

## SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**ISA. 9:6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

**7** Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be no end*, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

**JOHN 12:12** On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus

was coming to Jerusalem,

**13** Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

**15** Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him.

### NOTES

# A King Comes Forth

Lesson Text: Isaiah 9:6-7; John 12:12-16

Related Scriptures: Micah 5:2; Psalm 118:22-29; Zechariah 9:9;  
Matthew 21:4-9; Mark 11:7-10; Luke 19:35-38

TIMES: about 733 B.C.; A.D. 30

PLACE: Jerusalem

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—“[They] took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord” (John 12:13).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **PROPHECY OF THE KING— Isa. 9:6-7**

**Titles of honor (Isa. 9:6).** While Jewish rabbis had many theories about when and how the Messiah would arrive, Scripture taught that He would be born of a virgin (7:14) in the town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).

Jesus, of course, would be no ordinary child, since He was the very Son of God in the flesh (John 1:14).

Isaiah is often called the “gospel prophet” because he said more about the coming Messiah than any other prophet. The character of Messiah’s reign is revealed in the titles given to Him by Isaiah’s prophecies. “The government shall be upon his shoulder” (9:6) indeed indicates that Messiah would govern as king.

What follows are some titles rightfully given to Messiah. The first is “Wonderful,” or as many prefer, “Wonderful Counsellor.”

As we think of Jesus’ life and ministry, there are indeed many ways it could be described as wonderful. He spoke amazing words and performed

miraculous deeds, confirming that He is both Saviour and Lord.

Christ is also “Counsellor.” This Hebrew word denotes one who is the source of wise counsel, one who provides wisdom, meaning, determination, and purpose. During His ministry, Jesus never sought counsel from anyone other than His Heavenly Father (John 5:30; 6:38). As Creator (1:1-3), He never needs to seek counsel from any of His creatures.

The title “The Mighty God” (Isa. 9:6) is the designation “God Almighty.” While some in Isaiah’s day might have been puzzled about how this could be true, New Testament believers can readily understand how Jesus deserves this prophetic title. As God incarnate, Christ was both “with God” and also “was God” (John 1:1). As the title “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14) indicates, Jesus is “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

When Jesus claimed to have existed before Abraham as the great I AM (cf. John 8:58), He was declaring Himself equal with God (cf. 5:18). He Himself asserted, “I am the Son of

God” (10:36; Matt. 27:43). This is also affirmed elsewhere in Scripture (Phil. 2:5-6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1-3).

Closely related to the preceding title is “everlasting Father” (Isa. 9:6). Some think this might be better rendered “Eternal Father.” Christ Himself affirmed the truth of this title when He declared, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). In answering Philip’s request to see the Father, Jesus replied, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (14:9).

Perhaps the best-remembered of the titles given to the Messiah, especially at this time of year, is “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

At His birth, the angels announced, “Peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). This peace is only possible when we receive Christ as our Lord. Neither individuals nor nations can enjoy lasting peace if they reject the Prince of Peace. The apostle Paul writes, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). This is the peace that matters most.

**Just and righteous rule (Isa. 9:7).** Concerning the Messiah’s kingdom and the peace He brings, the prophet describes it as without end. All the earth will be subject to His divine authority.

When Gabriel appeared to Mary, he told her that “the Lord God shall give unto [Jesus] the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33).

Unlike earthly kingdoms—often governed by unjust men—the Messiah will rule with “judgment and justice” (Isa. 9:7).

## **WELCOMING THE KING— John 12:12-15**

**Palm Sunday (John 12:12-13).** Our second text begins shortly after the events of last week’s lesson text,

when Mary anointed the Lord with expensive perfume.

While the chronology of some of the events of the final week of Jesus’ earthly life may seem somewhat complex, we can be reasonably sure that “the next day” (vs. 12) was Sunday. Since Jews would abstain from travel on the Sabbath (Saturday), not even venturing very far from home on that day, we can assume that the Passover pilgrims would be making their way to Jerusalem on the first day of the week.

Passover was a required feast for Jewish men (Ex. 23:14-17); multitudes, therefore, would be on their way to the city at this time. As was true with Pentecost, even Jews from distant lands commonly journeyed to Jerusalem for important gatherings such as this (cf. Acts 2:5-12).

Since Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem is mentioned in all four Gospels (cf. Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44), it was obviously considered a very significant event in Jesus’ life. While the other Gospels all mention people casting their garments on the road as a carpet for the arrival of Jesus, only John specifically mentions the use of palm branches for this purpose. Thus, it is because of the account in John’s Gospel that we now refer to the day honoring this event as Palm Sunday.

While nothing specific is mentioned in the Old Testament concerning palm branches at Passover, their use was common during the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40). During the Maccabean revolt, almost two hundred years previous to Palm Sunday, palm branches were used to celebrate the rededication of the temple.

Consequently, the palm branch became something of a symbol of liberation for Israel. It was therefore significant that they welcomed Christ in this manner.

The exclamation “Hosanna” (John 12:13) means “give salvation now” or “give victory now” (Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, Eerdmans). Since God had liberated ancient Israel from Egyptian oppression at the first Passover, there was perhaps at this time an expectation that He might do the same thing by freeing His people from the oppression of the Romans.

We are all products of our times, especially with regard to our perceived needs. So it was with the Jews of Jesus’ day; they thought their greatest need was freedom from Roman oppression. Thus, their view of Messiah was one of a political deliverer and a military leader.

What the crowd shouted came directly from the Psalms: “Save now. . . . Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (118:25-26). In quoting this psalm, instead of using “he,” the people inserted the phrase “the King of Israel” (John 12:13).

#### **Prophecy fulfilled (John 12:14-15).**

While the other Gospels give details concerning how the donkey Jesus rode was procured, John merely informs us of the fact that He rode such an animal.

Although donkeys were sometimes ridden by kings (II Sam. 16:1-2; I Kgs. 1:32-34), they were often seen as a poor man’s beast and symbolic of peace and humility.

Of course, Christ *is* a king; He simply was not the kind of king Israel was expecting.

Clearly, what Christ came to offer at His first advent differs from what will occur at His second coming. At His first advent, it was necessary for Him to be “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities” because “all we like sheep have gone astray” and “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5-6).

## **MISUNDERSTANDING THE KING— John 12:16**

That the disciples of Jesus did not comprehend many things should not surprise us. All of the Gospels seem to indicate that they were confused about many of His teachings, especially about certain aspects of His mission of salvation. This may be partly due to the fact that He so often spoke in parables. Nor had they as yet received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, who would later greatly illuminate their understanding of His words (Luke 24:45; John 14:26; 16:13).

After Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, His disciples would receive divine illumination through God’s Spirit. What once had been unclear, the Spirit would make perfectly clear.

—John Alva Owston.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What is the first title given to Messiah in Isaiah 9:6?
2. Which of the titles in Isaiah 9:6 is the most commonly remembered at Christmas?
3. What are two qualities mentioned in Isaiah 9:7 that will characterize Messiah’s reign?
4. On what day of the week did Christ triumphantly enter Jerusalem?
5. Why were there so many people in Jerusalem at this time?
6. How were palm branches significant in Jewish history?
7. What does “Hosanna” mean?
8. What kind of king were the Jews seeking at this time?
9. What did Jesus’ riding on a donkey likely symbolize?
10. Why did Christ’s disciples so often misunderstand Him?

—John Alva Owston.

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Jesus is the King who meets all needs (Isa. 9:6).
2. Though the world may be in a state of turmoil and confusion, God brings peace to those who believe in His Son (vs. 7).
3. When God has been faithful, we cannot help telling others about Jesus and what He has done (John 12:12-13).
4. Jesus' example shows us the humility we are to demonstrate when we live out and proclaim the gospel (vss. 14-15).
5. We will fully understand the ways of God when the time is right (vs. 16).

—Charity G. Carter.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Explain the meaning of each name that is ascribed to Jesus: "Wonderful, Counsellor," "The mighty God," "The everlasting Father," "The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).
2. The terms "government" and "peace" seem somewhat contradictory today. How does relating both terms to the promised Messiah make perfect sense (vs. 7)?
3. Why do you think Jesus allowed people to publicly celebrate His arrival (John 12:13)?
4. Why did the prophecy about Jesus' arrival include instructions about not being afraid (vss. 14-15; cf. Zech. 9:9)?

—Charity G. Carter.

## Golden Text Illuminated

**"[They] took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (John 12:13).**

The prophets had predicted a Messiah, and the time had finally arrived. The streets of Jerusalem filled when it was publicized that Jesus was coming.

Jesus had warned His disciples that His entrance into Jerusalem would result in His death, but they, too, may have been caught up in the euphoria. The crowds were paving Jesus' path with the leaves of palm trees, calling Him the King of Israel and quoting Scripture (Ps. 118:25-26). The word "hosanna" is a prayer for salvation: "Oh, save!"

Most of those present, however, were probably not asking to be born again. They were praying for deliverance from Rome, whom God was using to punish them for their sins.

Jesus, by riding on a donkey's colt, was obviously encouraging this event (cf. Zech. 9:9), but He was under no illusion as to where this parade would end. Surely, He knew the meaning of His own cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee" (Luke 13:34). Yet He rode on.

Jesus' triumphal entry into old Jerusalem was a necessary part of His messianic mission. But the week would close out with Him tried, crucified, killed, buried, and raised from the dead. The final stage of His earthly ministry, namely, atonement and forgiveness of sin, would be complete (cf. Heb. 1:3).

—David Samuel Gifford.