

The New World Order

What's it like to have Christ for a king? That is the question at the center of today's readings.

Zechariah describes the return of a Davidic King who would restore the nation of Israel to its former prominence bringing peace to the world. This is a central theme that runs throughout Scripture. The Jewish notion of the Messiah is anchored in the idea that the Messiah would bring peace to the nations.

Adam was the first king presiding over a properly ordered world at peace. His fall from grace can be rightly thought of as a suspension of his kingship due to his bad leadership. From that time forward God promised us a new King... one who will rule in His name. This kingship was to attract all nations, so that all of the world would become once again rightly ordered as it was in the beginning. This vision is a promise proclaimed throughout Scripture, most especially by the prophets. It is also a constant theme of the psalms. This was the hope that Israel clung to... That God would come to reign through the Messiah.

We can sense a resonance with this dream in our own hearts. The daily news provides us with round-the-clock reporting of the world's chaos, disorder, dysfunction, and violence. We even see this dysfunction in our workplaces and our own families. Who among us does not long for a king who will set things right? A just savior... a healer who will put an end to the injustice.

So how will this king come?

Zechariah tells us that He will come in peace. "Riding on a colt... the foal of an ass." There is important significance attached to the imagery expressed here... We tend to see this as a mere sign of humility, but there is much more to consider. The colt was the proper mount of an Israelite king, when that king came in peace. By contrast... the king who came in wartime rode a great steed or battle horse. Additionally we are told that this king will not engage in battle in the usual sense of the term... in fact this king will put an end to the usual weapons of war.

Let's bring that promise forward to our own time... The nuclear weapons and tanks will be taken away. The mighty armies will be disbanded. There will be an

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end to the ways of war and peace will be established. The world will move in a whole new way... there will be a new arrangement or order

Who is this king that Zechariah talks about?

He appears some 500 years later, when he enters the Holy city of David just as Zechariah prophesied he would. It is Jesus who enters Jerusalem on a colt... "On the foal of an ass." Humble? Certainly! But more importantly he has come to banish the weapons of war, and to introduce a whole new way of ordering things. And he does this through the cross... Where he submits to the violence of the world out of love for the Father and for us. The cross embodies the whole of human dysfunction, the dark and fallen ways of the world throughout all of history. Jesus takes the darkness of the world on and allows it to overwhelm and spend itself on him. He swallows up that darkness and dysfunction with a greater divine mercy. His resurrection from the dead shows His Lordship over the darkness of the world. He brings into existence the new kingship that Zechariah prophesied.

This king, this strange counter-cultural new Davidic King, offers us an invitation... "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."

Who are those who labor, and are burdened? It is everyone from all time, who has lived, is living, or will live under the burden of the old world. The old way of thinking, which is the world as we know it. Jesus invites us to come to him, with all of our baggage, troubles, and fears... So he can give us rest.

What are we called to do to respond to his invitation? We are invited to submit to his new kingship, His new way of ordering things... To take His yoke upon our shoulders.

It is Christ who encourages us... "Take my yoke, and learn from me." We are meant to imagine ourselves as beast of burden. And truthfully we are in fact under many burdens. To our mindset this image might seem offensive and demeaning. Perhaps that is because we do not understand the purpose of a yoke. When Jesus says "My yoke is easy", the term "easy" meant "well-fitting." In Palestine ox-yokes were made of wood: The ox was purchased and its measurements were precisely taken. The yoke was then roughed out, and the ox

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was brought back to have the yoke tried on. The yoke was carefully adjusted, so that it would fit well, and not chafe the neck of the patient animal. The yoke was tailor-made to fit the ox and it's purpose was to lighten the burden by protecting the animal.

When Jesus says, "My yoke fits well" He means... The life He has given us is not a burden meant to cause us pain. Our task is made to measure to fit us, it is made to fit our needs and our abilities exactly.

When Jesus says my "my burden is light", He is not saying that the burdens we are given are easy. Those burdens are given in love... They are meant to be carried in love, for it is love that makes the heaviest burden's light. When we remember the love of God (as witnessed by the cross), when we understand that our burden is to love God, and to love one another, then our burden becomes light.

This is what submission to Christ lordship looks like... It is putting ourselves under the yoke and direction of the Divine farmer. It means we embrace and serve the purposes of the new king... We go where he wants us to go.

The challenge the yoke provokes is this... Is Christ commanding every action and detail of my life? Is he the Lord of my family life? Is my family life under His guidance? Is he the Lord of my recreational life? Is he the Lord of my work and professional life? Is he the Lord of every room of my house... Including my bedroom?

The teaching of the Church warns us that to act as if our life is ours to do with as we please is to take a dangerous path. That is so because all life and especially our life, belongs to Him. And because our life belongs to him we are called to be a witness to love.

When we surrender to the path of love, which is the way of the cross. We submit ourselves to the discipline of this new order. Our lives become infinitely lighter, easier, more joyful, and they begin to move according to the divine rhythm, in alignment with the divine purpose.

Christ is the King who has come as he promised... in peace. He has come to establish a new order where Divine Love is more powerful than the old order. We

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are invited to submit to that Divine Love, to put ourselves under it's yoke and move according to its rhythms and patterns. We were created to be a Holy City... The Holy city that Christ wants to enter... So that He can ease our burdens. That can only happen when we take the yoke He has fitted for us... And we put ourselves under His Divine direction.