

# His Triumphal Entry Revealed His Identity. How Do You Respond?

Zechariah 9:9-10; Mt 21:1-11 (texts)

Reformed Church of Wainuiomata – 28 March 2021

(Put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

## Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

I know of a young man who grew up in one of the Reformed churches in my country of heritage. Sadly, due to “circumstances,” his training in the Reformed (Biblical) faith was not as thorough as it should have been.

So, later on, when this young man had finished his university studies, he went to Israel for work. And his going to Israel was partly because he was inspired by a Zionist-kind of theology.

Well, to cut a long story short, this man ended up marrying a girl of distant Jewish descent, and, eventually, he rejected his Christian upbringing, and became a Jew – wearing the Jewish kippah, and training his sons in the Jewish faith.

The last time I heard from this young man was when he said that he “once was a Christian,” but that he now knows better!

Wow! I ask myself: “How did that happen?”

Then I also ask myself, “But could it be that there are people in our church(es) who *also* doubt that Jesus is who He said He is – the Son of God; the only *way and the truth and the life!*”<sup>1</sup>

Could it be that, in our heart of hearts, you & I think of Jesus the way most Pharisees of old thought of Him – that He was a mere prophet – and even a false one, too!?

Well, lest such thought might one day overwhelm you or me, come look with me at the following three things our texts say about Jesus, i.e., that He is...

- Rightful King
- Victorious King
- Gentle King<sup>2</sup>

## Rightful King

The people of Israel had always understood Zechariah’s prophecy to refer to the Messiah – to God’s anointed King!

And what did Zechariah say?

Well, about five hundred years before Jesus was born, Zechariah said (in Zech 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,*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jn 14:6, *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (NIV 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Three points brilliantly chosen by Ryken, Philip. *The Coming of the King: what Christ’s triumphal entry means to you.* [ <https://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermons/2006/march/comingoftheking032006.html> ]

*Humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

Well, five hundred years after this prophecy was written, Jesus of Nazareth came and did something, which, for you & me, might look like a trivial thing. However, what Jesus did was of great theological significance!

What was that?

Well, so many years after Zechariah's prophecy, Jesus told His disciples to go get a donkey – but not just any donkey; no, just as Zechariah's prophecy had said, a donkey *foal* – yes, a *colt*!

And how would the people know that it was not just a donkey, but a *colt*, that Jesus was using?

Well, to make it plain for everyone to see, Jesus chose His donkey well! Yes, He told His disciples to get not just a colt, but to bring its mother as well!

Then, as the Gospel of Mark tells us, Jesus got onto that colt!<sup>3</sup>

So? What's the significance of that?

Well, the minute Jesus got onto that donkey's foal and rode into Jerusalem, what message was He giving the Jews?

Well, look! Without saying a word, but just by His actions, was not Jesus saying the very words of Zechariah 9:9, "...**Behold, your King is coming to you!**..."?

And many of the Jews who saw Him riding down the mountain slope towards Jerusalem – they knew their Bibles well! So, they recognised what Jesus was doing!

How do we know that?

Well, by how they reacted!

You see, they reacted by shouting out words that one should only shout out to the Messiah – words like "Hosanna!" and "Son of David!"

(Of course, "Hosanna" means "Please save!" – and it comes from the very messianic psalm, psalm 118 [verse 25].<sup>4</sup> And "Son of David" was a title to be ultimately fulfilled in the person of the promised Messiah!<sup>5</sup>

So, what do we see?

Well, that, when the people shouted out the words "Hosanna" and "Son of David," and when they did what people in those days only did for a king (i.e., laying their coats on the colt for the King to sit on, and spreading their coats in the road in front of Him and laying palm branches in front of Him), they clearly did only one significant thing!

What was that?

They were acclaiming Jesus of Nazareth to be their **rightful King!**

And you know what? By having taken that donkey, Jesus did not just fulfil the five-hundred-year-old prophecy of Zechariah, but also the one-thousand-eight-hundred-year-

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mk 11:7, **They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it.**

<sup>4</sup> In Hebrew, Hoshi'ah-nna (הוֹשִׁיעַ נָּא) which means, "Save! Please!" Cf. Ps 118:25, **O Lord, do save, we beseech You; O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity!** (NASB).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g., 2 Sam 7:11b-16, **"The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: <sup>12</sup> When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. <sup>15</sup> But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. <sup>16</sup> Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever"** (NIV 1984).

old prophecy of Jacob when he, on his deathbed, blessed his son, Judah, *from whose offspring Jesus would be born!*

And what did Jacob prophesy about Judah and his offspring?

Well, this was what Jacob (by the Holy Spirit) said (in Gen 49:10-11a),

***“The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch...”***<sup>6</sup>

See? *Jacob’s prophecy meant that Israel’s true king would come from the tribe of Judah, and that in some way, he would be associated with the colt of a donkey.*<sup>7</sup>

See how the Old Testament is as people have often said – yes, that the Old Testament is like a room that is beautifully furnished with the best of furniture, but that this beautifully furnished room was dark until Jesus came, then it was like someone suddenly turned on the light so that we can now clearly see every piece of choice furniture in that once-dark room!?

My brother & sister (boys & girls), when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that colt’s back, many in the crowd acclaimed Him as their **rightful King** – yes, as the One *who had come in the Name of the LORD!*<sup>8</sup>

So, here’s something of great significance: Many in that Palm-Sunday crowd, acclaimed Jesus of Nazareth as their rightful King. They did it by calling Him, “Son of David,” and also by spreading their cloaks and palm branches before Him – that’s how they did it!

Question: How will you & I do it? Yes, how will you & I acclaim Jesus as our rightful King?

Well, will it not be like you & I lay our hearts before Him? Yes, will it not be when you & I (moved & cut-to-the-heart) throw down our selfish wills in absolute surrender, and ask Jesus to govern everything we think and say and do? Yes, will we not acclaim Jesus as our rightful King when we do not just selfishly receive Him as our Saviour, but also make Him Lord of our lives?

Perhaps someone will say, “But, Pastor, how can we know for sure that Jesus is indeed that rightful King that was promised?” “I mean, Pastor, could not anyone who knew the prophecies of old have done what Jesus did?” “Yes, is it not possible that anyone could have taken a donkey foal and rode into Jerusalem?”

Well, to answer this question, we’ll have to go to point 2 of this sermon...

## **Victorious King**

My brother & sister, hear what Zech 9:9 says about the Messiah who was to come.

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<sup>6</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New International Version\*](#). (1984). (Ge 49:10–11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>7</sup> The well-said words of Ryken (ibid)

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mt 21:9, ***The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David;***

***BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;***

***Hosanna in the highest!***” (NASB; Emphasis mine).

Of course, this is a quote from the messianic psalm 118:26, ***Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD*** (NASB).

It says, “**He is just/righteous and endowed with salvation!**” (NASB)<sup>9</sup>

The Hebrew text literally says, “*He is righteous and saved!*”

Did you hear that? “He is saved!”

Well, what does it mean that Messiah *is saved*?

Could it mean that Messiah is saved from His sins?

No, that can’t be, for we know (and Zech 9:9 makes it clear) that He who would come riding on that donkey foal, would be totally righteous – i.e., His actions and thoughts would only ever be right and in sync with God’s will – in other words, He would be sinless!

So, it’s clear: when Zech 9:9 says, “He is saved,” it could in no way mean that Messiah would be saved from His own sins! And many years later, the Apostle Peter confirmed that the Messiah was sinless. I mean, does not 1 Pt 2:22 say that Messiah/Christ

“**committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth...**”<sup>10</sup>

So, see? All that “He is saved” could possibly mean is that He (Messiah) would be saved *from death!*

In fact, often when the Bible says that someone *was/is saved*, it meant that he was saved from physical death.<sup>11</sup>

So, in the light of the New Testament, how do you & I then have to understand the words of Zech 9:9 which says that *He (Messiah) would be saved*?

Well, Zech 9:9 could only have referred to the fact, which we now know by hindsight, i.e., that Messiah/Christ was saved by the *resurrecting* power of the Holy Spirit!

Granted, on Palm Sunday, the crowd did not yet grasp it! Even the disciples did not yet fully understand it! But He who rode that donkey foal would, eight days later, prove that He was/is not just the *rightful* King, but also the *victorious* King – victorious, in the sense that, by God’s power, He would conquer the unconquerable, i.e., death!

And here is the beauty: Even though the crowds of Palm Sunday did not fully understand the mission of Messiah (that He would die and rise again from the dead), they asked their *rightful King* to save them. But not just that! No, by shouting “Hosanna” (Please save [us]), they also welcomed Him as their *victorious King*!

Now, although most people in that crowd saw in Jesus a mere political saviour who would deliver them from Roman oppression, the disciples had a vague understanding –

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<sup>9</sup> *Tsaddîq vənōshā’ hū’* (צַדִּיק וְנוֹשֵׂא הַיָּא) (NASB)

<sup>10</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (1 Pt 2:22). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Of course, Peter is quoting from Isaiah 53:9 which says, “**He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.**” Also cf. 2 Cor 5:21 **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ryken (ibid) for, “Although the Bible often uses the word ‘save’ to refer to salvation from sin, it also uses the term in a more general way to refer to any kind of deliverance. For example, when the psalmist praised God for bringing Israel out of Egypt, he said, ‘He saved them from the hand of the foe’ (Psalm 106). The Exodus did not save the Israelites from their sins, but it was a great deliverance, a mighty act of salvation. The word ‘save’ is used in a similar way at the end of Psalm 20: ‘O LORD, save the king!’ (Psalm 20:9). That is not a prayer for the king’s salvation from sin, but for his deliverance from his enemies. Or consider another example: King Solomon promised that God ‘will deliver the needy who cry out ... and save the needy from death’ (Psalm 72:12-13). For Solomon, salvation meant deliverance from death. That is the kind of salvation Zechariah had in mind when he promised that the king would come ‘righteous and saved.’ He meant that God’s rightful king would be delivered and vindicated...”

and you & I a clear understanding – that Jesus came to save from the biggest calamity – a calamity greater than political oppression, a calamity that’s at the heart of all calamities, i.e., the calamity of sin – which is at the root of all evils (even at the root of political oppression).

My brother & sister, if the Palm-Sunday crowds cried out to Jesus, their victorious King, to save them from their political enemy, then you and I who know better, have all the reason to cry out to Him to save us from sin, from death, and from the eternal wrath of God!

And what’s the right way to go about it?

Well, it’s to not fool ourselves, but to understand and acknowledge that you & I are guilty sinners whose sins permeate our own lives, and affect all our relationships – sadly also our marriages!

And then? Well, then you & I will come and cry out, “Jesus, You who are the Victorious King who conquered death, to You I cry, ‘Hosanna,’ i.e., please save also me!” “Yes, grant also for me, one day when I have died, to live forever – and to even now, in this sin-marred life, find healing!” “Yes, ‘*God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*’”<sup>12</sup> Come, subdue my will to Yours so that my life and all my relationships can be healed – my marriage, my parenting, my friendships – and You be glorified!

My brother & sister, so far, we have seen from our texts (Zechariah 9:9-10 and Matthew 21:1-11), that Jesus of Nazareth is 1) Rightful King as well as 2) Victorious King.

Well, our last point tells us He is also 3) Gentle King...

### Gentle King

In ancient times, when a king rode into a city, it was usually accompanied by a show of power and wealth! And this was especially so when a king returned victorious from a battle!

O, what pomp & glory it was!

Such king would come into his city like a garlanded hero! He would *stand* in his war chariot while driving down a whole lane of cheering subjects and smoking altars!

And guess who would follow him?

The kings and princes of those foreign countries that he had subdued – kings whom he had taken captive and had put in chains. And if he did not bring those conquered kings *themselves*, he could easily have brought back some of their body parts<sup>13</sup> along with all other spoils – like gold, silver, valuable garments, cattle and sheep, and even women & children!<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Lk 18:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. e.g., 1 Sm 18:27 *David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men among the Philistines. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law. So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife.*

<sup>14</sup> Cf. e.g. under the one Hebrew word for “spoil” – the word, *shālāl* (שָׁלַל) “...prey, spoil, plunder, booty... booty, spoil of war, of all kinds,... including garments, gold and silver Jos 7:21, ornaments Ju 8:24, 25, fabrics and women 5:30 a, b, flocks and herds 1 S 30:20; Je 49:32; 2 Ch 15:11, + persons Dt 20:14, garments, food and drink 2 Ch 28:15, etc. (58 times; among these)... Dt 2:25; 2 S 12:30; 1 Ch 20:2 and ( + cattle in addition) Dt 3:7, Jos 8:27; 11:14 ..., cf. (also of city) Is 8:4; Dt 13:17; Zc 14:1 and ( + cattle) Jos 8:2..., but including persons and cattle Dt 20:14, cf. v 14; fig. of entire nation Je 50:10; Ez 7:21; Zc 2:13...” (Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). [Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon](#) (pp. 1021–1022). Oxford: Clarendon Press).

And, here's the point: Such a king's chariot would be pulled by a *horse* – a strong *war horse*; or the king himself might, in all glory, have sat on that war horse!

But not so the Lord of lords and King of kings!

You see, surprisingly, the truly *rightful* King – yes, the truly *victorious* King – is also a truly *gentle* King!

And Zechariah 9:9 *foretold* that He would be *gentle*! The Hebrew word can also be translated as *humble* or even *poor*, or *afflicted* or *lowly*!<sup>15</sup>

And the Greek word of Mt 21:5, which quotes Zech 9:9, has the meaning *meek*.

And here is something quite significant about the Greek word for *meek*: You see, in Ancient Greek, this word was, among other, also used to describe a horse that was broken in – *tamed*!<sup>16</sup> In other words, it described “power under control,”<sup>17</sup> i.e., the horse's will is in submission to the will of his master!

So, used about Christ and the Christian, this word then means someone whose will is in submission to *God's* will! Yes, someone who, by grace through faith, is able to say to God, “My Lord, I trust You with all my heart!” “Whatever You say – whatever You have planned for my life, I will submit to that!” “Whatever good or bad You send me, I will in faith understand that *You* know best!” “God, I am *meek*!” “I *submit my will* to Yours!”

Well, is this not what the donkey Rider of our text says in picture language? Yes, is this not how our meek Lord Jesus lived before His Heavenly Father?

Now, we have said it many times: “*meekness* does not mean *weakness*.”

You see, it asks an awful lot of strength (not weakness) to submit willingly to God! Christ did that without fail! And meek Christ's strength is seen in how He was victorious over the devil and death!

And you know where this perfect combination of meekness and strength was clearly seen?

Well, was this not clearly on display every time meek/gentle Christ was moved with compassion, and then literally touched<sup>18</sup> and healed the blind, lame, and sick, and in raising the dead!?

Meekness! Yet, a meekness that gave hard blows to the devil every time this humble donkey rider (Jesus) powerfully freed the demon possessed and those held in satan's claws; meekness that, in the power of God, beat the devil on that first resurrection Sunday, when Christ rose from the dead – yes, from the devil's grip!

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<sup>15</sup> For this range of meanings, of the Hebrew adjective *‘ānī* (אָנִי), of which the noun is *‘ānī* (אָנִי), cf. Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). [Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon](#) (pp. 776). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Liddell & Scott do give one of the meanings of the verb *prāyñō* (πράϋνω) as “to tame wild animals” (Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). [A Greek-English lexicon](#) (p. 1461). Oxford: Clarendon Press).

<sup>17</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Mt 5:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books. Also cf. Ryken (ibid).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g., Mk 8:22-23, ***They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?”*** (NIV 1984; Emphasis mine). Also cf. Lk 22:51, ***But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man's ear and healed him*** (NIV 1984; Emphasis mine).

My brother & sister, here is the beauty: Christ is still doing this! Yes, with that same powerful meekness/gentleness, Christ helps everyone who comes to Him in faith. As someone has said so well, “His kingship does not treat people roughly or abusively. Instead, he rules with a gentle strength that brings healing and wholeness. When we are disobedient, gentle Jesus restores us to the right path. When we are disheartened, gentle Jesus encourages us not to give up. When we are downcast, gentle Jesus wipes away our tears. Our rightful, victorious king has both the power to help us and the gentleness to heal us.”<sup>19</sup>

John Newton, put it well: "Happy are these his subjects who dwell under his shadow. He rules them, not with that rod of iron by which he bruises and breaks the power of his enemies, but with his golden sceptre of love. He reigns by his own right, and by their full and free consent, in their hearts. He reigns upon a throne of grace, to which they have at all times access; and from whence they receive, in answer to their prayers, mercy and peace, the pardon of all their sins, grace to help in every time of need, and a renewed supply answerable to all their wants, cares, services and conflicts."<sup>20</sup>

Powerful meekness! Yes, regal gentleness – that’s our Lord Jesus!

But you know what, my Brother & Sister?

Those who have been saved by this gentle King – look, will they not, in return, serve Him with all gentleness?

I mean, does not God’s Word say that gentleness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit in God’s people?

Gal 5:22-23, “***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.***”<sup>21</sup>

Phil 4:5, “***Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.***”<sup>22</sup>

My brother & sister (dear boys & girls), do you sometimes doubt that Jesus is who He said He is?

Well, look at our text and come see how Jesus of Nazareth is the to-the-letter-fulfilment of prophecy concerning the Messiah-King; yes, that He is the truly...

- Rightful King
- Victorious King
- Gentle King

Come see, believe, and live!<sup>23</sup>

AMEN (2,795 words excluding footnotes).

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<sup>19</sup> Ryken (ibid)

<sup>20</sup> Newton (apud Ryken, ibid).

<sup>21</sup> [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Ga 5:22–23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. (Emphasis mine)

<sup>22</sup> [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Php 4:5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jn 20:30-31, “***Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name***” (NIV 1984; Emphasis mine).