdom. They are still thinking like the Jews. They have materialistic expectations when they ought to be looking at present spiritual realities.

The Kingdom and salvation are inseparable. Salvation is in receiving the King, in wholehearted bowing of the knee to Him and His sovereign rule. Damnation and destruction result from rebellion against the King. Both are going on at this time, as it is in any earthly kingdom. The King is our Saviour. And you may not have a Saviour without that Saviour being your King.

Perhaps it will be helpful for us to see the present spiritual reality of Christ's kingdom if we draw some contrasts between it and the kingdoms of this world. We might also be dismayed to notice how the Christian church has corrupted herself by taking on the characteristics of this world's kingdoms.

**1. The kingdoms of this world are material, political, carnal, sensual, fleshy and outward.** They identify themselves with emblems, flags, badges, documents (constitutions), creeds and statutes. These are all outward marks, devised and manufactured by men, to be seen and appreciated by the mortal eye. The goals and objectives of these kingdoms have to do with the pursuit and preservation of the outer man, his sensual pleasures and carnal will.

**The kingdom of our Christ is spiritual, heavenly, divine, holy, inward and invisible to the carnal eye.** It is identified only by the seal of the Holy Spirit, that which is in God's power alone to give (John 6:27, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30, 2 Corinthians 1:22). Men adopt emblems such as crosses, fish, doves, flags, books. They learn and quote doctrine, incorporate it into their constitutions and bylaws. They institute creeds and statutes. But all these are borrowed from the kingdoms of this world, and do not distinguish the kingdom of our Lord. The goal and objective of His kingdom is realized in spiritual regeneration of the inner man and outward transformation of the whole person. That is salvation. Christ reigns in the hearts of His people, and this is demonstrated in their triumph over the carnal and devilish powers at work in this world.

**2. The kingdoms of this world are established and maintained by the power of the sword in physical violence, malignance and bloodshed.** Their greatest dynamic for victory is hate, prejudice and tyranny. These United States of America were established, like all other nations on this earth, on the blood of men who were inflamed to hate and mercilessly destroy their enemy. A war can be won no other way. The enemy (which is simply other people like ourselves) must be pictured as subhuman vermin to be exterminated. Men know of no other means of obtaining power than by crushing other men.

**The kingdom of our Lord is a non-violent one.** Love is His conquering power, and peace reigns in every heart. Zechariah's prophecy has the war chariots cut off, the cavalry retired, the battle bow laid down and peace spoken to the Gentiles. The prophecy of Isaiah tells us that in His reign, nations shall "*beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks . . . neither shall they learn war any more*" (Isaiah 2:2-4). Christ enjoins us to return good for evil, to love our enemies and bless our persecutors, to turn the other cheek and go the second mile. He comes not to destroy, but to save men's lives.

**3. In men's kingdoms the greatest and most powerful rule, and all others serve them.** If you are meek and humble, you will be a servant and relegated to the realm of the insignificant and contemptible. If you would be served, you must rise to the top on the necks of your peers. In this order of things, men revere, adore and admire the one who uses, plunders and enslaves them and despise those who serve them.

**In Christ's kingdom greatness comes with servitude.** Jesus, Lord and Master, girds Himself with a towel and scrubs His disciples' filthy feet. He gives His life and His body in the service of redeeming His brethren from their sins. It is not without significance that He calls those in whose care He puts His flock, "ministers" (servants). He who would aspire to greatness in this kingdom is the one who serves most. The cadre of big-shots dressed in their official robes or unofficial finery, flaunting their high living which has been wrung from the pittance of hard-working people, living their lives of ease, surrounded by people waiting on them hand and foot, never raising a callous on either hand or foot, whose hearts are not daily pierced in the care of their charge – these are not the servants of our Lord in His kingdom. They belong to the kingdoms of this world.

**4. The kingdoms of this world are characterized by immorality, injustice, inequity and oppression.** The strong prey on the weak. The lion eats the lamb. The big fish eats the medium fish, the medium fish eats the little fish; the little fish eats the minnow; the minnow eats grass. Power and advantage are taken as occasion to plunder the weak and vulnerable.

**It is not so in the kingdom of our Lord. In His kingdom is justice, equity, mercy and self-giving.** "*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*" (Isaiah 11:6-9).

A young Christian couple who got married, had little money, had no furniture, and poor prospects of obtaining any. Seeing an estate auction advertised, they determined to attend and see if they could purchase a few needed things. A snowstorm preceded the sale, and few people were in attendance. To their amazement, they were able to purchase almost everything they needed for ridiculously low bids. There were simply no bidders to bring the price up. To use a popular figure of speech, they "made a steal". So they went home rejoicing. But their joy was short-lived. They had broken no laws; their purchases were legitimate; they were the rightful owners of all they carried off. They had made the highest bid. But they had a King other than the kings of this world to give account to. Their King had come and they must heed Him. And He does not allow the subjects of His kingdom to take advantage of someone else's misfortune. In this case the "misfortune" was the snowstorm which He sent. So the couple went back to the widow whose estate was sold and told her, "We are Christians, and it is not right for us to profit by your loss. We know that we bought the furnishings legally and they are legally ours. But they are worth much more than we paid you. We do not have the money now to pay you what they are worth, but we want you to know that we will make up the difference."

That is the way this King rules His subjects, and that is the nature of His Kingdom. What a contrast to the greedy, merciless, power-grabbers of this world preying on the weak. Religious newsletters abound telling “Christians” how they can profit by disasters, inflation, deflation, commodity fluctuations and other people’s losses in the stock markets! Does one stop and think that for every unearned dollar he grabs, someone else lost as much? That is the dog-eat-dog system of this world. If a man is down, pick his pockets while he has no defense. If he gets up, he may pick yours. The lion eats the lamb. It is not so in Christ’s kingdom! The weak and vulnerable have nothing to fear from the strong and powerful. They have both met their King and they both bow together before His throne.

- 5. In the kingdoms of this world, the subjects enrich the king.** He enters his office, promising to make everyone prosperous and happy. But when he leaves, his pockets are full, his subjects’ emptied and their condition more miserable. It is true of all the world’s national leaders. And it is true of the politicians within each system. They always come out much richer than when they went in – at the expense of their subjects.

**But in the kingdom of our Lord, the King enriches His subjects.** *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).* He Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His Own blood has made us kings and priests unto God (Revelation 1:5-6). He has *“begotten us to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven” (1 Peter 1:3-4).*

- 6. In this world’s kingdoms, the subject die for the king.** The ward of this world are instigated and prosecuted by power-mad rulers, greedy bankers and businessmen out to enlarge their empires or protect their investments. They delude the public with their lying propaganda and then squander the blood of our sons to achieve their selfish ends. There is a very simple device that would end all wars. But it will never be employed. If one government has a quarrel with the other, then let the presidents, prime ministers, kings, congressmen and ruling party leaders arm themselves and fight it out. But they will not do that. They will have our children murdered to save their own skins.

**In our Lord’s kingdom, the King gives His life for the subjects.** *“The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep” (John 10:11).* *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15).*

- 7. The peoples of this world choose their own king.** They make him king. Even where there is no “democracy”, no despot may take or maintain his throne without the popular consent of the ruled. Jesus refused to allow this to be done to Him (John 6:15).

**In Christ’s kingdom He simply reveals Himself as King.** It is the way of salvation. When He looked less like a king than at any time during His earthly sojourn, hanging on a cross, the dying thief saw Him as his Sovereign (Luke 23:42).

- 8. Submission and loyalty are obtained from the subjects of this world’s kingdom by carnal means.** On the one hand, they are suppressed by laws and fear of punishment and deprivation of property or liberties. On the other hand, their obedience and good will are bought with the promise of carnal rewards, mammon and praises of men.

**But those whose King is Christ submit freely in joyous adoration.** When I first saw a certain man, he was the picture of misery and unhappiness, a man laboring under a heavy burden of inward distress. A chain smoker, he could hardly sit through a church service before getting out for a smoke. The flushed tone of his face betrayed his abuse of alcohol. I saw him next in a Bible conference, sitting erect, a tape recorder by his side, his eyes and ears fixed on the preacher, intently devouring the Word of God. I hardly recognized him when we met the next time. His face was the picture of peace, joy and rest. Gone was the anxiety, the uncertainty, and it their place quiet repose in Christ. They told me what had happened. His King had come. He went home and emptied his liquor cabinet, opened bottle after bottle of expensive alcoholic beverages and poured them all down the sink. Then he picked up a costly television and “entertainment center”, carried it out and chopped it to pieces with an axe. In his previous state, laws, threats and bribes could not have taken this man’s crutches from him. But when his King came, these relics from dead men’s graves were worse than useless. This is the way Christ reigns in the hearts of His people.

- 9. Some of the kingdoms of this world are small and some are large, but they all have boundaries.** They may reach to the wall, the river, even the sea, but they go so far and no further. Another king reigns in an adjoining nation, which is always a threat that never permits rest.

**The kingdom of our Christ is universal.** It includes all of theirs. His is the *“stone cut out of the mountain without hands”* that *“smites the image”* and *“fills the whole earth”* (Daniel 2:34-35). It breaks and consumes all other kingdoms (Daniel 2:44). No earthly power can have dominion over those whose Sovereign is Christ. He gives a freedom that none can abridge, and has earned a loyalty that no power in the universe can corrupt. The caesars, popes, the “kings of the earth”, the “merchant men” and all the harlot’s daughters have tried and failed. His righteousness covers the earth as waters cover the sea. He is “set down” on His throne. Victory is His and He rests, unthreatened, for all other powers have been put under His feet.

- 10. The kingdoms of this world are temporal.** Mortal men die. Cultures and ethical systems corrupt and fade and decay. They fall and others take their place.

**Christ’s kingdom is eternal.** A thousand years? No! Forever and ever! *“And in those days shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever”* (Daniel 2:44). Would that be the “kingdom of God” or the “kingdom of heaven”? It is the *God of Heaven* Who sets up the kingdom. And Jesus Christ, Who is the King of Heaven, is its King.

Our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, together with the events leading up to it, afford us an opportunity to observe the various reactions to His proclamation as King. No king is universally received and loved. A sovereign’s appearance is an

occasion for joy for some, anger for others, disappointment for others, and frustration for yet others. It would be helpful if we could admit to ourselves into which category we fit.

**There are the disappointed.** At the supper in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6-15), Judas learned that the kingdom to come was not the one he had counted on to further his fortunes. This Man from Whom he was expecting an exalted place in one of this world's kingdoms was about to die. So he did what many do who have their carnal expectations unfulfilled in Christianity. He sold out for the best price he could get. If a man is a fool to gain the whole world and lose his soul in the deal, how much more the one who sells it for 30 pieces of silver? Yet every man who refuses to bow to his King sells out for less than that.

**There are the frustrated.** The Pharisees, fuming among themselves, sensed their utter inability to stop Him. *“Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him.”* Ironically, they uttered more wisdom and truth in that explosion of disgust than in all their clever scheming. Those who oppose this King can never prevail. It is as if their opposition did not even exist. This Man is going to reign over the whole world, and every knee will bow to Him.

**There are the angry belligerents.** The chief priests, their hearts set on murdering this Man Who was delivering people from their power, were unconvinced by the resurrection of Lazarus. Mad with rage and unbelief, they plotted to kill him also (John 12:10-11), because of his powerful testimony of the deity of Christ. Established religion will ever be at war with the Lamb and His saints. But this King will subject their natural wickedness to His sovereign good purpose. He Whom they killed was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23).

**There are the indifferent,** from whom He gets unwitting obedience. Those who were either the owners or had charge of the donkey Jesus sent for, made no protest to the simple *“The Lord hath need of him.”* The donkey, which had never been ridden, meekly submitted to the will of his Creator. This King *“doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”* (Daniel 4:35) All creation belongs to Him, and He will appropriate it for His purposes any time He pleases.

**There are the wittingly committed to serving the King.** His disciples, when told to go and pick up a donkey in such and such a place (Mark 11:2-6), given no money to buy or rent the animal, given no explanation whatever, without question went where the Lord sent and loosed the animal and led him away. We, who should serve and obey Him perfectly, must learn to trust Him fully. We shall learn that the questions we had about His wisdom were foolish, the fears about the outcome of our obedience unfounded, and the outcome He promised certain. We can do no better with our lives than to serve this King with all our hearts in unqualified and unhesitating obedience.

**Then there are those who are delighted in His glory.** Multitudes of elect believers worshipping, praising and glorifying our God and King and prophesying in the Spirit. The Apocalypse, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the unveiling of our Saviour as King, rings aloud with this refrain:

*“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are manifest”* (Revelation 15:3-4).

To this King shall every knee bow and every tongue confess His Sovereign right and power. Will you not receive Him as your King now, while He is willing to be your Saviour?

- C. M.