

One of the most bothersome difficulties I observe in the lives of many Christians, even for some really solid long-term believers, is a nagging sense of a lack of victory in a key season of life. Have you seen that in others too? Or perhaps that's something that has even plagued *you* in your walk with Jesus.

Well, like all of the most difficult issues, the only real path to a solution is a solid, consistent grounding in God's truth for our lives...pointedly, our lives in the Kingdom. That means delving into the Word of God for the foundations God wants us anchored in. So, let's take a look at a couple of Scriptures.

First and foremost, we must hit "refresh" on the most key truth: Jesus Himself proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom! That's in Mark Chapter 1. Yes, the good news is that Jesus came to establish His Kingdom. And His Kingdom is indeed here, right now! Let's be clear here—the status of the Kingdom of God is what astute theologians call "already and not yet." That means, Jesus is King *now*, His Kingdom is established *now*, and we believers are His ambassadors *now*! As we genuinely pursue our faith in Christ the King, the eternal victory over sin and death is assured! Of course, the Kingdom of God will come into a majestic fullness later—we're "not yet" there. But the current reality of our amazing citizenship, by God's gifts of grace and faith, has firmly established the final victory in our lives, now and for eternity.

Now...about that victory. Jesus's victory came well-disguised as a failure to many, even to some of those disciples taught intimately by the Lord Himself—disciples who had a very hard time grasping what was happening in real time. But in the Old Testament, Zechariah prophesied something profound hundreds of years before Christ, a truth that is supremely valuable to us. Here it is, in Zechariah 9:9 in the ESV.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Do those words sound familiar? Of course, because you likely remember what Jesus instructed for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as related in this famous passage found at Luke 19:28-40.

"And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, saying, 'Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of it.' And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.'"

Wow. Final victory over sin and death was at hand...so stunning that even the very stones would cry out!

So, within a very short period of time after that, Jesus went to the Cross and defeated sin and death for the believer. It was an eternal defeat of the enemy, a complete victory for all believers, for all time. This is the victory Jesus the King has provided, the victory where you and I are to reside and abide, every day, in our particular time and place in the unfolding history of humanity. Simply put, we are ambassadors for the King, messengers of the good news that the Kingdom is here, and that salvation is for whosoever would call upon His name. This is the foundation that Christ has built, the perfect victory we can completely rely upon.

But we get pulled away from that focus all too easily and become entangled in the cares and thorns and diversions of this world. But it's even deeper than that...sadly, many often knowingly choose to build on fallible foundations, like human governments and families and cultural rules. And we do that while knowing that governments, families, and cultures will fail us. Here's the truth: we too easily discard the victory by choosing deficient substitutes for King Jesus—not necessarily in the big picture, but in the pressure of everyday choices in life. Then of course, we cry out, asking where God is...

So, the wavering, unstable victory we have is often of our own making. Rather than focusing on the Rock, on the King and His Kingdom, we lapse into focusing on fatally flawed substitutes. To be sure, we indeed are to participate robustly in the kingdoms of this world as faithful ambassadors of the eternal Kingdom. But we are not to confuse the two kingdoms—one is temporal and shakeable and fully destined to disappoint and fail us, and the other is eternal and unshakeable and will never fail us. A misguided leaning on worldly kingdoms and their priorities is a substantial root cause of our discontents. We tend to build false expectations that the kingdoms of this world are able to be made reliable by us and our leaders, and that those kingdoms can ultimately satisfy. They cannot truly satisfy. They never have. They never will.

All this is what Jesus signaled so strongly to us by riding the donkey. He was bringing peace and victory forever. He certainly was not bringing war to people who wanted a Savior, a Messiah. In Luke 2, the story of Simeon paints a very clear picture. Simeon was "righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Yes, Jesus was not bringing war, He was bringing salvation, He was bringing a new foundation. Indeed, Jesus was signaling His Kingship over the only unshakeable kingdom, His Kingdom. And He was bringing all this to whosoever would call upon His name.

But why was Jesus specifically riding a colt "on which no one has ever yet sat?" Because, in His major opening act, Jesus was a wholly different King than the world had ever seen, a king who *first* brought peace, not war. For sure, no one had ever sat on *that* colt before!

This...*this* is what we, by faith and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, base our lives on: the Only One capable of bringing peace to all. And so, with this understanding and context, we are to confidently build on this perfect victory delivered by Jesus, through His sinless life, His death, His Resurrection, and His Ascension.

Even so, this unique story is not yet made full. And what an amazing picture of future wholeness we are treated to. In one of the most startling examples of God confounding human expectations, the book of Revelation tells of Jesus returning to fight a very big end-time battle on a white horse. Of course, *that* is how we're accustomed to think of authentic victory—a king defeating the enemy on a splendid horse. And so Christ will do just that...*then, sometime in the future*.

But, as we know, the real, eternal victory was His when He rode the humble donkey long ago...bringing peace to every person who calls upon His name. That happened *before* He rides the white horse. Yes, earthly kings go to battle, riding a splendid horse first. Not Jesus. He humbly rode the donkey to bring peace to us all. And so our victory and our peace is happily dependent upon His victory and His peace.

So, just what about that nagging sense of a lack of victory that raises its head in a particular season of life? That may be our sense of things, but only if we don't cultivate an abiding awareness of building on the foundation of Christ. By faith, we must stop bouncing back and forth between elation and misery...like the ball in a never-ending tennis match. Jesus won it all on the Cross. His Kingdom is here. Our blueprint for authentic building is established. So, let's get to work...with gratitude and joy and expectation! We can work with the humility symbolized by Jesus's donkey and reside in the assurance of His future white horse.

*Astonishing*. What a story...a hope...a reality...a future—only accessible with Jesus the Messiah!

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. Has a consistent sense of victory been elusive for you or others close to you? What do you think are identifiable, effective action steps for you or others to stop bouncing back and forth between elation and sadness? Elaborate.
  
2. In what contexts have you put your faith in kingdoms of this world instead of in Jesus alone? (Think of these possibilities: government, family, culture.) We all do some of that at times, even if it's in nuanced ways or even unintentional. So, pray and think: do you have an area where you need to hit "refresh" and again trust in the victory of Christ alone, through a humble, longstanding, patient faith?
  
3. Specifically how does your joy and gratitude and expectation based upon Christ and Him crucified manifest in your life? Explain how others have heard this from you in your words and testimony.