

Grace to you and peace ... from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. ²⁸ And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹ When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

Text: Matthew 27:27-31 4/9/17 Palm Sunday Zechariah 9:9-10 Luke 19:28-40 Psalm 24
Hymns: 41, 162, 725, 161

WHAT KIND OF KING IS JESUS?!

- 1. Jesus is no earthly king.**
- 2. Jesus is our Heavenly King!**

No tramp of soldiers' marching feet with banners and with drums
No sound of music's martial beat – "The King of glory comes!"
To greet what pomp of kingly pride no bells in triumph ring.
No city gates swing open wide: "Behold, behold your King!" (WS #725:1)

Dear fellow believers in Jesus Christ,

"My dad's stronger/faster/smarter than your dad!" little boys like to brag to one another. We tend to put our heroes up on a pedestal. And we don't feel good when our heroes fail to meet our expectations. At first glance, there's not much in our Lord Jesus to brag about, at least as far as His earthly life is concerned. Speaking of that time of Jesus' life Isaiah says, "*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him*" (Is. 53:2). There was nothing special about Jesus' physical appearance. He was very meek and lowly. He was poor. He had a small following of faithful disciples. Yet Jesus called Himself a **King**. The soldiers of Pontius Pilate thought that was a joke. And they made great fun of Jesus for making such a claim.

Today, with the Palm Sunday vision of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, we'll consider this question: **WHAT KIND OF KING IS JESUS?!**

1

The Roman soldiers under Pilate certainly misunderstood our Lord's claim to be a king. At Pilate's command they flogged Jesus, a beating that was so vicious the victim sometimes died from it. (That's why, later, Jesus was too weak to carry His cross.)

We're told that "*the whole garrison [gathered] around*" Jesus. There were at the very least sixty soldiers, and there may have been many more. Secular history tells us that the way Roman soldiers treated those who were going to be crucified was ugly. Being surrounded by all those Roman soldiers was terrifying for Jesus. Psalm 22 had prophesied this in figurative language: "*Many bulls have surrounded Me. ... Many dogs have surrounded Me, a band of evildoers has encompassed Me*" (vv. 12, 16). Jesus felt as if he were in a pen surrounded by

huge, powerful bulls that wanted to crush Him, or by a pack of wild dogs that wanted to tear Him apart.

“They stripped [Jesus] and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand.” In those days kings wore scarlet, or purple robes. They pushed a crown of thorns onto Jesus’ head. And they put a stick in Jesus’ hand – like a ruler’s staff of office – ridiculing Jesus for saying He is a king. *“And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.”* How terrible that God should be treated so mercilessly and shamefully by sinful human beings!

The Jews had told Pontius Pilate that Jesus claimed to be a king (Lk. 23:2; Jn. 19:12). They wanted Pilate to think that Jesus was trying to lead a revolt against Rome so that Pilate would approve of executing Him. Pilate wondered why the Jewish leaders hated Jesus so much for claiming to be their king that they wanted Him dead. The Jews were a very small nation under the control of the Roman Empire. And Jesus, a Jew who claimed to be the Jewish king, didn’t look like a king at all. Where were His armies? What were His military conquests? Pilate had asked Jesus, *“Are You a king then?”* And Jesus had answered, *“You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world”* (Jn. 18:37). **WHAT KIND OF KING IS JESUS?!**

John says about Jesus, *“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him”* (Jn. 1:12). Jesus’ own nation as a whole completely misunderstood Him and His claim to be their King. The majority of the Jews didn’t want a Heavenly King who would save them from their sins. They wanted an earthly king who would make their nation great again. When Jesus was crucified Pilate had a sign attached to His cross: *“JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”* The Jewish chief priests resented it, protesting to Pilate, *“Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”* Pilate answered, *“What I have written, I have written”* (Jn. 19:20-22). Thus God saw to it that the truth about Jesus was written on His cross for everyone to see.

After Jesus fed the 5,000 they wanted to make Him their king who would keep feeding them, but Jesus wouldn’t let them (Jn. 6:15, 22f.). People flocked to Jesus for His miracles of healing, and He healed every one of them. But how many of them after being healed does Scripture say also looked to Jesus to save them from their sins? Jesus says, *“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Lk. 19:10). **The most important thing** Jesus gives us is forgiveness for our sins and eternal salvation.

2

Jesus rode through Jerusalem on a lowly donkey – a very unimpressive sight. Later, the Roman soldiers spit in His face. They pressed a crown made of thorns onto His head. They whipped Jesus half to death. The Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders directed insults and mockery and hate-filled words at Jesus. Jesus was nailed to a cross by His hands and feet, bloody and dying. **“WHAT KIND OF KING IS JESUS?!”**

We’re told that *“the governor’s soldiers took Jesus.”* They could only take Jesus because He allowed them to. Jesus had said, *“No one takes [My life] from Me, I lay it down on My own”* (Jn. 10:18). Jesus knew everything His enemies would do to Him before they did it. He had said so to His disciples: *“We are going up to Jerusalem ..., and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles, who will mock Him and spit on Him, flog Him and kill*

Him. Three days later He will rise” (Mk. 10:33-34). Jesus could know all that in advance because He is God. But since Jesus is God, why didn’t He prevent it from happening? Jesus didn’t prevent it **because** He is God. As God, Jesus knew He would be made to suffer and die. And as God, Jesus willingly put Himself through it all because He knew He had to do it to save us.

No earthly king would put himself through what Jesus did for us. No earthly king could. Jesus went to Jerusalem and to Calvary willingly and purposely as our Heavenly King. Isaiah had prophesied about Jesus: *“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth”* (53:7). The writer to the Hebrews says that it was *“for the joy that was set before Him”* that Jesus *“endured the cross, thinking lightly of the shame”* (12:2). As our Heavenly King Jesus submitted to all the ridicule and suffering and to death with joy in His heart, knowing that it would accomplish our salvation.

Although Pilate’s soldiers tried to make a mockery of Jesus’ claim to be a king, Jesus really is a King. The season of Lent reminds us what kind of king Jesus is: *“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes”* – Jesus’ whipping – *“we are healed”* (Is. 53:4-5). Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to earth to save all people. Jesus took upon Himself our sins and the sins of the whole world. Jesus bore the humiliation, rejection, anger, hatred, punishment, and death that **we** deserved for our sins. Jesus, our **Heavenly King**, willingly gave His life in our place. And as our Heavenly King Jesus rose again. Jesus, our Heavenly King, fought the battle against Satan, sin, death, and hell for **us**, winning that battle and giving **us** the victory over them all. Jesus, our Heavenly King, has given us forgiveness for all of our sins, and saved us. Jesus had told the Jewish authorities, *“I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven”* as the Heavenly King to judge them and all people (Mt. 26:64). Jesus, our Heavenly King, is coming again, this time in all of His power and glory as God to take all of us who believe in Him to heaven!

Jesus Christ truly is a King. We gratefully claim Jesus as our Savior, our God, and our Heavenly King!

No fading flow’rs His road adorn; the palms, how soon laid down!
 No bloom or leaf but only thorn The King of glory’s crown.
 The soldiers mock, the rabble cries, the streets with tumult ring.
 As Pilate to the mob replies, “Behold, behold your King!”

Now He who bore for mortals’ sake the cross and all its pains
 And chose a servant’s form to take, the King of glory reigns.
 Hosanna to the Savior’s name till heaven’s rafters ring,
 And all the ransomed host proclaim “Behold, behold your King!” Amen.

(WS #725:3, 4)