

The Coronation of the King – Part II
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John 12:12-16
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Amen. That was a wonderful blessing. Thank you, choir. That's a very appropriate theme in that song as well for our sermon topic today. I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to John 12. The title of our message is 'The Coronation of the King – Part II'. We started last week looking at John 12:9-19. We're going to pick up there again in that same passage this morning, a very familiar subject of our passage, Palm Sunday. It is interesting to preach about Palm Sunday during the Christmas season. I think sometimes it helps you to look at things in a fresh way, doesn't it? When it is not in the routine. Hopefully the Lord will use it to impress these truths upon our hearts in a wonderful way.

We saw last time in our passage that really one of the things that John does in his account, this is a story that is told in all four Gospels, that is Palm Sunday, the story of coming into Jerusalem, the *Triumphal Entry* of Jesus into Jerusalem in which He is hailed to be the King. It is told in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It is one of the unique events that occurs in all four Gospels. As we look at this, what we saw last time, and what we want to look at today too, is it is very helpful when you are studying a passage of Scripture, because you want to understand the mind of God in that particular passage, the mind of God in John 12:9-19. We need to understand what He had on the heart of John as he wrote it.

One of the ways you can study a passage in the Gospels is to compare the account to the other Gospels and to see why was it that in this passage, why did John leave that out? Or why did he add this detail? That helps you understand what the portrait of Christ is. What is exactly he wanting you to focus on? Being sensitive to that, then you know that you are where the Spirit is in this passage. You are seeing what God wants you to see.

We noticed last time, that one of the things that John brings out that the other Gospel-writers don't is the connection with the *Triumphal Entry* and the resurrection of Lazarus. Now I use that term '*resurrection*' like the points in the text, usually there is a heading in John 11, 'The Resurrection of Lazarus'. Someone pointed out last week that it is a helpful distinction to remember that in one sense, the resurrection of Lazarus is a misnomer in a way because Jesus was resurrected, Lazarus was resuscitated. That is he died again. He didn't have a resurrection body, so that is a valid point. He was still raised from the dead, and that is what the

text says, ‘*raised up*’, but it was different. But anyway, the miracle of the raising up of Lazarus in John 11 was of such profound impact that it really, it was the fuel that just became inflamed in the hearts of the people, and led to this outpouring of support for Jesus. In the presence of such a miracle, how could people who were looking at a man who was dead four days, see him alive and not acknowledge that this man who raised him must be from God? So there was this overwhelming just bubbling up of enthusiasm for Jesus in which they hailed him to be king, to be the Messiah, and that is what *Palm Sunday* is.

Yet five days later, many of those hundreds of thousands, or scores of thousands of people that had lined the streets of Jerusalem who were singing, “Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” five days later on Friday, they are saying, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” The irony is staggering. On Sunday, they say, “Bless Him! Bless Him! Bless Him!” On Friday they say, “Curse Him! Curse Him! Curse Him!” because cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. How did this happen?

We saw last time, as we looked at the brackets of the passage, the connection of the miracle of Lazarus, and the opposition of the Jewish leadership, that the Lord allowed this timing, this high point in Jesus’ ministry where people, the crowds at last are saying, “Yes, You are the one. You are the one.” The reason God did it was so that they could see that right before the cross, and they could know that they were crucifying the Lord of glory. We are going to see that even more clearly as we look at the heart of the passage. We looked really last time, we dealt with Verses 9-11, and Verses 17 and 19, the brackets of this passage. John 12:9-19 is the account of the *Triumphal Entry*. We really looked at those two couplets of three verses that bracket the passage. Today we’re going to look at Verses 12-16, those five verses that form the heart of the passage. Now let’s read the text together.

John 12:9-19 ~ The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus. On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel.” 14 Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION;

BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.” 16 These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. 17 So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. 18 For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.”

Let’s pray together.

Our Father, we acknowledge our great need of Your grace, and Your Spirit to take Your word, and to enlighten our minds and our hearts, that we might understand, and that we might believe. Help us, Lord, to know Your will, and to honor Your Son. We pray in His name, Amen.

Now I want us to gather our thoughts today, as we look at these middle verses, Verses 12-16, gather our thoughts around two points. It is ‘The Coronation of the King’, and so the two points are first, the recognition of His Kingship, and secondly, the redefinition of His Kingship. The recognition of His Kingship and the redefinition of His Kingship.

1) The Recognition of His Kingship:

Verses 12-13 show us the crowd recognizing His Kingship, and the large crowd, what did they do? What does John tell us they did? Verse 12:

John 12:12-13 ~ On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, (What did they do? They...) 13 took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel.”

The first thing they do is they took the branches of the palm trees. Now only John tells us about the palm trees. The palm branch doesn’t occur in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Matthew tells us that they took branches. Mark tells us they took leafy branches. Luke doesn’t talk about the branches at all. He just talks about the clothes that were laid down. All four talk about the garments, but only John mentions the palm branch. Now remember, this is great evidence of the

truthfulness of the Scriptures because we have four eyewitness accounts that in them each give slightly different details, which is exactly what you would expect from four eyewitnesses who were being truthful. They saw the same event happen, but they focused on different details as they saw it, just like you and I would.

I mean, if you and I were to talk about our Thanksgiving meal, or I guess if people who had the same meal together, you talked to several of your family members who had the same Thanksgiving meal, “Man, that was wonderful. Wasn’t that incredible? The turkey, boy the turkey was so moist.” Somebody else doesn’t say anything about the turkey. “Man, the dressing. The dressing was just awesome,” or if you say stuffing, “The stuffing was okay.” That is more of a northern thing, I think, stuffing versus dressing, but we don’t want to get into that right now. But you would talk about the different things that impacted you because that is the way that we are. We see things, and we record what we saw. If you were to write it in your journal, which I didn’t write in my journal about Thanksgiving dinner. Hopefully, not many of us are that into food that we... I guess you could, if you are praising the Lord, it is all for His glory anyway. “Thank You, Lord, for a wonderful meal,” whatever. If you did, we would record different things. John is inspired by the Spirit, as he recalls the event, to remember different things.

One of the things he wants us to know is that the branches that Matthew and Mark didn’t specify, that most of those branches were palm branches. Why does he care for us to know that? Well, the palm branch was a sign of victory. It was a way that, even in Roman civilization, the kings would be acclaimed, or even the victors of the games would be given a wreath sometimes of palms. In Israel, in the 1st Century, it had a particularly powerful association. Remember John, when he writes his Gospel, is writing with a focus on Jews and Jewish proselytes. He is writing basically trying to influence all the different synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world that have not yet embraced Jesus. He is writing around 85 A.D., 50-60 years after Jesus has ascended into Heaven, 50+ years and he is telling them again the story of Christ, and he understands that most of them are rejecting Jesus, or they wouldn’t still be in the synagogue. So he is trying to convince them, “You are rejecting the Jewish Messiah. These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God,” is his purpose statement in John 20:31.

So he wants them to know, he wants his readers to know, them, and now us, that at a moment in time, the entire nation acclaimed Jesus to be the victor, to be the king, to be the victorious one. The entire nation basically with one voice, rose up and said, “Hail, to the King. He is the one who comes in victory.” The palm branch

speaks of victory because the palm tree, especially in the Mediterranean world, was one of the tallest trees. It was a straight tree, it was a fruitful tree. You had coconut palms, you have date palms. Around Jerusalem, mostly date palms even today. The palm bears fruit, it stands against the storms, it stands tall and stately. So the palm branch is a picture of victory, a picture of strength.

Then secondly, what did they do? They went out to meet Him and they began to shout. The focus on the shouting, what were they shouting? They were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” The verb here means they didn’t just begin to shout, they kept on shouting. The imperfect tense, they were shouting, imperfect in Greek means past time, continual action. A continuous action in past time. They were shouting continually, “Hosanna, to the son of David.” “Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” “Hosanna, to the King of Israel.” What they are shouting is a quotation from Psalm 118, Verses 25-26. In fact, the word ‘*Hosanna*’ basically means this: It is literally translated ‘*Oh save us now*’. When they say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Oh save us now.” “The King of Israel, oh save us now!”

In fact, when you look at the text of Psalm 118:25-26, it really has that emphasis on the ‘*now*’. “Now, save us now!” In fact, turn over to Psalm 118 for just a moment, we’ll look at it together. I mentioned to you last week that this Psalm is a part of what the Jews call ‘*The Hallel*’. ‘*Hallel*’ means ‘*praise*’, but it is a technical term for Psalm 113 to Psalm 118, those six psalms that are very joyful, uplifting psalms which celebrate the goodness of God, the victory of God, the coming salvation of God. These were very familiar because they have a part in almost all of the Jewish feast days, particularly, most notably, in the Feast of Tabernacles where they are sung every single day. All seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles they are sung by the temple choir. This is a part of the festivity every time, and Passover, and Pentecost, they are also a part of the celebration. These six psalms were heard so much, and sung so much in Jewish homes, that they were basically memorized. It is kind of like, I mentioned the 23rd Psalm, for even unbelievers know a lot of the 23rd Psalm. Or *Amazing Grace*, ‘*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me*’, right? You know the words before I say them because you’ve heard it so much. This was the effect of this particular passage. When they began to say it, it is like, “Oh, yes. We all know that passage,” and they started reciting it. What they were doing was they were connecting it with the context of Psalm 118, and they were basically, clearly acknowledging what it says in that psalm. Look at Verse 25:

Psalm 118:25 ~

***O LORD, do save, we beseech You;
O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity!***

That is really 'Hosanna'. *O Lord*,... of course is *O Lord*,... but then, ... *do save, we beseech You*;... "Do save now," is the force in the Hebrew. "O Lord, do save now. Save us now!" "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." That particular passage had Messianic overtones, and as the people would sing it at each holiday, as they would recite it in times of prayer, they knew when they said these words that these were the words about the Messiah. So what we have here when John recounts this is the clear acknowledgement that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus is the King, Jesus is the son of David, and Jesus is the only one who can save. "Our Savior is here at last," the whole nation is saying. "The King is here." This recognition of His Kingship is fundamental to what John is saying. He is basically saying to those Jews who aren't believing, "Listen, your first need, what you guys need to understand, you need to recognize the King. Jesus is the King and you need to recognize that!" And every one of us in this room, every single human being on the face of the earth, that is their greatest need—to recognize that Jesus Christ is the King and there is no other. He is the only one that can save. He is the only one God has appointed to save. There is salvation in the name of Jesus, and in no other name.

Now when you look back though at Psalm 118, and look at the context with me for a moment. Just reading through this last week, you read through the whole psalm and there is so much about the gates of righteousness are going to be open to us. The Lord is saving, the Lord is sending a deliverer, but look with me at Verse 22. This verse seems to me to be completely out of place in the psalm as it was originally written. Of course, it is not out of place, but the psalm is a psalm of joy. The Hallel is all about joy. It is not sung by the Jews on somber, serious occasions. It is not sung on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, because of the seriousness of that day, but on the joyful occasions it is sung. This verse just seems to be out of place. Look at Verse 22:

Psalm 118:22-26 ~

***22 The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief corner stone.***

***23 This is the LORD'S doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.***

24 This is the day which the LORD has made;

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

25 O LORD, do save, we beseech You;

O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity!

26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;

I think that is one of those passages that you sing a song and you don't understand the lyrics sometimes. A lot of times I've had trouble with that because I have a hearing loss since I was a kid. I had a significant hearing loss, about 30% in one ear, 40% in the other. The range, I can still hear volume, but distinguishing words is tough sometimes. So if I look at you, if you say something to me like, "My dog died," and I say, "Oh, well that's wonderful to hear." I probably didn't understand what you said. I like dogs. If you said that about your cat, I don't know. No, cats are God's creations too. But anyway, hearing songs through the years, I get the lyrics wrong. I think everybody does that to some extent, but I did it more than the average bear.

So how do you make sense out of this thing? It is just hard to make this fit, and if you have the wrong lyrics it is really hard to make it fit. But I think this is one of those situations where you have the right lyrics, but it is still hard to make it fit. We are talking about the King coming, we're talking about salvation coming, what is it that the builders are rejecting? It doesn't make sense. I think the Israelites, looking ahead to Christ, should have been thinking, "I don't understand that verse." Until afterward, when John writes his Gospel, he wants them to look back at this passage. He has included the words that they said so that they would think back to the Hillel just because that was what was being said on their voices. But here he is writing to people who are at that moment rejecting Christ, and who is he writing to? He's writing to the builders, he's writing to the Nation of Israel, and this passage, this is so powerful to say, "Look, the builders rejected Him, but don't you reject Him too." The chief priests, the rulers, they all rejected Him, almost all of them, but isn't this exactly what the Lord said would happen? Think back to Psalm 118:22-23. The stone the builders reject has become the cornerstone, and God builds His temple on that cornerstone, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What this says to us is, and a question for you this morning is: Will you recognize Jesus as King no matter who rejects Him? Because the reality is, the builders always reject Him, not just the builders in Jewish society, but the builders, the leadership, the intelligencia, the leaders of thought and philosophy, how many of them follow Christ? The leaders in society, the leaders in politics, how many of them follow Christ? Very, very few. So the question for you and me is: If they reject Him, and they want to reject you if you accept Him, will you recognize Jesus

as King anyway? Or are you more concerned about what other people think? We need to recognize Him as King. There is no other way to be saved. You must recognize Him as Savior and Lord, King of your life. Now that is the recognition of His Kingship, but the next point is very important because they recognized Him initially as King, the nation did, for a day, but Jesus then redefined His Kingship.

2) The Redefinition of His Kingship:

John makes this very clear. Back to John 12:14-15.

John 12:14-15 ~ Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.”

Jesus, finding a young donkey,... Now what we have here is Jesus is redefining what it means to be King. They are saying, “Oh, King, save us,” and He is saying, “Let Me tell you what kind of King I am, and how I’m going to save you.” In fact, this is interesting, the way John tells it again. When you compare the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell you, the first thing they do in talking about *Palm Sunday* is tell you about how Jesus, and you are familiar if you’ve read those passages or been in the church for very long, you’ve probably heard them read, read them yourself. Remember how He tells two of His disciples, “Go on ahead into the village and you’ll find a colt there.”? Matthew talks about a donkey with its colt, “Bring them both.” Mark and Luke focus on the colt, just like John does. The issue is the colt because that is what He is going to ride. Matthew happens to give you extra detail, “The mother donkey was brought along. It is a young colt, just old enough to be ridden on, but nobody has yet ridden on it,” Luke tells us. But they tell you, Matthew, Mark, and Luke spend five verses each.

Now think about it, they spend five verses each telling you about how Jesus got the donkey. John does it in two words in the Greek text, four words in English. Look there in Verse 14, ...***finding a young donkey,...*** He does it in two words, they take five verses, why is that? Well I think one of the reasons that Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell you that story is so that it is in keeping with one of the themes of the Old Testament, which is that when a prophet comes along that he is to be listened to, he prophesies the future exactly, and that’s what they basically show you. Matthew, Mark, and Luke say, “Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Go ahead, you’re going to find a donkey and a colt,’” Matthew says, “You’re going to find a colt, and you guys start to untie it, and there is a guy that is going to come and say, ‘What are you doing?’ and you just say, ‘The Lord has need of it,’ and he’ll say, ‘That’s fine.’” Really?

That's going to happen? And so then they recount and that's exactly what happens. This is how the prophets were verified, so Matthew, Mark, and Luke want you to understand as you look at the *Triumphal Entry*, that Jesus is a prophet.

In fact, Matthew himself records the statement about this *Triumphal Entry*, that the Jews were saying to themselves, "This is the Prophet." Now He is the King and He is the Prophet. John doesn't want to focus on His prophetic ministry, He wants to focus on something else. That is why he doesn't tell us in five verses. That's why we need the four Gospels. They give us different facets, like four facets of a diamond, four portraits by four great artists that give you a different presentation of the glory of the Son of God.

When John tells the story, he says *finding a young donkey*. He puts the emphasis on Jesus finding it. Now, in reality, these are both perfectly consistent accounts. Jesus found a young donkey by sending His disciples to go get it, right? But John wants you to think about Jesus finding it. He's looking for it. He's got to have one. He knows He has to have one, and what's interesting though, is not only is it five verses in kind of a compressed account here in John, but there's also an interesting change of order. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, the first thing they tell you about is Jesus finding the donkey. He gets on the donkey and then they tell you about what the people were saying. Do you see that? *Finding the donkey* is five verses, and then this is what they were saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" John says they were saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and He finds a donkey.

Now, how do you make sense of this? Well, they were saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," before He found the donkey, and they were saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," after He found the donkey, clearly, and John showed us that the crowd is going with us from Bethany. He has a large crowd with Him, behind Him, and He's walking toward Jerusalem, and people come out to meet Him. The first folks coming out are saying, "Hosanna!" they're waving palm branches, and Jesus says, "Go get the donkey." John doesn't tell us about Him saying, "Go get the donkey." He says He found the donkey because he wants you to not spend time thinking about how He got it. He wants you to see Him sitting on the donkey in response to the Hosannas. The people have said, "You're the King. You're the King. Oh save us." The way he tells us this is basically responding to what they said, and He is redefining what it means to be the King. John wants us to see that. He's distilling down the details so that we see that like a laser focus. "Do you see what He did? He found a donkey and He sat on the donkey. This was to fulfill..." and then he brings up Zechariah 9:9 and he quotes it for us:

John 12:15 ~ “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.”

Again, like the other gospels, he emphasizes the fact that it was a colt of a donkey, a young donkey, and what does that mean? Why did they all emphasize that? All four emphasized that He rode on it. John just makes that stand out a little more. By leaving out the other details, he makes that stand out a little more, because a king would either enter a village or a town on a charger (on a horse) or on a donkey, and when a king came on a horse, that was a sign of his coming to dominate or coming in war to make war. But when a king came humbly on a donkey, he was coming to friends. He was coming to those that he was pronouncing peace, not war. So Jesus is coming here to His friends to make peace.

Now, you would think everybody would have liked that. If they had had their senses about them, they would have. This is something that you find even like in 1 Kings 1:33. David gives Solomon a donkey to ride as he’s proclaimed King. It was something that was common in the ancient world, but why did Jesus do it? I believe this is one of the things that made the crowd turn on Him. It took them a little while to figure it all out, but they wanted a king to come in on his charger and whip up the troops to deliver them from Roman tyranny. That’s what they wanted. When they were saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David. Oh, save us now,” they were saying, “Oh save us from the tyranny of Rome. Oh save us by taking away the harsh circumstances of our lives. Change our circumstances. Save us now.” And when Jesus comes in peace, He’s not coming to save them the way they want to be saved, and He’s making a powerful statement to the contrary. The Lord’s Messiah comes in peace, not to destroy the Romans, but to destroy sin.

We’re a lot like the Jews. We are willing to accept the fact that God is God. There are many people who believe that God *is*. Like James says, “You think that you do well to believe? The demons believe in God,” so that’s obviously not saving faith. We believe in God. People believe in God. People even believe Jesus is the One sent of God, that He is the King, and yet they’re not saved. The overwhelming multitude of people that praised His Name that day, the exceeding majority died and went to hell, and that is because they wanted a king on their own terms. They wanted their king to do what they wanted Him to do, but Jesus is basically telling them, “I didn’t come to take orders, to take requests. I came to take charge. I am Lord, and if you will not receive Me as Lord, you will not know Me.” They wanted Him to destroy the Romans, to deal with all the injustice they were living with.

I mean, the Romans were brutal people, and the Romans were evil. They were incredibly brutal in the way they would subdue nations, and they’re going to find

out less than four decades after this that the Romans are going to annihilate Jerusalem, and God didn't stop that. Why? That's what the people of Israel wanted. They wanted Him to deliver them from that kind of Roman tyranny, and when they were waving the palm branches, they were remembering the day that they had greeted Simon Maccabeus as he rode into Jerusalem after defeating the Greeks. He had liberated them from Greek tyranny. That's what they did then. 1 Maccabees 13 tells about that. They waved the palm branches for Simon Maccabeus as he came into Jerusalem, and he also restored the worship of God. So there were religious and nationalistic overtones. "We want You to deliver us from the Romans," and the problem is Jesus in coming in peace, it wasn't what they wanted but it was what they needed. In fact, there's an interesting thing that John does also in this passage. You see he says in Verse 15:

John 12:15 ~ "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT."

It's interesting when you look at Zechariah 9:9 that it doesn't say, "Fear not." It says, "Rejoice greatly." It says, "Shout." "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion. Shout, daughter of Jerusalem." But John brings another verse of scripture in and puts it beside it. He says, "Fear not... Your King is coming." Why does he say that? Because John is teaching us that if Jesus came the way we want Him to come, He wouldn't just destroy our enemies. He would destroy us. If He came on His white charger, He would have eradicated all of Jerusalem and would have had to send them to hell instantly, and the reality is you and I are too much like the nation of Israel.

We want to believe in God. Sometimes a non-Christian, you may believe in some sense in Jesus, but you're more interested in Jesus changing your circumstances than you are in dealing with your sin. He will not do that. If He is not allowed to deal with your sin, He will have no part of you and you will have no part of Him. He doesn't come to do our bidding. He comes to do His will. I mean, there were harsh circumstances that people were living under. There was all kinds of injustice just like there is today, but what this says is the biggest problem in our lives is not our circumstances. The biggest problem in our lives is our hearts.

Now, I want you to turn back over to Zechariah for a moment. I want us to look at Zechariah 9:9 together, and then we're going to go back and look at those passages I read earlier in the scripture reading.

Zechariah 9:

9 *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

Now, part of what He's going to do is put an end to war.

10 *I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow of war will be cut off.
And He will speak peace to the nations;
And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.*

11 *As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you, I have set
your prisoners free from the waterless pit.*

So this prophecy was basically saying to the people 500 years before Christ, they didn't have a king. At the time Zechariah is giving this prophecy, they were under Persian domination. They had just been dominated by the Babylonians in the exile, they'd come back to the land, but now they're under Persian rule. They would continue under Persian rule for another 200 years until Alexander the Great comes, and for 170 years they'd be under Greek rule. Then the Maccabean revolt would give them about 60 or 80 years of freedom. Then the Romans would come in and bring them into subjugation again, and Jesus comes 100 years after the Romans, and He comes into Jerusalem riding that donkey.

What Zechariah's prophecy should have said to them is, "This is the day of salvation. Look, the King is here. The King is coming," and the people were seeing that, but they weren't putting together what Zechariah had taught and what Jesus was saying by riding on the donkey, because what Zechariah had taught was that on the day that He comes, when you look at the teaching of the book of Zechariah, remember I pointed out Chapter 3, the story of Joshua the High Priest, that what we need is a high priest who is clean and who can make us clean, and who can deal with sin and remove iniquity in one day. That's what chapter 3 says.

Joshua the high priest, the high priest is the one who brings a person into a right relationship with God. Our biggest problem at every moment is that we need to be in a right relationship with God, and so he says, "I'm going to send my servant the

branch,” in Joshua 3. And then in chapter 6, he has Zechariah go over and do something that was just unheard of. “Make a crown and put it on the head not of the son of David, Zerubbabel. Put the crown on the head of Joshua the high priest and say to him, ‘It is he who will build the temple of the Lord. He will bear the honor (verse 13 of chapter 6). He will be a priest on his throne and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.’”

Basically what he’s saying is now the Lord is saying that the Messiah when He comes will be a Priest and the King, and this was impossible before. In the unveiling of God’s plan, the king and priest couldn’t be the same person. Remember Uzziah was the king, and he tried to take the role of a priest and go in and offer incense in the temple. You know what happened to him. He was struck with leprosy for the rest of his life, because you don’t do that. You don’t take that upon yourself, because the role of the king and the role of the priest were so important that fallen men couldn’t handle two at the same time. But when the Messiah comes, He’s going to be both. The King will be a Priest and the Priest will be the King.

So when Jesus gets on the colt, I think all of this revelation is coming together, and they’re supposed to see, “Look, the one the builders rejected is the King, and the King is the Priest,” and the reason they’re seeing it five days before Friday is they’re looking at the King, they’re hailing the King, but the King also has on the robes of a Priest, and five days later He’s going to enter the temple not made with hands but the one made in heaven, and offer the blood of His own life as an atonement for sin and make a finish of sin in one day. All of this is coming together right before their eyes. Glory to God how He puts together His plan of salvation, how beautiful it is.

What this says to you and me is we need a Priest as much as we need a King. We need a King to deliver us from our enemies, yes, but we need a Priest to deliver us from our sin and from ourselves. You know, I don’t know about you, but I find myself constantly complaining about my circumstances, and a lot of times I do it in my own mind. I know better than to talk to the Lord about this most of the time. It’s just something that we talk about—me, myself, and I. *I can’t believe this is happening. This is so unfair.* And then I pray, “Lord, please deal with that situation. Help me.” I’m basically saying, “Change them,” and the reality is we then wonder why we don’t get blessed.

I’m talking about as Christians we do this. Why don’t we get blessed? It’s because we want Him to do what we want Him to do, and we don’t realize that the biggest problem in our lives is our own sin. He’s not interested in changing our

circumstances, because changing our circumstances doesn't really address our need. Our need is a new and pure heart. Many people have stopped short of salvation. Many people have been church members throughout their whole lives. Many people like Judas have been very close to the things of God, among pastors and elders and deacons, and yet came up short of salvation. Why? It's because they wanted a King on their own terms.

They were more interested in God changing their circumstances than they were in seeing that my biggest problem at every moment is me. My biggest problem in this circumstance is me, though this person may really be messing up, and though they may have a problem and I can see it. It's amazing how well I can see their problem, and isn't it funny how our spiritual eyesight is so good out there? We're farsighted like an eagle. "Man, I see the problem in your life so clearly," but when we look at ourselves we can't see anything, and the reality is this is the appalling thing.

This is why He says, "Get the log out before you get the speck out." We see the speck and it looks like a mountain, not just a log but a mountain. "Look at this, God. This has got to be dealt with," and He says that is a speck, and what you've got right there is a log, and Jesus is in the business of dealing with logs. If you won't let Him deal with your log, He is not going to help you with the speck. In fact, the speck is there to make you aware of the log, because He loves you too much that He doesn't give us what we want. He always gives us something better. And so people that end up short of salvation are people who want what they want, and they're always looking at what's wrong out there, but they're never looking at what's wrong in here.

If you haven't come to the point where you can see that the biggest problem in my life is not out there, is not him, is not her, is not them, is not what's happened, and all the bad things that have happened to me, but the biggest problem in my life is me, if you've not come to that point, then you are likely not saved. In fact, if you've not come to that point, you're certainly not saved. Even as a little child who gets saved, you have to understand that my biggest problem is I'm a sinner and I need a Savior. You say with the Publican, "Woe, Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner." It was the Pharisee that was saying, "I'm not like that person. I'm not like that person. Look at me. Look at me, Lord. I'm not like them."

Jesus said it was the Publican who said, "Have mercy on me, the sinner," that went home justified. We need a Priest. We need a High Priest, and praise God that Jesus is that High Priest. In our Christian lives, you've got problems in your home with your children, and it's right to pray for our children. It's right to talk to our

children and to encourage our children to be what God wants them to be, but the number one thing that we should be concerned about even as we're having that conversation is, "Lord, help me in my sin and what's wrong in my heart. Even as I'm dealing with the situation, the biggest problem in my life is me."

This is what we should be doing in the biblical counseling room when we're counseling. The biggest problem in this room—listen to me—no matter how big the problem is across the table, and there are some big problems that we get confronted with, but the biggest problem in this room before me and you, Lord, is right here. It's my tendency to judge, my tendency to be unsympathetic, and my tendency to not really care like I ought to care. That's my biggest problem, and when that becomes my biggest problem, then I have a worthy Savior who is my sufficiency, and I can look to Him and say, "Lord Jesus, I need a High Priest. I need You to be with me. I need You to make me different. I need You to cleanse me and change me. Even as I try to minister to this person in front of me, I'm unworthy, Lord," and then we go off—we stop from up here pointing down, and we come down and we wash their feet as a humble servant just like our Master.

That's why we always need to understand that when He comes as King, He comes as Priest, and I'm so glad He does. He's more interested in you being holy than you being happy, because He knows if you're holy you will be happy. You will really be happy. He's so good, and this is what He's saying when He gets on that donkey. "You're saying I'm King of the Jews. You're saying I'm King of the Jews. You don't know what you're saying fully. Let Me show you what my Kingship looks like. I come humble and lowly, and though I am able with a word to call legions of angels..."

Later He's going to come on a horse. In Revelation 19, He comes riding a white charger, and the word, the sword that comes from His mouth slays the nations. If He'd come on a charger, He would have ended everything right then, but He didn't come that way. We still are in the moment of His offer of peace. When He comes on the horse, it's too late. Today is the day of salvation. Today He's saying, "I'm extending the olive branch to you. I'm offering to you peace." When the two offices—the office of King and the office of Priest—are joined together, then He makes peace. He brings shalom. He brings fullness. He brings blessing, and that happened at Calvary.

That's why everything in this world that should matter to us is the cross. That's all. That is all our hope, all our joy. All our treasure is in that moment when the Son of God hung on the cross, when He who was perfectly righteous offered His own blood. He was High Priest and He was the Lamb at the same time, and when sin

was imputed to Him, credited to Him, every sin, every single time that you or I have sinned in thought, in word, in deed, all of those, the catalogue of all of that wrath, the mountains of wrath that were stored up for me were put on Him, and He took that, and He drank the dregs of that cup of God's wrath, and then He said, "It is finished!" That is everything and then He makes us righteous. He gives us in exchange His perfect righteousness, not a brief catalogue of righteousness, but a whole life of perfect righteousness.

That's why we realize that there we are being condemning to our loved ones, our children as we talk to them, our spouse, our friends, and we realize, "Lord, it's what's wrong with me," and we look up to Jesus and we say, "You paid for that. You bled for that self-righteousness. You drank the dregs of all of that, and there's no more wrath, and so God is not looking down at me frowning at me even now." He ought to be, if not for Christ, but because of Christ He will never frown if you're in Him. He looks at you like He looks at His Son, and He says, "There is My precious, righteous child," and then not only does He see you that way, but then He empowers you to be like His Son. That's the glory of our salvation and that is the glory of a Savior who is King and is Priest, our great High Priest Jesus Christ. He will reign forever and ever. Is He reigning in your heart today?

Let's pray...

Our Father, we acknowledge how great is the need in the human heart. We overestimate ourselves. We judge ourselves by our intentions, not by what we do or what we say. We judge others by what they do and say, not by their intentions. The pride of the human heart is so ugly, and it is that pride that keeps so many from knowing and experiencing salvation, and we pray that You would break that pride of people in this room today that's keeping them back from You, that's making them continue to stand as Your enemies when You have extended the invitation to become Your friend, to become Your beloved child. Give them eyes to see the ugliness. Grant them repentance. Give them the gift of faith. Save them today. Oh Lord, save now.

For those who are saved in this room, we just acknowledge that we still are in need of grace, so harsh in the way we see others, and so blind to our own ongoing need that is just so vast, so great. God, have mercy on us. Save us now from ourselves. Make us holy. Make us humble. Make us lowly like our Savior and let us savor His glory and His beauty and His goodness, and let us be like Paul who said, "We are

the true circumcision who put no confidence in the flesh, that we place all of our hope in Christ.” Father, be glorified in lives that are overwhelmed with the miracle of Your grace. We pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

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