

**Weekly Bible Study Series, Vol. 9, No. 29: 31 August 2008**

© I. Chris Imoisili, E-mail: [imoisilic@hotmail.com](mailto:imoisilic@hotmail.com); [imoisilic@gmail.com](mailto:imoisilic@gmail.com)

For past issues and more, visit our Web Site: [www.bibleresourcecentre.com](http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com)

## THE HIGH ROAD IS NOT PAVED!

**Today's Text:** Zech. Chap. 9

**Extracts:**

**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding on a donkey [Zech. 9: 9]**

**Compare with:**

**Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it as it is written: "Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt" [Jn 12: 14-15]**

*Sarah Palin, the 44-year old Governor of Alaska, is the surprise nominee for Vice-President by the Republican candidate for the 2008 US Presidential Election, John McCain.<sup>1</sup> Of interest to us is her moral high ground on social and religious issues. For example, she believes in creationism, not evolution. She is against abortion and for abstinence (preserving virginity until marriage). In selecting her, McCain referred to such values and her fight against corruption since she became Governor less than two years ago. However, her moral high road has also been plagued with problems. For example, her last born son (she has five children) suffers from Down Syndrome (the most frequent cause of mental retardation and related medical disorders)<sup>2</sup> and her 17-year old daughter is pregnant out of wedlock.*

*According to the Encarta World English Dictionary, the high road is the easiest or most direct way to your destination. With respect to morality, it is the right moral course or the most ethical course of action.<sup>3</sup> So, why has the high road not been easy for Sarah Palin? Do we as believers not experience a similar thing when we try to get right with God? Why is it that believers' walk towards salvation is such an unpaved and rough way instead of a super high way? Those and more are the issues that we shall examine in this week's study.*

<sup>1</sup> Based on Elisabeth Bumillier, 'Palin disclosures raise questions,' *The New York Times*, Tues. Sept. 2, 2008; <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26501863/?GT1=43001>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ssl.search.live.com/health/article.aspx?id=articles%2fev%2fpages%2f0%2fDown\\_syndrome.htm&u=Downs%20Syndrome&focus=](https://ssl.search.live.com/health/article.aspx?id=articles%2fev%2fpages%2f0%2fDown_syndrome.htm&u=Downs%20Syndrome&focus=)

<sup>3</sup> [http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary\\_1861691824/high\\_road.html?partner=orp](http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_1861691824/high_road.html?partner=orp), Encarta® World English Dictionary [North American Edition] © & (P)2007

## 1. Background: The coming King would take the High Road

Zechariah's prophecy referred to Jerusalem, the holy city of the future, when the King would arrive. The coming King would defend Israel against its enemies [**Zech. 9: 1-8**]. Having seen His glory with his spiritual eyes, the prophet said in ecstasy, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; *He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt and the foal of a donkey*" [**vv. 8-9**].

Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the Passion Week. As He approached the city, His disciples brought the donkey and colt that He had sent for. They spread their clothes on them and set the Lord on the animals. Then "a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road." Crowds followed before and after rejoicing and crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." We are told, "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Tell the daughter of Zion, behold your King is coming to you; lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey'" [**Matt. 21: 1-9**].

Let us pay attention to the following issues in this story:

### a) *Whose King was this King?*

As the parade moved from the Mount of Olives towards the temple in Jerusalem, it was not everyone that danced and rejoiced. The common people and the disciples rejoiced because they thought that their sufferings and oppression from wicked rulers would soon come to an end [**Lk 19: 37-38**]. But the Jewish leaders, especially the Pharisees, were not happy because they saw Jesus as a threat to their power base [**v. 39**]. The priests and scribes were threatened, especially as Jesus drove out traders from the temple [**vv. 45-47**]. They regarded Him as blasphemous for calling Himself the Son of God whereas they saw Him as a mere man [**Jn 10: 33**]. The Romans saw Him as a mortal threat to the authority of Caesar [**Lk 20: 20-26**]. Even Satan was scared because he was going to lose his earthly power. So he entered into Judas Iscariot to make him betray Jesus [**Lk 22: 3**]. Therefore, there were many stakeholders, a majority of who were opposed to the proclamation of the kingdom of God under the reign of Jesus the Christ.

### b) *What was the coming King's purpose?*

The high road you take is determined by your end, purpose or destination. The coming King was interested solely in the salvation of all that had

sinned through Adam and hence fallen short of God's glory [Is. 53: 5; Jn 3: 16]. That way, everyone would be afforded the opportunity to avoid the final judgment that would come to all. Jesus never deviated from His purpose throughout His earthly ministry.

c) *What was this King's character?*

This King was different from the earthly kings that we are used to. Zechariah told us that He "is just and having salvation, lowly and sitting on a donkey" [Zech. 9: 9]. This King would be humble (lowly) and work for our salvation, not for His own self-aggrandizement [Is. 53: 4-5]. He would be just, that is, He would operate on the rule of law, not arbitrariness as we experience among human kings. Therefore, the coming King would take the high road to achieve His purpose of gaining us salvation. As Jesus' Sermon on the Mount confirms, the King would seek from all believers true worship and conduct as should befit the true children of God. For example, we are to love our enemies [Matt. 5: 43-48]. We are to focus more on the kingdom of God and less on earthly cares and worries [Matt. 6: 25-34]. He lived what He preached and died for it!

From the forgoing, we can conclude that the King was asking believers to take the moral high road that leads to salvation instead of the short cut to disaster. However, this high road is not paved or smooth! In Christ's own words, "*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction (but) narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life*" [Matt. 7: 13-14].

## 2. Taking a successful walk along the High Road

The high road may be the most direct route to destination but it is hardly the shortest by time or difficulty. It may be the right way to go but it may not be the most attractive. As we all know, the road to success is for ever under construction! So, how then can we take it in order to achieve our purposes?

The following suggestions are helpful:<sup>4</sup>

a) *You must be a believer*

To be a believer implies that you are relying on a force or power outside of yourself. Some people trust in material things, such as money, power or position. Some people rely in themselves (self-confidence). Some people believe in God, no matter how they define it or Him. Even atheists believe in something. If you do not believe in something, you have no basis for taking a high road defined by it. However, it is not everything you believe

<sup>4</sup> Gay Jones, 'Taking the high road to achievement,' <http://blog.prospectus.com/?p=154>

in that can deliver confidence for you as you take those unsteady steps along the high road. The word of God says, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. *They have bowed down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright*” [Ps. 20: 7-8].

Take the example of Paul when he was being taken as a prisoner to Rome. As they were about to set sail, Paul warned the centurion and the ship owner, “I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.” The centurion consulted with the weather and shipping experts and chose to ignore Paul’s warning [Acts 27: 9-12]. Soon after they had set sail, a tempest arose and tossed their ship so violently that they gave up hope of surviving. After they had starved for days, Paul came to them and assured them, saying, “There will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship; *for there stood by me this night an angel of God to whom I belong and whom I serve*, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar, and indeed, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’” Paul added, “I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.” In deed, it was so and all the two hundred and seventy-six people on board were saved [vv. 13-44]! Paul’s faith defeated human expertise. Therefore, you must make sure that your faith is anchored on the true God.

b) *Live in the present!*

Most of us worry unnecessarily about the future because we base our concerns not on needs but wants. We do not just want transportation but a fanciful and expensive car. We may have no problem with clothing except that we are eyeing special jewelry. We are pursuing the Joneses that may never exist. Therefore, we may be pursuing the elusive, a moving target, to worry about tomorrow.

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus has taught us to ask His Father to give us *this day* our daily bread [Matt. 6: 11]. Jesus says, “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. *Sufficient for the day is its own trouble*” [v. 34].

The God you believe in knows your needs even before you ask Him [v. 8]. He told Paul in advance the outcome of the tempest. So, he did not need to worry about the next day. That strengthened Paul to invite the other 275 passengers to share bread with him after they had lost appetite for food for fourteen days [Acts 27: 31-36]. They were strengthened to walk along the high road to life after shipwreck.

c) *Work hard!*

Even when God assures you that He will do something, you need to cooperate with Him to bring it to pass. God will not do for you what you can do for yourself! For example, Jesus says that He is standing at the door and knocking. If you *hear and open* the door, He will come in and sup with you and you with Him [**Rev. 3: 20**]. What if you were to remain on your knees praying and refuse to hear the knock on the door? What if you were to hear the knock but refuse to open? In both cases, there is no way that He will come in to meet your needs.

Jesus says, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” [**Jn 5: 17**]. Therefore, you must be prepared to work hard. God is going ahead to wait for you at the point of promise. Until you join Him there, He will not waste time with you! He told Abraham to leave his country, family and house and come to a new land. It was after Abraham had arrived in the land of Canaan (that was a hard and long trek for a 75-year old man!) before God appeared again to him [**Gen. 12: 1-9**]. Therefore, if God promises you that your daughter is going to be a medical doctor, it will not happen if she refuses to finish high school or to study science subjects. Faith without works is dead [**Jam. 2: 17**].

d) *Take responsibility and behave wisely!*

As you walk along the high road, you will step on toes. It is not everybody who wants to hear the truth. Many people cannot stand people of integrity and principled conduct. Therefore, you must learn to behave wisely. When you offend others, accept responsibility and apologize. When you are offended, forgive, even when they refuse to apologize. When your achievement is downplayed or ignored, do not worry because God will make up for it. When your error is over played, do not worry because God will vindicate you. Sooner than later, you will be respected for who you are.

We are told, “David behaved wisely *in all his ways, and the Lord was with him*. Therefore, when Saul (the then King of Israel) saw that he behaved wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them” [**1 Sam. 18: 14-16**].

e) *Always put others first*

If other people know that you will always keep the best for them in their absence, they will not mind to put you ahead of the line! They know that you are *selfless*, that is, that you always put others before yourself.

The Lord Himself confirms that it is more blessed to give than to receive [**Acts 20: 35**]. The Dead Sea in the Middle East only receives water (from River Jordan and other rivers) but does not give. Consequently, it is dead

because of the over supply of salt that it does not need! We are all poor in something or the other. You may have money but need peace of mind. When you give money to those who lack bread, you receive joy that you have given comfort to others. That way, you may receive peace of mind. Secondly, those who may give us are not those that we have given. You may give a few dollars to a beggar and receive thousands by way of a grant or a scholarship from the state. Give and it shall be given to you beyond measure [Lk 6: 38]. You are on the high road to life.

f) *You are 'work-in-progress' all the way!*

According to an African proverb, you cannot laugh at the physically challenged until the day of your death. In other words, you cannot slow down on perfection because your race is not over until God calls you home to eternity. Proud people are short-sighted because they look behind and think they are ahead of competition. Life is not a linear curve. You may be six-foot tall today and your son is just two. One day, he will equal or overtake your height!

Everyday, for the rest of your life, you must see yourself as 'work-in-progress.' Paul has asked, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?" and he has advised, "Run in such a way that you may obtain it" [1 Cor. 9: 24]. Therefore, Paul disciplined his own body and brought it under subjection so as not to be disqualified (from gaining eternal salvation) after having preached to others [v. 27]. That was why at his old age, when he knew that death would soon come, he could write Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" [2 Tim. 4: 7]. He was a 'work-in-progress' throughout his new life in Christ. So should we.

### **3. Conclusion: The high road is the best road!**

Everybody is not doing wrong. Wrong can never be fashionable! Therefore, look up to Jesus for guidance on taking the high road. The road is rough. It is not paved. But it is the surest way to eternal life with Christ in His Father's Kingdom. If you think faith is so hard, try expertise!