

MESSIAH THE PRINCE,
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.
By William Symington.
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 9.

CHAPTER 6.
THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST'S
MEDIATORIAL RULE.
(Continued.)

2. If from the lower parts of creation we ascend to the highest, we shall still find traces of the mediatorial dominion. Christ exercises rule over *angels*. These constitute the highest order of intelligent and moral creatures with which we are acquainted. Of their character, rank, attributes, and employments, we know but little. But this we know that, in all their orders and degrees, they are without exception put in subjection to the Messiah. It is only necessary here to view them in their two grand divisions, of good and bad, or fallen and unfallen.

(1.) Christ's mediatorial dominion extends to holy angels—those who, when their fellow-spirits rebelled, kept their first estate. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, represents him as seated 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,' [Eph. 1.21.] terms which are understood to denote the different orders of angelic creatures. Peter also speaks of him as He 'who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; ANGELS, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.' [1 Pet. 3.22.] As God he has an undoubted essential right of dominion over such: but that something different from this is meant in these passages is plain from the context, and also from the phraseology employed, especially in the latter case. Angels could be *made subject* to Christ, only in his mediatorial capacity. ► The account given in Scripture of the services of these bright and happy beings, both to the Head of the church, and to the members of his mystical body, throws the clearest light on the general statements to which we have just referred. Holy angels surround the throne of the mediatorial King:—'In the year that king Uzziah died,' sings the son of Amos, 'I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims.' [Isa. 6.1,2.] They offer him the tribute of their lofty adoration at the command, 'Let all the angels of God worship him,' for they cry with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing' [Heb. 1.6; Rev. 5.1,12.] They attended him at Sinai, when the law was 'ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator.' [Gal. 3.19.] When, in the fulness of time, he

'Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay,'

an ‘angel choir’ descended on the plains of Bethlehem, ‘and sung the hymn of his nativity:—‘And suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.’ [Luke 2.13,14.] ► Angels ministered to him in his state of humiliation: when the devil left him in the wilderness, ‘Behold angels came and ministered unto him’ (Matt. 4.11.) And, during his mysterious agony in the garden, ‘there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him’ (Luke 22.43.) On the first day of the week when he rose from the dead, ‘Behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre’ (Matt. 28.2); and, taking his station there, was the first to announce the tidings of his resurrection to the disciples who visited his tomb. Angels accompanied him at his ascension to the Father’s right hand:—‘The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels’ (Psalm 68.17.) And when, at the last day, he shall come again to judgment, ‘The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (2 Thess. 1.7,8.)

Holy angels are commissioned by the Mediator to perform a variety of important services to the members of the church. ‘Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?’ [Heb. 1.14.] The ‘heirs of salvation’ are, of course, those on whom God has chosen to bestow deliverance from all evil, and the possession of all good, as a rich, manifold, extensive, and imperishable inheritance, freely bequeathed to them as children. To such the holy angels minister in holy things, in a variety of ways. Setting aside the learned fancies of certain ancient philosophers, regarding the peculiar occupations of these celestial beings; discarding, as without foundation in the word of God, the Socratic notion of one guardian spirit being assigned to each saint; the following ideas respecting the ministry of angels, may be gathered from the Scriptures of truth.

Holy angels, under the Mediator, exercise a certain inspection over the people of God. ‘Suffer not,’ says Solomon, ‘thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?’ [Eccl. 5.6.] If the angel in this passage means, as is supposed by some, one of the celestial hierarchy, such are plainly to be considered as taking cognizance of the sayings and doings of men. The most plausible interpretation of an obscure passage in the writings of Paul, proceeds on the same supposition:—‘For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels,’—angelic inspection being here urged as an inducement to female decorum in the matter of dress, especially in the public congregation. [1 Cor. 11.10.] ► The same consideration gives point and emphasis to a clause in Paul’s solemn appeal to Timothy:—‘I charge thee, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and *the elect angels*, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.’ [1 Tim. 5.21.] It would thus seem to be one of the functions of angelic ministry, to exercise an inspection over the worship, and sufferings, and obedience of the saints, that they may be ready to yield them

assistance when required, be prepared to carry tidings respecting them to the company of interested fellow-spirits on high, and be qualified to bear witness in their behalf at the last day.

Holy angels, under the Mediator, are employed in making suggestions to the people of God. The following passage may perhaps warrant the idea that they performed an important part in communicating to the sacred writers the matter of the Scriptures:—‘The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass, and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John.’ [Rev. 1.1.] But, however this may be, now that suggestion of this extraordinary kind is at an end, it is interesting to think that they may still be employed in directing the mind to duty and to comfort, and in calling up thoughts of a spiritual and improving character. The thing is at least possible. It is rendered even probable, by what we know of the power of bad spirits, in suggesting evil thoughts, imaginations, and desires. ► But the experiences of the people of God, respecting the sudden occurrence of ideas and states of feeling, whose origin cannot possibly be referred to the mind itself on any known laws of mental operation, would seem to give it a character of certainty. This cannot be understood as interfering with the work of the Divine Spirit, whose prerogative it is to guide into all truth; it only supposes him to work by means, the means in such case being created spirits, while the sole efficient agency is reserved exclusively to himself. It may be difficult, or impossible, to discriminate between the suggestions of the mind itself and those of angelic ministers; but the difficulty is not greater, here, than in the case of the workings of evil spirits; and, in neither case, does the difficulty in question militate in the least against the fact.

Protection is afforded to the saints by holy angels. ‘There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.’ [Psalm 91.10-12.] Agreeably to this general statement, we find them employed in delivering Lot and his family from the destruction of Sodom:—‘And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.’ [Gen. 19.15.] Daniel’s safety from the lions is another instance:—‘My God,’ says the prophet, ‘hath *sent his angel*, and hath shut the lions’ mouths that they have not hurt me.’ [Dan. 6.22.] ► If we may judge from what occurred in the case of the Saviour himself, at the time of his being tempted by Satan, when angels came and ministered unto him, we may conclude that the protection they afford extends to spiritual as well as outward dangers. Nor is it irrelevant, here, to observe the services they discharge, in the way of counteracting the plots of the church’s enemies, and inflicting upon them the judgments of the Lord, inasmuch as these are connected with the safety of his people. Thus, with respect to Sennacherib’s army, it is said:—‘And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four-score and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning they were all dead corpses.’¹

1 2 Kings 19.35. See also Zech. 1.8-11; Dan. 10.13; 11.1.

Holy angels, under the Messiah, exercise a salutary vigilance over the people of God. They are employed in frequent embassies of mercy to them while they live. When they die, they carry their disembodied spirits to the regions of bliss:—‘The beggar died, and was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom.’ And have we not reason to think that even their bodies will be taken in charge by the same powerful servants at the period of the resurrection? ‘He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’ [Luke 16.22; Matt. 24.31.]

Such are some of the services performed by the angelic tribes to the members of the church of Christ. The wide space betwixt heaven and earth is not, as we are apt to imagine, an unoccupied void, but crowded with a busy throng of active beings employed in ministering to them who are to be heirs of salvation. And who is the master of these servants? By whom are they ‘sent forth’? From whom do they derive their commission? From Him whose mediatorial kingdom ruleth over all; who has removed the moral barrier which sin interposed to obstruct the intercourse of men and angels; who hath ‘gathered together in one all things, both which are in heaven and which are in earth,’ and thus opened the way for our being introduced to ‘an innumerable company of angels.’ Had he not assumed the character and discharged the functions of Mediator, none of the benefits conveyed through the medium of angels, could ever have been enjoyed by the people of God; nor could men ever have undergone that transformation and elevation of moral character which are necessary to fit them for intercourse with such pure and dignified creatures.

Important purposes are served by the subjection of angels to the Messiah. Foundation is thus laid for the restoration of a useful, happy, honourable, and lasting friendship betwixt men and these celestial spirits. The whole honour and glory of man’s salvation are thus secured to Christ, no service being performed to the saints, or benefit received by them, but emanates, be the instruments who they may, from the sacred fountain of his authority and love. Had the angels not been put under his feet, the services they perform, supposing them to have taken place, must have been independent of him, and consequently believers should have had a class of precious benefits for which they were under no obligation to Christ, and the glory of which they could never have ascribed to him. In this way, also, provision is made for a high example of obedient subjection to Messiah being set before saints; as well as for the overthrow of evil spirits by beings of their own order, which cannot fail to contribute to the completeness of their defeat by increasing their torment and mortification.

(2.) And this leads us to remark, that fallen angels, as well as those who kept their first estate, are placed under the Messiah. He possesses power over infernal spirits, not only as God, but as Mediator. The very object of his mediatorial character requires this; for, as the elect of God are, by nature, exposed to the assaults of Satan and of his emissaries, it is important that He, who is to act as their Saviour, should be invested with power to rescue them from their spiritual adversaries. That he may bind the ‘strong man,’ and spoil him of his goods, by delivering those whom he has led captive at his will, he must have a right to enter his house

and place him in fetters. [Matt. 12.29; 2 Tim. 2.26.] The god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, worketh in the children of disobedience; and He who is to restore them to the love and practice of holiness, must have power to cast out the prince of this world. [2 Cor. 4.4; Eph. 2.2; John 12.31.] ► Even after the children of God are rescued from the yoke of Satan's dominion, they are still liable to be assailed and subjected to partial and temporary bondage. Either on the one hand to protect his people from such assaults, or on the other to render them subservient to good, it is necessary that the devil and his angels be placed under the control of the Mediator. It is here not a little interesting to observe, that the very first announcement given of the Saviour exhibits him as the conqueror of the prince of the bottomless pit—the *seed of the woman bruising the SERPENT'S head*. ► Such was the object contemplated in his advent. 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' [1 John 3.8.] When the saints are exhorted to 'be sober, be vigilant, because their adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,' [1 Pet. 5.8,] to whom but to their divine Mediator can they look for wisdom and strength, to resist his attacks and continue steadfast in the faith? When the devil is permitted to cast them into prison that they may be tried, He only can enable them to 'be faithful unto death, that they may receive a crown of life.' [Rev. 2.10.]

Nor is it for the individual members of his mystical body alone, that this extent of mediatorial power is necessary, but also for his church in her collective character. As for those systems of iniquity, religious and civil, with which she has to contend, we are assured that 'the dragon gave them their power and their authority;' [Rev. 13.2,] and, of course, without some such control as we are supposing, things could never be so ordered as to bring about the issue which is predicted. 'And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night.' [Rev. 12.9,10.] ► Nay, these infernal agents, it would seem, are employed by the Mediator as instruments of inflicting merited punishment on the enemies of the church; but this they could not be, unless under his dominion. 'Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet: for they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. [Rev. 12.12; 16.13,14.] Thus the church's salvation, safety, peace, and prosperity, require that her Head be possessed of a rightful dominion over fallen spirits of every order.

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Supplementary Material

Excerpt from Reformation Principles Exhibited, 1806.

Part 2, Chapter 19, Of Christ's Headship, Section 4:

The administration of the kingdom of Providence is subordinate to the dispensation of grace: Christ Jesus, as the head of the church, rules by his infinite power, and in perfect wisdom and justice, over all the parts of the inanimate and irrational creation, and over all wicked men and devils; making them and all their changes, counsels, and efforts, subservient to the manifestation of God's glory in the system of redemption.

Rom. 8.28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Eph. 1.22. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. John 17.2. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Rev. 1.18. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death.

Discussion Questions

1. Which apostle is explicit that angels have been made subject to Christ?
A. Peter in 1 Pet. 3.22.
2. Why are not the words of this apostle seen as having reference to Christ's essential power as God?
A. Because the verb used by the apostle is "made subject" or subjugated, assuming a previous contrary state.
3. What are some of the occasions on which these angels were employed in the service of the Messiah?
A. At his birth they announced his advent to the shepherds, Luke 2.9-13; after his wilderness temptation they ministered unto him, Matt. 4.11; and in his agony in the garden one appeared to strengthen him, Luke 22.43.
4. Where does the Bible teach us that all of the Angels are made ministers on behalf of Christ's redeemed saints?
A. They are all such ministering spirits according to Heb. 1.14.
5. What passages of Scripture teach us that angels exercise a certain inspection over the people of God?
A. 1 Cor. 11.10, concerning women's decorum; and 1 Tim. 5.21, implying they observe the faithful discharge of minister's duties.
6. What passages might be alleged to show how angels are active in the protection of individual saints?
A. The promise of the Psalm, elsewhere misused by Satan, does give us this assurance, 91.10-12; and the example of Daniel in the Lions' Den confirms it, 6.22.
7. Why is it needful, in light of the object or end of Christ's mediatorial character, that fallen angels be placed under the Messiah as such?
A. It is needful because the Elect are by nature exposed to the assaults of Satan, and it is Christ himself who is given power to rescue them from their spiritual adversaries.
8. How does this advantage appear to be the more needful when considering God's people in their collective character?
A. As Satan has given the antichristian organizations of church and state power and authority for their tyrannizing, so Christ possesses that power by which he authorizes, guides, and rules his Church in contending with these systems of iniquity.