

A Case for Christ-Lent 2010 **Jesus as “Unkingly King”**

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Digging Deeper (Questions are on the last page)

A Case for Christ-Lent 2010: Jesus as Unkingly King

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Background Notes

Key Scripture Texts: 1 Samuel 8; Psalm 146:3-4; Matthew 21; Philippians 2:1-11

Introduction

Who will lead us? The American national debate persistently asks that question. In times of crisis and uncertainty, democracies use the ballot not the bomb to reach a consensus. But as Churchill once noted:

Many forms of Government have been tried and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.¹

To the founding fathers and leaders of the American Revolution, almost any form of government was preferable to the tyranny of monarchy as experienced under George III. America’s dislike for kings runs deep in its national creed, as a casual reading of the Declaration of Independence reveals. Too much power in the hands of too few is the recipe for despotism. “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” Lord Acton wrote in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887. He added, “Great men are always bad men,” perhaps a more debatable assessment. William Pitt, Prime Minister of Great Britain during its war with the colonies, penned similar thoughts when he told the House of Lords in 1770, “Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it.” George Washington, upon taking office as the nation’s first President, refused titles of royalty, such as “his majesty,” answering to the simple designation of “Mr. President.” One major reason that the founders of our republic eschewed monarchy was their firm belief that human beings already have God as their king.

Millennia before the American experiment, the nation of Israel had its own controversy over kingship — something we will explore in our study this week. When kings no longer ruled Israel after the exile, a longing remained for God Himself to become king once again. Tired of oppression at the hands of Gentile overlords like Rome, Jewish people wanted the return of “the Son of David,” a title which referred to an ancient promise that God had made to David that he would not fail to have a descendent sit on the throne of Israel (see Psalm 89:4, 29, 36; 2 Samuel 7:13, 16; 2 Chronicles 7:18; 21:7; Jeremiah 33:19-21). The seeming interruption of Davidic kingly rule presented a serious problem for national Israel. “Where is the son of David?” That was the question of the day, and was equivalent to “Who will rule Israel?”

In this week’s study we examine the concept of kingship in relationship to Jesus. Did Jesus aspire to become a king? Did he understand his own vocation to include the idea of kingship? How did Jesus define “king” when he announced the coming of the “kingdom of God?”

A King Like All the Other Nations (1 Samuel 8)

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵ and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. ⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. ⁹ Now then, obey their voice;

¹ Speech in the House of Commons (1947-11-11) as recorded in *The Official Report, House of Commons* (5th Series), 11 November 1947, vol. 444, cc. 206–07.

only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." ¹⁰ So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. ¹¹ He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. ¹² And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶ He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸ And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day." ¹⁹ But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, ²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." ²¹ And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. ²² And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city" (1 Samuel 8:4-22)

"Be careful what you ask for" might aptly title this passage. Still, a certain unsettledness led Israel to make their request of Samuel, the prophet-judge who ruled Israel after the disastrous leadership of the High Priest, Eli, and his sons. Samuel had been a good leader, consecrated from birth, and beginning his ministry as a child with the words, "Speak, Lord, your servant hears you" (1 Samuel 3:9-10). His rule of Israel was blessed, and the people loved him. However, things would change:

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³ Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

As 8:1-3 explains, his children would not be suitable replacements for their father.

The idea of prophets ruling Israel was not new. Previously, Moses was the quintessential prophet in Israel's history, having advocated God's cause before the Egyptian king, demanding the release of His people. The Exodus followed in due course, under the steady guidance of this grand prophet whose faithfulness to God and the people was his lasting legacy. Lawgiver, shepherd, judge, prophet, but not king. Nor were his successors for nearly four centuries, into Samuel's time. God was Israel's king, and men like Moses, Joshua, and Samuel were His earthly servants. That was the common designation for them: "servant of Yahweh," he who is hearing His word, following his instructions, and ministering to the needs of His people.

As far back as the time of Abraham, we hear the old patriarch calling himself the "servant" when he is in the presence of God or his representatives (Genesis 18:3, 5). Taken as a group, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as covenant partners with God are called His servants (Deuteronomy 9:27). Moses calls himself servant as he stands barefoot before the burning bush in the presence of Yahweh (Exodus 4: 10). Indeed, as a result of the Exodus, all Israel looked to Yahweh as their Lord and Moses as His servant (Exodus 14:31). Until the end of his life (and beyond it), Moses is called Yahweh's servant (see Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 1:1, 2, 7, 13, 15; 8:31, 33; 11:12; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 4-5; 24:29; Judges 2:8). When Moses feels the pressure of leadership and the burden of "carrying" Israel, he appeals to his role as the Lord's servant (Numbers 11: 11). The Lord refers to Moses as "my servant Moses" and then explains what this means in practice: "He is faithful in all my house" (Numbers 12:5). As Moses approaches the end of his life, he refers to his servant relationship with Yahweh as one in which God makes himself known in His greatness and power (Deuteronomy 3:24): that is, the servant "knows" what his master is truly like. Yahweh God's commitment to his servant-people as their covenant Lord is to vindicate them and have compassion on them when they are in a bad way (Deuteronomy 32:36).

Samuel himself is given this designation in his role as prophet, beginning that vocation from childhood when he spoke those famous words, "Speak, Yahweh, your servant hears you," as we noted above (1 Samuel 3:9, 10). Collectively, the prophets are referred to as "my servants the prophets" (2 Kings 9:7; 17:13, 23; 21:10; 24:2; Ezra 9:11; Jeremiah 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Ezekiel 38:7; and elsewhere). If the prophets were

servants, then Yahweh was their Lord and King. His covenant (*berith*) was the bond uniting them to Him. His word was their command.

The common Hebrew word for "servant" is *'ebed*, occurring some 780 times in the Old Testament. Its range of meaning covers "slave, subordinate, servant, subject, vassal, minister". Some 266 times we find the verb form *'abad* which has the root ideas of "work, cultivate, serve, be a slave, be subservient, worship". Generally, to be a servant is to perform work for another or at another's behest. To serve at the "pleasure of the king" is a frequent referent. As we have already noted, in the context of covenant relationship, the vassal serves the suzerain², fulfilling his purposes and obeying his word. From a religious perspective, Israel saw Yahweh as their Lord-suzerain to whom they devoted a lifetime of service, whether at the holy place or in their daily lives. Israel served at the behest of Yahweh, and, in turn, Yahweh became their "shield and exceeding great reward" (see Genesis 15:1).

We can see why Israel was slow to have an earthly king, since to do so would raise a host of questions about the human king's relationship to the *supreme king*, Yahweh. Various alternative styles of leadership arose instead. Among them the *shophēt* ("judge") and the *nabî* ("prophet") were the most common. Samuel was held both offices during his lifetime, and during his "rule" the reign of the judges (*shophetîm*) came to an end and was replaced by the *melek*, the "king." The passage chosen for this section (1 Samuel 8) relates the conversation between Israel and Samuel, and between Samuel and Yahweh. What the people wanted was to be like "the other nations." These "other nations" were the chief enemies of Israel, and it is likely that the people's request grew out of fear that without such a ruler Israel would not be able to defend themselves. Eventually, Saul, their first king, had to fight "...against Moab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines" (1 Samuel 14:47). This expectation is affirmed in 8:20 by the words, "...go out before us and fight our battles."

Samuel jealously defends God, reminding the people that *He is their king*. God redirects Samuel's anger into a solemn warning of what the king they choose will do to them: establish expensive standing armies, force civil labor, and raise high taxes. Then a day will come when they will cry out for God to end the monarchy. This is echoed in a later prophecy: "Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers — those of whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'? 11 I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath" (Hosea 13:10-11).

The sequel to this account is the anointing of Saul as Israel's first king, a tall robust man whose brain did not match his brawn, and who manifested signs of manic depression, bordering on paranoia. During his reign, he faced the stern censure of Samuel for his presumptuous intrusion into the office of priest. The consequences were devastating for Saul:

22 And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king." 24 Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the LORD." 26 And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." 27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. 28 And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. 29 And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, .that he should have regret ... 35 And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel." (1 Samuel 15:22-29, 35).

² The term suzerain refers to a great king or ruler who makes a covenant with a subject people. He is their master. Conversely, the vassal was the servant of the suzerain, the lesser partner in the covenant arrangement. Between suzerain and vassal obtained a legal bond requiring faithfulness and loyalty. The suzerain made promises to his subject people, and the vassal pledged a sacred bond of trust and obedience to the lord. God's relationship with Israel was cemented by covenant oath and promise arrangements. Earthly rulers within Israel did not cease to be vassals just because they took the throne. God was still King alone: king of kings and lord of lords.

After Samuel's death he fought his own demons of jealousy against young David who was anointed by Samuel to succeed Saul upon his death. The last days of Saul's life found him fighting for his life against the Philistines. His capture and beheading at their hands left his legacy empty.

King, Son and Servant: The Old Testament Precedent

When David became king of Israel, his royal claim rested on a special covenant Yahweh made with him. It was the prophet Samuel who sought out a future replacement for the failed king Saul. At that time, God warned that the prophet must not look at outward signs of kingly power but at something much deeper:

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

In place of the "appearance" model of kingship, God affirmed the "king-as-son" model. This was celebrated in the Second Psalm:

6 "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." 7 I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession" (Psalm 2:6-8).

The same language applied to David's successor, his son, Solomon:

12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, 15 but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" highlights this unique role of those who would be kings in Israel. The bond between God and the king was one of "steadfast love" (*hesed*-style love — covenant love). Since God was seen as the king's true Father, He took responsibility to discipline as well as to honor his son. The "house" built by the offspring of David was more than the Temple, but instead a royal dynasty which would last forever.

The concept of divine offspring was not the same as that found among the pagan nations. In their case, nearly unlimited power rested with the ruler who presumed to rule as a god on his throne. That is not the case with Israel's kings. Israel's true God was Yahweh, and the kings were his sons *by covenant bond alone*. The kings could not unilaterally exercise god-like power apart from the covenant. Indeed, a single covenant bound both the king and the people to God, and the king was not at liberty to rule without submitting to the same covenant as all of Israel. While the Davidic covenant marked God's commitment to sustain the dynasty "forever," the covenants with Abraham and Moses leveled the ground for both ruler and ruled.

If a king honored the covenant, he would experience the blessing of God. On the other hand, if he failed to keep the covenant, he would be judged by God and, at times, removed from his throne and replaced by another. Reading the history of the kings of Israel, we discover that some ended well and others badly. The recurrent evaluation of a king's reign follows these examples:

So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done (1 Kings 11:6; 15:26, 34; 16:25, and others).

And Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as David his father had done (1 Kings 15:11; 2 Kings 12:2; 14:3; 15:3, 34, and others).

The formula is simple: *x* did that which was *a* in the eyes of the Lord, followed by a description of the king's misdeeds or his goodness. Notice how references to David set the standard — this in spite of David's sins from which he repented:

Abijam began to reign over Judah. 2 He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. 3 And he walked in all the sins that his father did before him, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. 4 Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him, and establishing Jerusalem, 5 because David

did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite (1 Kings 15:1-5).

King, son, and servant relationships maintained with God kept in delicate balance, promised blessing to the rulers of Israel. Each king lived under the covering of Yahweh's "steadfast love (*hesed*) for David" (2 Chronicles 1:8; 6:42; 2 Samuel 22:51; 1 Kings 3:6; Psalm 18:50; and others). One particular passage in the prophets reveals clearly how kings ought to see their position:

3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. 4 Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples (Isaiah 55:3-4).

Notice how God "made" David to be "witness, leader and commander," not that David made himself into those things.

We turn now to how the New Testament re-shaped the ancient office of the king and applied it to the coming kingdom of God brought by Jesus. Already in the language of the kingdom is contained the idea that God is becoming king once again, and Jesus of Nazareth is His anointed one — His Messiah.

"Your King Is Coming to You": The Jerusalem Entrance (Matthew 21:1-17 and parallels)

As we have noted in previous studies of the Gospels, God has chosen to communicate the Jesus story through more than one human lens. The narrative of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his cleansing of the Temple during his final week receive treatment in all four Gospels. While the material is arranged in somewhat different ways, the substance of the event is essentially the same. However, "sameness" does not mean we have identical accounts by any means. Each writer chooses those elements for emphasis which further his own purpose in composing his Gospel, guided (and superintended), of course, by the Holy Spirit. In the table which follows, we have laid out the parallels, attempting to arrange the sequence of material (especially in John's case) to draw out the identities while preserving the differences. After our general commentary on the Palm Sunday story, we will take a closer look at the nuances and seek to discover their significance. You are encouraged to read the "synoptic" format for yourself and make notes of the distinctive "twist" of each writer.

Although our chosen text is from Matthew 21:1-17, we need to keep in mind what the other writers are saying about the Jerusalem Entry, and thereby appreciate the special emphasis present in Matthew's account.

| Matthew 21:1-17 | Mark 11:1-19 | Luke 19:28-48 | John 12:12-19; 2:13-22 |
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| <p>Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her.</p> <p>Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5 "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"</p> <p>6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.</p> <p>7 They brought the donkey and the</p> | <p>Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples 2 and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat.</p> <p>Untie it and bring it. 3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'"</p> <p>4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. 5 And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. 7 And they brought the colt</p> | <p>And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, 30 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.</p> <p>Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'"</p> <p>32 So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. 33 And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 And they said, "The Lord has need of it." 35 And they brought it to Jesus, and</p> | <p>12:12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.</p> <p>14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it,</p> <p>just as it is written, 15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. 17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. 18 The reason why the</p> |

| Matthew 21:1-17 | Mark 11:1-19 | Luke 19:28-48 | John 12:12-19; 2:13-22 |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. 8 Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting,</p> <p>"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"</p> <p>10 And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" 11 And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."</p> <p>12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.</p> <p>13 He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers." 14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.</p> <p>15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, 16 and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "' Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?'" 17 And leaving them, he went out</p> | <p>to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. 8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. 9 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting,</p> <p>"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"</p> <p>11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. 12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.</p> <p>15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 16 And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.</p> <p>17 And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."</p> <p>18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. 19 And when evening came they went out of the city.</p> | <p>throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. 37 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, 38 saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!"</p> <p>Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." 41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."</p> <p>45 And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold,</p> <p>46 saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers." 47 And he was teaching daily in the temple.</p> <p>The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, 48 but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.</p> | <p>crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."</p> <p>13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"</p> <p>14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18 So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word</p> |

| Matthew 21:1-17 | Mark 11:1-19 | Luke 19:28-48 | John 12:12-19; 2:13-22 |
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| of the city to Bethany and lodged there. | | | that Jesus had spoken. |

"Hosanna" is a perfectly good Aramaic/Hebrew word, and had you lived in Jesus' day, you would have heard it used at more than one Jewish festival. The actual form is *hōšî'â-na'*, and literally, it means "Save! Please!" The root behind the name Jesus (*Yeshua*) is the same as the root for Hosanna. The nation of Israel stood in need of salvation — from their national sins and from their enemies all around them. The exile was everywhere evident, and it was on the occasion of the great festivals that they gave voice to these hopes and expectations. Yahweh, their Creator and covenant God, would one day come and save them. Passover — and the week which surrounded it — was just such a festival. During it, Israel recalled how God had rescued His people from Egyptian slavery, bringing them through the sea and on their way to Canaan land. Each year, at the time of the festival, the Roman procurator would allow the High Priest to wear his holy vestments and perform the sacred rites in the Temple. For a moment, ever so briefly, Israel lived once more the life of liberation, the death of its Pascal Lamb a firm reminder of God's redemption.

The real question, however, was "Would God do this again, now, and in our time?" That's what all the talk about Messiah ultimately meant: God's anointed one, come to save His people. This was, of course, at the very center of the vocation of Jesus of Nazareth. For some time now, he had preached and acted in ways that reminded the people of how God Himself had spoken and acted. All of that was now coming to a crucial climax when the powers of evil and the purposes of God would clash in the great battle waged on the cross. "Behold, the Lamb of God," John the Baptizer had witnessed at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (John 1:29). But Passover had come once more, and this time the lamb would take a human form. In what ways did Jesus make this announcement to his people? In what sense was he their king?

Through two powerful symbolic actions, Jesus would dramatically tell this part of the story: first, that he came to save, the royal king riding on a donkey's colt, humble, lowly, offering himself to Israel; second, as judge, coming suddenly to his Temple, overturning the old order in order to make room for the new one. In these ways Jesus told Israel's story by bringing it to fulfillment at last. He was a prophet, announcing the salvation of Yahweh and pronouncing judgment at the same time. As we shall note, some would receive his coming and become the Restored Israel, its covenant renewed and its mission to the world revitalized. Others would resist his kingdom message and Messianic suffering, stumbling over the cross and what it meant. Ultimately, a polarized nation would head toward its Armageddon, resulting in the loss of Temple and Land. We will see how that painful outcome was symbolized in Jesus' Cleansing of the Temple.

An Historical Perspective. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem, following the path Jesus took, involved some serious mountain climbing. At 800 feet below sea level, Jericho is the lowest city on the planet. When the traveler reaches the top of Mt. Olivet, he has ascended some 3000 feet above sea level: no mean task!

In addition to geography, history is also useful in understanding the text before us. During the 160's B.C.E., the Jewish people experienced the oppressive policies of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. The little kingdom of Judah had fallen under Syrian occupation. His desecration of the Temple prompted a Jewish uprising, led by the righteous family of Matathias, including his famous son, Judas Maccabeus. The outcome of this revolt was the defeat of the Syrians and the establishment of a dynasty lasting some 100 years. On the festive occasion of the Temple's re-consecration, the following events took place as recorded in the book of 2 Maccabees:

When Maccabeus and his companions, under the Lord's leadership, had recovered the temple and the city, 2 they destroyed the altars erected by the Gentiles in the marketplace and the sacred enclosures. 3 After purifying the temple, they made a new altar. Then, with fire struck from flint, they offered sacrifice for the first time in two years, burned incense, and lighted lamps. They also set out the showbread. 4 When they had done this, they prostrated themselves and begged the Lord that they might never again fall into such misfortunes, and that if they should sin at any time, he might chastise them with moderation and not hand them over to blasphemous and barbarous Gentiles. 5 On the anniversary of the day on which the temple had been profaned by the Gentiles, that is, the twenty-fifth of the same month Chislew, **the purification of the temple took place.** 6 The Jews celebrated joyfully for eight days as on the

feast of Booths, remembering how, a little while before, they had spent the feast of Booths living like wild animals in caves on the mountains. 7 Carrying **rods entwined with leaves, green branches and palms, they sang hymns of grateful praise** to him who had brought about **the purification of his own Place**. 8 By public edict and decree they prescribed that the whole Jewish nation should celebrate these days every year. 9 Such was the end of Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes....On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the year one hundred and seventy-one, **the Jews entered the citadel with shouts of jubilation, waving of palm branches, the music of harps and cymbals and lyres, and the singing of hymns and canticles**, because a great enemy of Israel had been destroyed (2 Maccabees 10:1-9; 1 Maccabees 13:51).

These passages from the Maccabees use the same kind of language as we find in the Royal Entry story in Matthew 21 (and parallels). The actions of the crowds reveal heightened expectation that Israel's Messiah would, on this occasion, fulfill his mission much as the rebels had done in previous generations: defeat the enemies of Yahweh and restore the Temple to its proper service. But did they think Jesus was that Messiah? As the readers watch the events of Matthew 21 unfold, they will notice the reversal of expectations and the irony of what Jesus actually does when he arrives in the Temple courts. If he is their king, Jesus acts in unusual ways indeed!

Bring Me the Colt. The assignment given to two of the disciples (which ones?) to bring a "colt" from Bethphage has a certain mystery about it. This account is cast in a prophetic form: "Go... and immediately you will find...And they went away and found...(Matthew 21:2, 6-7; Mark 11:2-4). The story before us breathes with prophecy. This alone should draw the reader into the Old Testament scriptures in search of precedents. Matthew and John explicitly cite Zechariah 9:9 (see below) as fulfilled by what Jesus did that day.

1. A colt which has never had a rider points to the sacred purpose Jesus intends for it. OT texts like Numbers 19:2, Deuteronomy 21:3 and 1 Samuel 6:7 all mention things that have not ever before been "used", in some sense, precisely because they will now be put to holy use. Jesus intends to use the colt in a symbolic way as its true owner and Messiah for a holy reason.
2. This is a colt tied. From Genesis 49:8-12 we have this prophetic account: "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. 9 You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness-- who dares to rouse him? 10 The scepter 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. 11 He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. 12 His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk."
3. To untie the colt was itself a sign of the Messiah, the one who "comes," and finds a parallel when the people sing "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord".
4. The true "Lord" of the colt is Jesus who "has need of it" now, but will return it "immediately". Jesus uses the word "immediately" to emphasize the urgency with which these events unfold. It is among the marvels of the ministry of Jesus that he "needs" his creatures to accomplish his work. This language endows both the colt and its "owners" with genuine importance. Whether it be loaves or fishes or a colt, Jesus will receive these gifts of creation and transform them into holy things. Mark and Luke report the questioning of the disciples by the colt's owners, but, then, without argument, the owners accepted what Jesus said as communicated through his disciples. This has not been, nor will it be, the only situation in which the disciples will need to rely solely on the word of Jesus when called into question about their actions. In the future, they will face more dire inquisitions and it will be the words of Jesus that will sustain and give them release.

A Grand Entry. The treatment afforded Jesus by his disciples, and the crowds making their entrance to Jerusalem, can only be regarded as worthy of *royalty*. In 2 Kings 9:12, similar actions take place when Jehu is anointed king of Israel: Jehu said,

"Here is what he told me: 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.'" 13 They hurried and took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!"

As we observed earlier, similar language appeared in the Maccabean victory celebration some 200 years earlier. Yet, in the present context, we can only say that the enthusiasm was momentary and the particular occasion of Jesus' own arrival is surrounded by more traditional chants of praise taken from Psalm 118:25:

"O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. 27 The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar."

Those words "O Lord, save us" are the real meaning behind the shouts of "Hosanna". This psalm was used by pilgrims during both the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles, *Sukkot*) and Passover. That the pilgrims accompanying Jesus sang this antiphonally can be seen from the "chiastic" arrangement of underlying Hebrew lines:

| | | |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| A | Hosanna! | |
| B | | Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! |
| B | | Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! |
| A | Hosanna in the highest! | |

The rabbis in their *Eighteen Benedictions* included the essence of this "Hosanna" prayer. Without actually saying that Jesus is the Messiah who brings to final fulfillment the kingdom of David, the crowds are re-enacting the great promise and hope that on this Passover celebration that might come to pass. The very fact the Jesus arrives in the city, riding the colt, only intensifies the expectation. But we need to be careful that we do not read more into the story than the Gospel writers offer us. Too often this entry has been interpreted as a clear acceptance by the Jewish pilgrims of Jesus' kingly offer. Yet, what they sang and what they did that day was to enter into the normal celebration leading up to the sacred Passover feast, as Jewish people had done for generations. It will be left for later generations to look back and see clearly that what happened that day was the real fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, even though the people did not recognize the significance at the time. Nor should we be misled into saying, as some have said, that the same crowd who hailed Jesus as Messiah on that day would later cry out in Pilate's judgment hall, "Crucify him!" Nothing in the text of the gospels can be construed as implying this. That portrayal and interpretation might be good script for Sunday School drama troupes, but not a good handling of our text!

Judging the Temple. It would not be an overstatement to say that the Jewish people venerated their Temple. Thanks to King Herod the Great, it stood as an architectural marvel, gilded with gold and shining like a divine emblem in the noonday sun. All of the main Feasts of Israel climaxed with some Temple rituals, as pilgrims came from all over the Empire to celebrate together. "The Temple, the Temple" could be heard in Jesus' day, much as it was heard in the days of Jeremiah. And in this veneration lay the tragic danger which led to the destruction of the Temple: twice.

The text from Jeremiah lies in the background of Jesus' **Temple action**:

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Stand at the gate of Yahweh's house and there proclaim this message: "Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship Yahweh. 3 This is what Yahweh Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. 4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh!" 5 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, 6 if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, 7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. 8 But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. 9 "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"--safe to do all these detestable things? 11 Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares Yahweh (Jeremiah 7:1-11).

First impressions are important. What would a visitor approaching the Temple courts immediately see? He would encounter crowds of people exchanging their currency for the Temple shekel, allowing them to purchase proper sacrifices, or, in the case of the poor, to buy pigeons instead. How did it come about that such commerce

was located inside the Temple area? There is good evidence that this practice was a recent innovation started by Caiaphas³ to counter pre-existing markets, located *outside the Temple*. The Mount of Olives was home to four markets where the necessary sacrifices could be purchased. But the Temple authorities did not control the commerce in these. And so the High Priest instituted his "counter-market" inside the court of the Gentiles, a decision which led to much controversy with the established markets on the Mount of Olives. Jesus knew that this practice was not needed, since the other markets already existed elsewhere. What he opposed was not the fulfillment of Temple sacrifices, but the unnecessary housing of its commercial apparatus inside the Temple courts.

The zeal with which Jesus carries out his prophetic action seems to be the only act of overt violence committed by Jesus. It parallels the actions of Jeremiah some 600 years before, when he broke a large clay flask to symbolize the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Jeremiah 19; see also Jeremiah 26:1-15). In performing the action in the way he did, Jesus effectively fulfilled the predictions of Malachi 3:1-5 in which the Lord comes suddenly to his Temple and accomplishes judgment on the people. What would lead Jesus to engage in such dramatic action?

He was outraged that money changing was now being conducted in the court of the Gentiles. To this court, Gentiles who had sincere interest in the religious life of Judaism ordinarily came to worship. But under the current circumstances, with people crowded there to exchange currency, there was no room for them to come and pray. Existing Temple regulations prohibited use of this area as a short-cut, and Jesus is, ironically, enforcing the standing rules put in place long before Caiaphas decided to get creative with his innovations. God's purposes, Jesus proclaims forcefully, are to provide a place of prayer "for all nations", and those purposes must not be thwarted by the trade now taking place in the Court of the Gentiles. Isaiah 56:7 already laid out this purpose: Jesus comes to sanction and enforce it, something the officials of the Temple had failed to do.

Worse than this, Jesus identifies the Temple as having become a "cave of *lestes* (in Greek)".⁴ Who are these *lestes*? Most translations use the word "robbers", but this is far too weak a word to communicate the meaning found in the Greek literature of the day. In both the writings of Strabo and Josephus, this word has a very specific connotation: "brigand" comes closest in meaning, as Buchanan showed in his 1959 article, "Mark 11:15-19: Brigands in the Temple". He argued then that already in Jesus' time, the Zealots had begun to use the Temple as a stronghold for their subversive activities against Rome. The current innovations started by Caiaphas created a distasteful atmosphere in the Temple that incubated the sort of resistance movement led by these "brigands". Jesus was saying, then, that due to these outrageous practices, the Temple authorities were contributing to the anti-establishment attitudes embodied in the activities of the anti-government guerrilla groups already marauding throughout the Judean country-side. Rather than being a light to the nations, Second Temple Judaism was becoming a breeding ground for terrorist cells bent on insurrection against Rome. Where could all of this lead? Jesus is clear: just as he overturned the tables, so God would overturn the Temple in judgment as the Old Testament prophets had already foreshadowed.

In contrast to these violent revolutionary schemes, Jesus performs his prophetic action, speaks the word of God against the injustice in the Temple and withdraws. Two responses follow:

1. The leadership is incensed, but unable to act quite yet, because,
2. The people are once more amazed at the authority of Jesus' teaching. Thankfully, they are not incited by his symbolic action to engage in the kind of zealotry proposed by the brigands whose rise Jesus seeks to forestall by what he said and did that day. Rather, they are moved by what he says. This has always been Jesus' focus: to re-store the true people of God by teaching the word of God.

³ See Katharine Helen Bond, *Caiaphas*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, pp.65ff; Ronald Brownrigg, "Caiaphas," in *Who's Who in the New Testament*, Routledge, 1993; William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Eerdmans, 1993, pp.403ff; V. Eppstein, "The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple," *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 55 (1964), pp.42-58.

⁴ See Timothy C. Gray, *Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study in Narrative Role*, , Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

The Form of a Servant (Philippians 2:1-11)

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The structure of this section "wraps" a powerful Christ-hymn inside a literary envelope. This is an example of *inclusio* in the rhetorical form. Consider 2:5-11 as the "heart" of argument one, with an "appeal" section before it (2:1-4) and another appeal section after it (2:12-18). It is written like a sandwich with the "meat" on the inside, but carefully enclosed within two slices of instructional "bread". As we have already observed from our previous studies, Paul has concerns for the Philippians in the areas of "unity" and "suffering". His deeply personal connections to this Christ-community, and his generally positive assessment of their Christian growth thus far, strengthens his concerns that nothing undo the wonderful progress the Philippians have already made. But Paul knew a great deal about Philippi, no doubt, especially the social pressures placed on the Christ-followers by a Roman colony built on values quite different from those Paul had taught the Philippian believers.

1. Unity in Everything (2:1-4)

We are met by the four-fold use of the word "if" (Greek: *ei*) in the first verse of this section. "If" can mean many things in our language, and Greek has many of the same nuances. Here we have what is sometimes called a "simple real conditional sentence", one in which it is assumed, at least for the sake of argument, that what is stated after the "if" (sometimes called the "protasis") is true. We might say to our spouse, "If you are going to the store, pick up some bread," when we fully expect that they are, in fact, going to the store. In the present case, "if" has the force of "since", and for greater effect is intensified by its four-fold use: "if any...". So what is it that Paul is so certain of that he can use it to introduced his first argument?

Four Grounds of Appeal (2:1)

Some scholars have noted that the first three "if" sentences actually form a Trinitarian appeal:

1. Encouragement: Christ (2:1a)
2. Love: God the Father (2:1b)
3. Fellowship: Holy Spirit (2:1c)

Nor is this an isolated case. Paul, in his famous "benediction" to 2 Corinthians, wrote:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Notice the order of the three phrases and the content which parallels our present passage. What is Paul's focus? It is on the person of God in His entirety: Father, Son and Holy Spirit who is the ground and basis of our unity in the Christian community. And so as to cement this connection, Paul throws in the fourth "if" statement on the heels of this Trinitarian formula!

4. Tenderness and Compassion (2:1d), which plainly focuses on what Paul wants to see within the life of the Philippian church.

Paul is arguing in the strongest of terms that because of the nature of God, three-ness in unity, there should be unity among the people of God. Moreover, each member of the Godhead brings something to that unity:

Christ brings *encouragement*: From the Greek word *paraklesis* which means "a calling alongside of", without question, *paraklesis* is what Christ did when he became a human being and made his temporary residence among us (see John 1:14). At the heart of Christ's Messianic name, "Immanuel", is the idea, "God with us". It is the "with-ness" of God we discover in Jesus Christ, and it is this dynamic which he also brings into our

Christian communities, namely, that we are to be "with" each other, alongside our brothers and sisters, in solidarity with them whatever their condition, status or social situation. Christ came alongside all kinds of people: tax-collectors, prostitutes, and "other sinners". And while he was criticized for it by those who had qualms about hanging around the "wrong kind of people", Jesus made it his business to do so--all the way to the cross where he hung between "two criminals"! Is their "alongside-ness" in Christ? Oh, indeed!

God the Father brings love: Of course the Father is the initiator of our unity by "loving us" before we "loved Him" (1 John 4:10). Paul uses two words here to describe this idea: *paramuthion* and the familiar word for "love", *agape*. Consistent with the love of the Father, are his words of "address, exhortation, assuagement, and abatement", all ideas found within the meaning of *paramuthion*. This is evidently a different kind of love than might be found between friends or family members. The New Testament writers, when they wanted to write about God's special love, chose a word commonly in use, *agape*, to communicate this idea. Some scholars refer to this as "love of the will" or "love of deliberate choice". At any rate, it is not tied to mere feeling or spontaneous emotion, but to the decision of God to be actively involved in the lives of His creation. This is expressed most vividly in John 3:16, "For God so *loved* the world that he gave His only Son..." It is the love of God which unites the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, but also unites fellow Christians with each other (see John 17:20-21).

The Spirit brings fellowship: Here Paul uses the word *koinonia* to express the idea of "commonness, communion, partnership". He has a preference for this word in discussing his relationship with the Philippians (1:5 and 3:10) and throughout his letters (see also Romans 15:26, 1 Corinthians 1:9, and elsewhere). In the present context, Paul means "fellowship with the Spirit", that is, the Spirit fellowships with us, and we have a "common life in the Spirit". Paul is specific elsewhere in explaining what this means:

1. One Spirit places believers in one body (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4), and so making them "one".
2. One Spirit makes possible "access to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).
3. One Spirit maintains and guards Christian unity (Ephesians 4:3).

Tenderness and compassion. Then, as if to bring all of these individual "if" statements into a grand unity, Paul adds yet one more which seems to involve the whole Godhead. The words Paul employs here communicate deep, inward feelings which get expressed through acts which are merciful and compassionate. The Greek words *splagchna* and *oiktirmoi* are in the singular and plural forms respectively. Though they refer back to the adjective "any" which is singular, Paul still keeps in tact the tidy parallelism of all four "if any" statements, even if it means breaking the rules of grammar! A few comments on these two words:

1. *splagchna*, used for "tenderness", is a visceral word, that is, it refers to something deep inside a person. It has a literal meaning, namely, "kidneys and liver", but, as was true with the ancients, such language pointed to deep feelings which they believed originated in these human organs. God is deeply moved by what happens to his creatures. Recall the story of Israel in Egypt, crying out to Yahweh for help, and how Yahweh responded (see Exodus 1). Or the story of Manasseh, king of Judah, whose sins sent him into exile, but whose repentant cries to God brought a deeply felt response. 2 Chronicles 33 tells us that Yahweh was "moved" by Manasseh's prayer. Theologians have sometimes claimed that God was "impassable", that is, unmoved by emotion. We beg to differ. Ours is an "open God" who responds in tenderness to human need, as a mother caring for her infant (see Isaiah 49:15; 66:13). Paul previously used this word to describe his own feelings toward the Philippians in 1:8, and now he shows his audience that such deep feeling originates in the very nature of God Himself.
2. *oiktirmoi*, used for "compassion", but actually comes closer to the idea of "mercies", those acts of compassion expressed by someone seeking to alleviate the suffering or meet the needs of others. Whereas "tenderness" implies feeling, this expression points to concrete action based on those feelings. Are we truly compassionate only if we feel compassion? Or does not mercy mean more than this? That is why Paul uses these two terms together: God both feels and acts from a heart of tenderness. And, by implication, Paul is

telling the Philippians, that is how they should behave in relationship to each other if unity is to be manifest in their community.

The Old Testament contains powerful passages which teach the tenderness and compassion of Yahweh toward His people:

And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have **mercy** on whom I will have mercy, and I will have **compassion** on whom I will have compassion (Exodus 33:19).

None of those condemned things shall be found in your hands, so that the LORD will turn from his fierce anger; he will show you **mercy**, have **compassion** on you, and increase your numbers, as he promised on oath to your forefathers (Deuteronomy 13:17).

Have **mercy** on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great **compassion** blot out my transgressions (Psalm 51:1).

And in the New Testament we hear:

As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy (James 5:11).

And Yahweh similarly expects his people to imitate these great attributes of His character in their dealings with each other. Consider:

This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other' (Zechariah 7:9-10).

Nor can we forget Paul's words in Romans 12:1, "I appeal to you on the basis of the mercies of God...", that is, I'm asking you to do something because of what God has already done. Paul is doing the same thing in Philippians 2:1, and it sets the tone for what follows.

Results Which Come From Responding To This Appeal (2:2)

Philippians 2:2 makes clear that Paul is joyful because of his previous relationship with the Philippians, but now he wants them to "make that joy complete" by following the example of God, as set forth in 2:1. For Paul that means "think the same" (Greek: *hina to auto phronete*). The Greek does not mean "agree on everything" or "always hold the same opinion". That would create a rather dull and monotonous sort of unity indeed! The verb *phronein* appears ten times in Philippians in one form or other, and some twenty-three times in all of Paul's letters. Considering that it appears twenty-six times in the whole New Testament, Paul's usage is remarkable. *Phronein* does not mean "to think" in merely an intellectual or mental sense. As Bertram notes, it involves one's emotions, attitudes and will. Not uniformity of thought or enforcement of a single opinion--something that would certainly provoke dissension and not unity--but instead a total orientation of will, mind, and heart which wants one thing: unity in spirit and feeling that is able to overcome the tensions created by such immense diversity as was found in the city of Philippi. Cranfield has written: "Such unity will only come when Christians are humble and bold enough to lay hold on the unity already given in Christ and to take it more seriously than their own self-importance..." Perhaps the best translation of *phronein* is simply "to have a common attitude".

But of what sort? Paul is clear: "having the same love", a Greek participial phrase explaining how one is to develop this common attitude. Our attitudes must be nurtured by the love of God. How does God love? That is how we should love! Further, Paul explains this attitude by its fruit: "harmonious" relationships, from the Greek *sumpsuchoi*, a compound adjective based on the word for "life or spirit" prefixed with the word of "together". Learning to "live together" harmoniously best expresses the thought of this word, and Paul sees it as the result of a deepening attitude which mirrors the love within God. Implied is the notion of togetherness, good will and equality. Finally, Paul binds together the thought of 2:2 with a reprise of the verb *phronein*, this time stressing common purpose. And so throughout 2:2, the apostle is revealing the **results** that flow from imitating God in His encouragement, love, fellowship, tenderness and compassion.

The Malady Requiring the Appeal to Unity (2:3a)

Having grounded unity in God, Paul now rejects a series of very pagan values, "power values", and in their place he installs Christ values.

1. selfish ambition: *eritheian*, that is, "one who electioneers for office, courting popular applause by trickery, courting distinction, desire to put oneself forward, partisan and factious spirit". A word which embodies the quintessential power broker, maneuvering himself into first place against a field of competitors.
2. vain conceit: *kenodoxian*, that is, "empty glory, vain self-estimation". The Greek term *kenos* means "empty". The person who proclaims his own glory, but the claim is empty and without merit. Paul strategically uses this word negatively in this section, so that later, he can juxtapose it to the attitude of Jesus in which he "emptied himself of the glory".
3. look to own interests: *ta heauton ekastos skopountes*, that is, "to observe, contemplate, look at, care for, have regard for" one's own private "things". The privacy of such a person's concerns isolates them from the collective concerns of the whole community.

Party-spirit, fueled by the wider Philippian culture, threatened the unity of the Philippian church. This is not a surprise, considering the stratification of Philippi's society. All the old animosities, suspicions, grievances, and hostilities followed the Philippians into the church where they would now need to be resolved. Paul is convinced the Christ-message and the presence of God in their lives would be sufficient to overcome these differences and restore unity to the community. But he wants to be clear about the ugliness of such pagan values.

The Remedy is Humility (2:3b-4)

"Humbly", Paul continues, "consider others better than yourselves". The idea of "humility" is the key element for unity at Philippi. The Greek noun, *tapeinophrosune*, is unique to the New Testament, but the adjectival form was found in ancient Greek texts, and it meant "the mentality of a slave" along with all sorts of very negative connotations: base, unfit, shabby, mean, of no account. Pagans would not have seen "humility" as a virtue, and so it remained only a negative adjective for them! A compound word, its first part is *tapein* and simply refers to a state of lowliness, unimportance, being small, being humble. The Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint, abbreviated as LXX) used this word to indicate how God's people should relate to God, and how God honored attitudes of being "humble" (see Isaiah 57:15). God gives grace to the humble (Isaiah 2:11; Ezekiel 17:24). The Bible, contrary to pagan culture, sees lowliness and humility as virtues.

Paul explains the meaning of this "invented noun", *tapeinphrosune*, with the words "considering each other better than yourselves". Ironically, in Philippian society, as we have already seen, people were assessed based on their status. There was no "considering" involved! You *were* a slave or poor or a non-citizen, regardless of how you *considered* yourself! And so, Paul is introducing a new way of "thinking" a new "attitude" about the all-important marker of "status" as it existed in the wider culture. He is saying to the Philippians, "Stop thinking about your position based on your own status (or as Paul puts it "interests"), but look outward to the people around you, and honor them with a status that is higher than your own." Pagans would do the opposite. They would want to see others as "lower" than themselves in order to maintain their own "status". But Christians, shaped by the God of encouragement, love, fellowship, tenderness and compassion, have a whole different "attitude". Voluntarily place yourself lower than others, Paul is saying. In Philippian culture that would have been seen as wholly counter-cultural, and contrary to the honor given to existing "status". It certainly flew in the face of all the norms surrounding "citizenship". Yet, in order for true unity to happen, such an attitude was absolutely necessary.

2. The Mind of Christ (2:5-11)

Whereas Paul previously appealed to a general understanding of "unity virtues" found in God (2:1), he now wants to bring those virtues into concrete form. He does this by devoting several verses to describing the "humiliation of Christ". To introduce this all-important section, he appeals to the Philippians to have the same "attitude" (once more he uses a form of *phronein*) among themselves, as that found in Christ. Some translations

use the word "in" before "you" in 2:5. We believe "among" better fits the plural form of the pronoun (*humin*). Had it been singular, "in you" would make sense, but when there are many "you's", "among" more accurately captures the meaning. The Christ-attitude, sometimes called the "mind of Christ", is what really guarantees unity within the Philippian church. People must relate to each other with the same attitude as Christ related to the whole human race when he "came down" to save it. This is Paul's overall point in using the example of Christ in 2:5-11.

Paul proceeds to explain that attitude by incorporating what has come to be known as the "Christ Hymn", 2:6-11. In "stair-step" fashion, Paul shows how Christ Jesus descended from his exalted position in relation to God his Father, and, at last, died as a common criminal. The whole passage is written like a poem, and most good translations typeset it in that fashion. It appears to have three stanzas, the first two developing the theme of Christ's "humiliation", while the last one reaches a crescendo with his final exaltation. This hymn seems brims with beauty and overflows with majesty. It was no doubt sung in the early Christian communities, and this was likely the reason Paul gave it to the Philippian church. Perhaps Paul believed that what the believers required was not a lengthy dissertation, but a hymn which they would sing again and again. And each time they sang it, the implications of its message would sink in yet deeper. The music of the community often accomplishes what prosaic exposition cannot, namely, it saturates the heart and soul with the truth of its words through the grandeur of its melody and lyric.

Sharply worded contrasts permeate this part of the reading:

- divinity and humanity,
- true being and fraudulent calculation,
- death and life,
- humiliation and exaltation,
- bending and raising,
- heaven and earth,
- things above and below,
- self-imposed slavery and God-bestowed lordship.⁵

Some simple observations rise from this part of the text:

1. Unmistakably, Christ was God in His essence, or, as Paul phrases it, he was God *morphically* (from the Greek: *morphe*). Lightfoot long maintained that this word expresses the essential and intrinsic nature of Christ--that he was truly God. And if Christ was truly God, he could not be anything greater than that! No need to strive or contest for a higher place. No need to seek a better role.
2. Confident of who he really is, Christ did not view "equality with God" something he had to "seize" or "rob" or "held fast" as if it would slip out of his hands. Why? Because Christ had the abiding confidence of his own divinity, grounded as it was, in the reality of his relationship to the Father. He knew he was God, and so there was no additional need to compete for that status.
3. "He emptied himself" (Greek: *heauton ekenosen*). Of course, he could not cease to be God, but he could choose to lay aside the prerogatives of God. That is, he chose to not avail himself of the privileges of Godhood, even though they were plainly his. Recall how Paul used the idea of "empty glory" when he was describing the pagan values his readers were to lay aside? In this passage, Christ **empties himself of the glory**.
4. "Form of a servant". Paul uses the same Greek word as he does when he speaks of "the form of God". Christ was just as truly a servant, as he was truly God. To be the one does not preclude the other. That is, of course, Paul's point. The assuming of the servant's role in no way compromises a Christian's identity, any more than Christ's taking the form of a servant meant that he ceased to be in essence, God.
5. Paul uses two different words to underscore Jesus' relationship to his humanity:

⁵ C. Clifton Black, "Philippians 2:5-11: Preaching This Week," *WorkingPreacher.org*, 2009.

- a. "in human likeness": Greek, *homoiomati*, meaning, "that which has been made after the likeness of something, a figure, image, likeness, representation, equality, identity". Anyone looking at him, interacting with him, and being around him would find a true human being in every respect. There was nothing "plastic" about Jesus becoming a human being. He was no demi-god or mythical half-god, half-man creature. As the creed expresses, "Fully God, and fully man".
 - b. "in human fashion": Greek, *schemati*, meaning, "habit, figure, bearing, discourse, actions, manner of life". So as to reinforce the first term, Paul invokes yet another word that validates the true humanity of Jesus, and certifies that Jesus became a human being beyond dispute.
6. Why is so much emphasis placed on demonstrating the true humanity of Jesus? Much of Paul's argument that Christians should set aside prideful ambition rests with the truth that Jesus did much more than that. Ironically, there were some teachers who would claim that Jesus did not really "come in the flesh" (see 1 John 4:1-3), that the idea of God becoming human was preposterous, and even blasphemous. Among the Jewish community it sounded like idolatry. Among the Greeks it seemed outright ridiculous that gods would freely choose to become human beings except as actors. To counter this resistance to the incarnation, Paul makes himself quite clear through the language he uses.
 7. But isn't the incarnation enough? No, Paul goes on to affirm, he humbled himself even further by accepting the shameful death of the cross. The "humiliation" of Christ (Greek: *etapeinosen*, from *tapeinoo*, meaning "to make low, bring low, to bring to humble condition, reduce to meaner circumstances, assign a lower rank or place, ranked below those who are honored, to cause to blush") made him lower than even his common humanity required. If leaving behind the majesty and privilege of being God was not enough, Jesus voluntarily submitted to the basest form of death in the Roman Empire, namely, that of a criminal. To the Roman mind, he was an enemy of the state, and threat to the Empire. To the Jewish mind, he was a failed Messiah, and an embarrassment to the nation of Israel. Yet, in spite of this lowered reputation, Jesus accepted his situation freely. Of course, Paul's point is simple. If the heart of our gospel is the incarnation and humiliation of Christ, God's Son, how can we, the Christ-community, live any differently? Must not we lay aside our claim to "glory"? In the service of others and for their sake, should we not be willing to humiliate ourselves even further? And does not the knowledge that we are "God's children" serve as sufficient confidence for us, allowing us to let go of power when the needs of others demands it?
 8. Finally, Jesus does not remain in his humiliation, though he chooses it without coercion. "God highly exalted him" (2:9), Paul writes, and invests him as King with the "name above every name" (Greek: *to onoma to hyper pan onoma*). Paul has in mind both the resurrection of Jesus and his enthronement at God's right hand. The language used in this passage echoes Old Testament texts such as Isaiah 45:23 in which all of creation will bow before Yahweh. In Paul's argument, the final vindication of Jesus comes when all bow before him and confess that he alone is *kurios*, "Lord". And for whose glory does all this happen? *Eis doxa theos patros*, "unto God the Father's glory". While it might seem reasonable that the glory is given to Jesus in his exaltation, Paul wants the argument to place God the Father in the role of glory-getter. It was Jesus who laid aside everything to redeem lost humanity and thereby bring glory to his Father. Likewise, Paul wants his readers to absorb the same truth: they are to lay down their lives in service for each other, so that their community life may bring glory to God.

To the Philippian Christians, this Christ-hymn proclaims the basis of their salvation, namely, in Christ's coming down as a human being, having laid aside his legitimate claims to equality with God. As Paul's hymn makes clear, Christ's arrival in human form, "humiliation" and death, demonstrate his willingness to "consider others" ahead of himself and disregard claims to status and honor. Of course, it is just this "attitude" Paul wants to see exemplified in the lives of the Philippians. Christ has done all of this for their salvation, and, at the same time, left his own "exaltation" entirely in the hands of God. Even so, the Philippians must lay aside their natural claim to status or position, whether as land-owner, master, Roman citizen, or other privilege, so that those who do not have this status might also be accepted within the Christian community. All human standards of importance are entirely rejected, and the new way of acknowledging other people--one based on Christ's own humiliation--takes their place. I suppose Paul might just as easily said, "Are you better than Christ? Do you see yourselves as exempt from the self-effacing conduct of our Lord?" Or perhaps, "Are you fearful that if you do

give up these places of prominence, somehow, it will not turn out well for you? Did it not turn out well for Christ when he 'made himself of no reputation'?" Barclay is helpful here:

Here then is the final appeal of Paul to the Philippians. If Jesus Christ was prepared to accept this amazing humiliation, how can His followers quarrel among themselves about matters of honor and of precedence? Surely all human thoughts of exaltation of self must shrivel up before the memory of the amazing sacrificial selflessness of Jesus Christ.

Joseph Hellerman⁶ helps us look at the hymn within the context of the Roman Empire. He starts with the *cursus honorum*, or "course of honor," which was the formalized sequence of public offices that a young Roman aristocrat was to follow as he advanced in his career. At each stage the upwardly mobile young man gained new responsibilities and new privileges. Lower classes of people, both inside Rome and outside of it, developed their own sequence of offices that mimicked the upper classes. Hellerman argues that the concern for such honor ratings and status was, if anything, greater than normal in Philippi, because the elites in Philippi were Roman and the city was a Roman colony often called "little Rome."

The Christ hymn, suggests Hellerman, has taken the *cursus honorum* and turned it upside down. Instead of climbing the proverbial corporate ladder, Jesus descends it. And so Hellerman labels what is happening in Philippians as the *cursus pudorum* or "course of ignominy" or "course of shame."

Humility is not a virtue in Paul's world. To be humble means to ignore the culture's concern for status, including our own, and to stop acting on the basis of social distinctions. In his continuing to move in reverse, Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient (see also Romans 5:19). It is not that Jesus is obedient to death, as though death ruled over him. Rather, he is obedient to God, and because of that obedience he dies. And he dies the most cruel and degrading death, death on a cross. Christ Jesus' negative career, his career in reverse has reached its end.

But why was this hymn included in the first place? The thesis of the letter is in 1:27-30: Christians are to conduct their lives in ways that are worthy of the Gospel of Christ. One of Paul's major concerns is the lack of unity in the congregation. And so in the introduction to our passage he calls on the Philippians to be of the same mind and have the same love (2:2), doing nothing from selfish ambition but looking to the interests of others (2:3-4). Paul's chief example of how to live is "Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God" Jesus is their example of a life that is lived free of concern for status and honor and open to radical service to God.

In his commentary on this reading, Dennis Bratcher challenges us:

We live in a society dominated by rights-activism, permeated with the philosophy of "me first," and molded by the corporate ideals of efficiency and success. The Church must be called to remember that demanding one's rights and privileges may be popular, even necessary in some cases, but if it does so at the expense of Christian unity and love, it is not Christian! The Body of Christ must be called upon to refocus on Christian humility, unity, and fellowship. We must make service to others, perfect love in action, our primary responsibility. An attitude of Christ-like humility does not demand rights or protect its own interests; it seeks servant-hood.⁷

Concluding Thoughts

What sort of king is this man Jesus? Once, during Jesus' trial before Pilate, that Roman procurator queried Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" The exchange between Jesus and Pilate which followed is highly instructive:

³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would

⁶ Joseph H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 132; Cambridge: Cambridge, 2005); also Walter F. Taylor, Jr., "Philippians 2:5-11: Preaching This Week," *WorkingPreacher.org*, 2008.

⁷ "The Poured-Out Life: The Kenosis Hymn in Context," *The Voice* at <http://www.cresourcei.org/kenosis.html>.

have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world- to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him" (John 18:34-38).

At first, the question carries political overtones with its explicit reference to a well-known royal title, "king of the Jews," once used by Herod the Great, and then likely never used again — except here. Claimants to that royal office had to pass muster with the Emperor in Rome, otherwise the pretender had the smell of sedition about him. No doubt Pilate is trying to smoke out that possibility as he puts the direct question to Jesus. Had Jesus been a Zealot or other revolutionary Jewish agitator, he would no doubt have taken glee in shoving that title in the face of Rome's functionary in Judea.

Jesus wants to flush out Pilate's intentions and make clear his own. "Your idea?" he asks the procurator. Pilate snorts his rhetorical reply, "Am I a Jew? (The implied answer is "No!").

In response, Jesus remains enigmatic by telling Pilate about "my kingdom," though rejecting any notion that he intends to provoke revolution within Pilate's domain: "... not of this world, otherwise my servants would fight...not from this world." Any talk about a kingdom was guaranteed to raise suspicion in the mind of a Roman official who was sworn to keep the *Pax Romana* at all costs. High holy days, like Passover, were always tense in Jerusalem, since on such occasions radicals had the widest audience to stage a would-be *coup* against the Roman occupation. Pilate remained cautious as he re-states the original question: "So then you are a king?" (Greek: *oukoun basileus ei su*). He drops the reference to "of the Jews," since Jesus himself had not claimed that title for himself.

What follows is, from Pilate's point of view, simply more mockery of the Jewish people. The flogging, the crown of thorns, the purple robe, and the subsequent *titulus* placed above the cross, all intensified the disdain which Pilate felt toward this subject people. The further dialog in John 19:1-16 ends with "Shall I crucify your king?" (19:15).

Embedded in this scene are the famous words of Pilate when he presents Jesus to the Jewish officials, wearing the crown of thorns: "Behold the man!" or in Latin, "Ecce Homo!" What sort of man, what sort of king is this who allows himself to be humiliated at the hands of a pagan ruler?

By way of clarification, Jesus in effect tells Pilate, "You apply the word 'king' to me, but I need to explain how I use that word in relationship to myself." He goes on to connect his life's work and vocation to a distinct activity, "to testify to the truth," and then issues the royal summons, "listen to me," to anyone who is truly "on the side of truth." Sarcastically Pilate responds with "What is truth?" Far too pragmatic on matters of State to engage in a philosophical discourse on such an abstract theme as "truth," the Roman official turns his attention to the Jewish accusers of Jesus and proceeds to disengage from the whole affair by saying, "I find no basis for a charge against him." We mustn't assume that Pilate suddenly got religion and became a nice guy. He's acting as any Roman official might under the circumstances. He sees the Jesus case as nothing more than a Jewish matter, and then insults the Jewish leaders further by suggesting he could release a known radical, Barabbas — an offer they proceed to accept.

What the Romans did not understand was that the Kingdom of God is a kingdom that does not have an army. It is not a kingdom that crushes its enemies. Instead, this is a kingdom in which God rules over the hearts and minds of His followers – a kingdom built on the rule that "You will love your neighbor as yourself." This King Jesus brought people into a kingdom that crosses national boundaries, color, race, language, economic class. Jesus is King of a Kingdom that is not a kingdom because of the might of its army, the amount of land and wealth it is able to amass. It is a kingdom that exists in relationship between neighbors. The sort of King that Jesus was does not fit with the image that the world thinks of when it uses the word, "King."

Lawrence Moore, in his lectionary commentary for Palm Sunday, makes these astute observations:

That Jesus is a messianic claimant is clear throughout the gospel. That his “march on Jerusalem” is a provocative act, heralding a final showdown with the authorities is equally clear. Throughout the gospel, the question that has been raised is what sort of Messiah Jesus is. Mark, in his narrative of the approach to Jerusalem, faces us with another, related question: what sort of king is Jesus? This is the question that will obsess Pilate at Jesus’ trial. While the Council want to know whether Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One”, the only question that interests Pilate concerns kingship, and he cuts directly to the chase: “Are you the King of the Jews?” (15:2)

Jesus is the Messiah and he is a king. It is not popular expectation – or even the Jewish scriptures – that will define these terms, however, but the Way of the Cross. Jesus is a revolutionary and a rebel. He is a liberator. Once again, it is the Way of the Cross that will define these terms. He is a rebel because the proclamation of the Good News challenges the political and religious powers of his day. In that sense, he stands firmly with the rural peasants and against the urban elite. The religious purity system that shuts the poorest out is contrary to the character of the very God it supposes it worships. Like all false gods, it will be swept away. Rome proclaimed that Caesar is king and god. It, too, will be swept away – as will all powers ranged against the Kingdom of God.

Ironically, unthinkably and unimaginably, the means by which God will accomplish this is through the very solution that the authorities employ to solve the “problem” of this upstart who stands at the gates and challenges their authority: the Way of the Cross. God isn’t as limited and parochial as to aim only at the restoration of the Davidic temple state: God’s got the whole world in view!⁸

Glory to God! Amen.

Sidebar on Pontius Pilate

History tells us that Pilate had a bad habit of ticking off the Jews. He was the fifth Roman procurator of Judea, Samaria, and Idumæa, from 26 to 36 of the common era; successor of Valerius Gratus. According to Philo (“De Legatione ad Caium,” ed. Mangey, ii. 590), his administration was characterized by corruption, violence, robberies, ill treatment of the people, and continuous executions without even the form of a trial. His very first act nearly caused a general insurrection. While his predecessors, respecting the religious feelings of the Jews, removed from their standards all the effigies and images when entering Jerusalem, Pilate allowed his soldiers to bring them into the city by night. As soon as this became known crowds of Jews hastened to Cæsarea, where the procurator was residing, and besought him to remove the images. After five days of discussion he ordered his soldiers to surround the petitioners and to put them to death unless they ceased to trouble him. He yielded only when he saw that the Jews would rather die than bear this affront. At a later date Pilate appropriated funds from the sacred treasury in order to provide for the construction of an aqueduct for supplying the city of Jerusalem with water from the Pools of Solomon; and he suppressed the riots provoked by this spoliation of the Temple by sending among the crowds disguised soldiers carrying concealed daggers, who massacred a great number, not only of the rioters, but of casual spectators.

In spite of his former experience of the sensitiveness of the Jews with regard to images and emblems, Pilate hung up in Herod's palace gilt shields dedicated to Tiberius, and again nearly provoked an insurrection. The shields were removed by a special order of Tiberius, to whom the Jews had protested. Pilate's last deed of cruelty, and the one which brought about his downfall, was the massacre of a number of Samaritans who had assembled on Mount Gerizim to dig for some sacred vessels which an impostor had led them to believe Moses had buried there. Concerning this massacre the Samaritans lodged a complaint with Vitellius, legate of Syria, who ordered Pilate to repair to Rome to defend himself.⁹

Pilate was, as a consequence, recalled from his duties. According to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* ii. 7), he was banished to Vienna in Gaul, where various misfortunes caused him at last to commit suicide.

⁸ Lawrence Moore, Director, The Windermere Centre.

⁹ Isidore Singer and Isaac Broydé, “Pilate, Pontius,” in www.jewishencyclopedia.com.

Digger Deeper: A Case for Christ-Lent 2010: Jesus as Unkingly King
(Bob Brown)

To gain a deeper understanding of *A Case for Christ-Lent 2010: Jesus as Unkingly King*, carefully read the selected passages below. To aid you in your study, we invite you to visit the website <http://notes.chicagofirstnaz.org>, or pick up a copy of the *Background Notes* at the **Information** desk, or from your ABF leader. Now consider the following questions, as you ask the Lord to teach you.

1. What promise did God make to David about his descendents being kings (Psalm 89:4, 29, 36; 2 Samuel 7:13, 16; 2 Chronicles 7:18; 21:7; Jeremiah 33:19-2)? In what sense, then, is Jesus the “son of David” (see Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31)?
2. Our first reading is 1 Samuel 8. Carefully read the chapter and identify the main theme. What did the people of Israel ask Samuel to do? What were their reasons, and what did Samuel think about their request? What problems did God warn Israel would have with their future kings?
3. According to 1 Samuel 15, what was the major failing of Israel’s first king, Saul? What did God do because of Saul’s actions? What does this tell us about God’s expectations for those who would be His kings?
4. When Samuel looked for Saul’s replacement, what qualities did God require of him (1 Samuel 16:7)?
5. What special relationship did God want to have with the kings of Israel (Psalm 2:6-8; 2 Samuel 7:12-16)? How should they respond to Him in return (Isaiah 55:3-4)?
6. Carefully read the account of the Jerusalem Entry of Jesus in Matthew 21:1-17 (compare the parallels in Mark 11:1-19, Luke 19:48, and John 12:12-19, 2:13-22). What is the significance of his method of transportation into the city, and under what circumstances did he acquire it (see also Zechariah 9:9; Genesis 49:8-12; 2 Kings 9:12; Psalm 118:25)? What does this tell us about Jesus’ own view of being Israel’s king?
7. Explain the meaning of the term “Hosanna” as it is used in this passage. For what good purpose will Jesus use his position as king?
8. What kingly action did Jesus perform in the Temple, and what significance did it have? As you work out your answer, refer to Jeremiah 7:1-11. What similarities are there between what Jesus did and what Jeremiah said? How do Jesus’ words also fulfill Malachi 3:1-5?
9. Our New Testament reading is from Philippians 2:1-11. The passage has two main sections: 2:1-4 and 2:5-11. After studying the whole passage, suggest titles for each section. How do the two sections relate to each other? In what way does one serve as the basis for the other?
10. Define the phrase “mind of Christ” as used in this passage. What are the characteristics of this attitude, and how do they express themselves in our lives?
11. Before Jesus became a human being, what was his position in relationship to God? Explain the language Paul uses to express this idea.
12. When Jesus became a human being, what sacrifices did he make? Why were they necessary? Make a diagram which shows the stages of Jesus’ descent from heaven to earth to become human.
13. As a result of Jesus’ obedience to His Father, what status awarded him? In what ways is the word “Lord” related to the word “King.” According to this passage, what sort of King was Jesus, and how did he acquire that role?
14. What sharp contrasts do you discover in this passage? Make a list of them, placing them in pairs. How do they reveal the sharp contrast between human kings and the kingly role of Jesus?
15. At Jesus’ trial before Pilate, they discussed the idea of “king” as it applied to Jesus. Read about this in John 18:34-38, 19:1-16. How was Pilate’s understanding of Jesus as King different from the viewpoint of Jesus? What part of this passage makes this especially clear?