

**MESSIAH THE PRINCE,**  
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.  
By William Symington.  
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 15.

CHAPTER 7.  
THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST IN  
RELATION TO THE CHURCH.  
(Continued.)

IV. Christ exercises mediatorial rule over the church for the accomplishment of the most important ends.

Of course the grand ultimate end, contemplated in the existence of the church, is *the glory of God*. This is the end, indeed, of every thing that exists. ‘The Lord hath made all things for himself.’ Such being the case, it follows, of course, that this must be the object of what holds so prominent and important a place as the church. All the perfections of Deity are in this way glorified; and glory is reflected on each of the persons of the Godhead:—on the Father by whom the members of the church are chosen to eternal life, on the Son by whose blood they are redeemed, and on the Holy Spirit by whose influences they are renewed and sanctified. But it is the sovereign grace of God as a covenant God, that is pre-eminently and peculiarly displayed by the church. Other views of his character are elsewhere exhibited; it is in this connexion alone that he is magnified and made known as a God of grace. ► The gracious purpose of God is recognised in the church’s existence; the gracious authority of God, in the voluntary submission of men to its laws and institutions; and the gracious power, and exuberant goodness, and immaculate purity of God, in the qualifications of its members, in the exercise of its discipline, and in its prayers, praises, and other acts of worship. ‘This people have I formed for myself; *they shall shew forth my praise*.’ ‘Having predestinated us, unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ *to himself*, according to the good pleasure of his will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace*.’ ‘But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should *shew forth the praises of him* who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.’<sup>1</sup>

But this great object is secured by the accomplishment of certain proximate ends, prominent among which stand *the exhibition and maintenance of divine truth*. Divine truth—comprehending the true character of God; the true view of man; the true way of salvation; the true method of sanctification; and the true state of future glory—is a sacred deposit committed to the church. ‘The church is intrusted with this awful charge, for the purpose at once of

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1 Isa. 43.21; Eph. 1.5,6; 1 Pet. 2.9.

diffusion and preservation. Without the church, the truth could be neither extensively made known, nor safely kept from extinction. It is contained, to be sure, in the Scriptures; but, without some such institution as the church, the Word of God would be sure to be overlooked by the great mass of mankind, and to fall a prey in the end to the wicked devices of those who are enemies to the truth as it is in Jesus. ► It is the duty and business of the church, both office-bearers and private members, to watch over the existence and interests of gospel truth, to keep it clear from the obscurations of error, to defend it from the assaults of adversaries who seek its destruction, and to hold it up bright and attractive to the notice and attention of all. To the Jews of old were ‘committed the oracles of God,’ and from them the precious custody has descended to the church in later times. All the members and ministers may be accounted as, in some sense, ‘stewards of the mysteries of God,’ and bound, according as every man hath received the gift, ‘to minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.’ It is required of stewards that they be found faithful; and fidelity, in the instance before us, consists, not in an exclusive personal appropriation and use of the invaluable gift, but in a cheerful, liberal, and universal diffusion of divine truth amongst others, in the spirit of the authoritative canon, *Freely ye have received, freely give*; and in protecting it, with true fortitude and at all hazards, from the assaults of those who would tread under foot or annihilate it. ► It is for this reason that the church is described as *the pillar and ground of the truth*, [1 Tim. 3.15,] a noble column on whose sides the lines of sacred truth are so deeply engraven as to defy the obliterating hand of time, and so highly raised that the mutilating hand of man cannot reach them, while from its lofty summit the heaven-lit lamp sheds afar its cheering and life-giving rays. As expressive of the same sentiment, individual churches are compared to ‘golden candlesticks,’—suspended on high by the hand of God, to dispense spiritual illumination to a benighted world, and to preserve alive that holy fire from which all the nations of the earth are yet to receive light and warmth. What a glorious and benign end this which the Saviour subserves by means of his church! Nor shall the benevolent purpose be defeated, by any or all of the insidious attempts that are made, by men who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. ► They may seek to undermine the sacred pillar; but the event will shew, that it is built upon a rock and is not to be overthrown. They may try, by heaping around it the rubbish of their errors, to hide from view its glorious inscription; but their attempts shall all prove abortive. They may flatter themselves that, by the mists and noxious exhalations of their false systems, the pure and blessed light of truth shall be hid, but all these obscurations shall be finally scattered as by a whirlwind, and the lamp of Gospel illumination shall continue to burn brighter and brighter till every quarter of the world has been gladdened with its beams. The cause of truth is subject, no doubt, to many vicissitudes; and circumstances may occur to make its timid and anxious friends bewail ‘that truth is fallen in the streets.’ [Isa. 59.14.] But while the Saviour has a church in the world, it shall never be wholly trodden down; and that ‘Lord, whose eyes are upon the truth,’ by pouring out ‘the Spirit of truth’ on the reading and preaching of ‘the word of truth,’ will see to it that to the end of time ‘Jerusalem shall be called *a city of truth*.’

By setting up a church in the world the Mediator has provided for *the public celebration of Divine worship*. It is every way proper that some acts of public homage should be paid to the God of the whole earth. The private adoration of individuals would seem not to be all the honour that is due to Him whose claims are so universal and transcendent. He is certainly entitled to acknowledgment in the most public and open manner possible. This is secured by the existence of a visible church, in which his being, perfections, purposes, and works, are publicly discussed; in which his praises are publicly sung, and in which united and public supplications are offered at his throne of grace. Even supposing that, for this end, secret acts of worship might suffice, it may fairly be questioned whether the spirit of such could be kept up, without the influence arising from public institutions. ► The devotions of the sanctuary, doubtless, exert, and are designed to exert, no small influence on those of the closet and the family. The lamp of personal or domestic piety will send forth but a dim and sickly ray, unless trimmed and replenished by frequent visits to the house of the Lord. When the believer feels those fervent emotions that are represented by his soul thirsting for God, and under the impulse of which he is stirred up to seek the Lord with great earnestness, it is that he may ‘see the power and glory of the Lord as he had seen them before in the sanctuary.’ If the psalmist David poured forth the sweetest and warmest strains of devotion in the wilderness of Judea and in the forest of Hareth, we must go back, for the secret of his high and holy inspiration, to the days when he trod the courts of the temple,—days which not merely exerted a reflex influence on his solitary exercises, but which, so far from making him contented with these, caused his soul still to long, yea even faint, for the courts of the Lord, and to count a day in God’s house better than a thousand. If we would rise to true elevation of heart in the closet, we must ‘lift up our hands in the sanctuary.’ So necessary is the church to the proper worship of God.

The church is designed for *the salvation of men*. It is an asylum, to which destitute and needy sinners may betake, to have all their wants supplied; a city of refuge, whither the guilty and justice-pursued may flee for protection; an ark, in which safety is provided from the threatened judgment about to come on a wicked and ungodly world. Here, whatever a lost and fallen sinner of the human family can require, is provided,—pardon, sanctification, peace, happiness, eternal life; and, by betaking to it in time, all these benefits may be infallibly secured. It is the means by which the grand benevolent purpose of the divine will, respecting our lapsed race, is carried into full effect. It is the nursery of saints, not less than the refuge of sinners. By its doctrine and discipline, by the spiritual instruction and vigilant superintendence it provides, the edification of its members in knowledge, holiness, comfort, and social duty, is promoted. ► The ordinances to which it gives access, and the interest it secures in the prayers of those who have power with God, cannot fail to render the fellowship of the church a distinguished means of extending knowledge, strengthening faith, confirming love, deepening humility, increasing joy, and cherishing every devout and holy affection. The whole work of grace in the soul is thus progressively advanced, and the individual is ultimately trained for the exalted exercises and enjoyments of the heavenly kingdom. The church, in this way, becomes

the joyous parent of a numerous spiritual progeny. She is the bride, the Lamb's wife, by whom the free-born sons and daughters of the Almighty are nursed and reared, till such time as they are made fully meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. She is 'the joyful mother of children,'—'the Jerusalem from above, which is free, and the mother of us all.' ► It has pleased God, for the purpose of bringing many sons into glory, to set up a visible church in the world, where these sons should be born again; supplied as new-born babes with the sincere milk of the Word, that they might grow thereby; fed with the strong meat of the covenant; and thus nurtured and disciplined into the vigour of spiritual manhood,—the fulness of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. It is, by being instrumental in the salvation of souls, that the church promotes the glory, and secures the worship, of Jehovah. Divine worship can be celebrated, and the praise of the glory of divine grace can be shewn forth, only by those who are 'saved and called with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began:' and this work of salvation is carried on in and by the church. The church, by subjecting the conscience to the authority of Christ, by maintaining wholesome discipline, and by affording opportunity of communion with God and with his saints, tends powerfully to enlighten the understanding, to enliven the affections, to restrain the passions, to promote Gospel morality, and to advance the divine life in the soul. 'The Lord added to the church such as should be saved.' 'He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' [Acts 2.47; Eph. 4.11,12.]

Such are the ends subserved by the existence of a church in the world. And it is carefully to be observed, that all these ends are brought about by the mediatorial administration of the Saviour. He it is who sends forth his light and his truth to gladden and direct an ignorant and benighted world; who prompts and enables men to celebrate the ordinances of God's worship; and who carries forward the work of salvation in the souls of believers.

#### V. All the ordinances of the church are instituted by Christ, the Mediator.

The ends above enumerated, are accomplished by means of ordinances, whose existence in the church is to be ascribed to the authority of Prince Messiah. He alone could determine what were fit to be instituted, or could give them the sanction of universal obligation. For such purposes, neither the wisdom nor the will of man could avail; the one being destitute of sufficient depth, and the other of adequate power. Nothing is, of course, left to man, but all is the work of the Mediator, whose skill is infinite, and whose authority is supreme.

He has given to the church a clear, authoritative, and perfect *law*. The church, like every other society, must have regulations. These are contained in the Scriptures. Some of them may be viewed as proceeding originally from God, as the moral governor of the universe; others, as issuing immediately and directly from Christ. The ten commandments, and the natural duties of prayer and praise, are instances of the former; the peculiar ordinances of New Testament worship, are examples of the latter. But, as regards their administration to our fallen race, both

classes must be looked upon as emanating from the Mediator. While not without law to God, we are under law to Christ. The promulgation of even the moral law itself was preceded by an exhibition of God's covenant character, and so might be said, not less than the Jewish law, to be ordained of God in the hands of a Mediator. ► The Lord is our Lawgiver, as well as our King and our Judge. The revelations given to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, and to the other patriarchs, must be regarded as communicated to the church through Christ. The disclosures that were made at Sinai, we are assured, proceeded from him. 'This is he,' says Stephen, speaking of the Prophet predicted by Moses, 'that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us.' [Acts 7.38.] It was he, too, who, by his Spirit, enabled the evangelists and apostles to complete the volume of inspiration. The whole of revealed truth, comprehending the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, may thus be looked upon as the code of laws given to the church by the Messiah. The sacred volume is often expressly designated 'the law,' 'the law of the Lord,' &c.; and, in communicating it to men, Christ acts, not merely as a *prophet* making known the will of another, but as a *king* issuing his own authoritative regulations to his subjects which they are bound to obey. 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' [Isa. 2.3.] ► The law, thus promulgated, is authoritative. It is not at men's option whether they shall receive and obey it. It is supremely obligatory on all. It is clear and explicit; not expressed in such ambiguous terms that the reader may put upon it what construction he pleases. Men, it is true, may frequently misapprehend it, and may experience some difficulty in ascertaining its meaning; but this arises rather from the want of diligence, application, humility, holiness, perseverance, or prayer, on their part, than from any thing equivocal in the law itself. Nor is this law, in any respect, incomplete. The law of the Lord is perfect. It neither requires, nor admits of any addition being made to it by the ingenuity or authority of man. No individual, however gifted, no council, however solemnly constituted, may assume a strictly legislative power in the church of Christ. Men can only legitimately make known the laws of the Redeemer; and dare not, under pain of a fearful malediction, venture to take from, or to add to, the complete promulgation of his will contained in the Bible. It is of itself sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Christ has instituted in the church ordinances of divine worship and ecclesiastical *fellowship*. Public prayer, praise, reading the Scriptures, preaching the Word, baptism, and the Lord's supper, are sanctioned, either by his express institution or his administrative example. In the presence of his disciples, he lifted his eyes to heaven in solemn supplication to the Father. He sang with them a hymn, before going out to the Mount of Olives.<sup>2</sup> When he went

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<sup>2</sup> This memorable event is recorded in Matt. 26.30 and Mark 14.26. In both cases there is, in the original, no noun designated to specify what was sung. Rather, the verb used to describe their action incorporates the Greek term from which English derives the word *hymn*. In other words, Jesus and the disciples were hymning praises to God. In the margin of the Bible, the word *psalm* is also suggested. If it were more common in English to use the word

into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, 'he stood up for to read.' 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,' was among his last directions to the apostles and their successors. He commanded them also to 'baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' In reference to the ordinance of the supper, he said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' And, as for that portion of time which is consecrated to the peculiar observance of all these institutions, it is written, 'The Son of man is the Lord of the Sabbath.' There is not an institution of divine worship, by which the devotional feelings of the church are expressed, or the edification of the body promoted, which bears not the stamp of the Saviour's authority; and, in observing them all, the true saint has the satisfaction to know that he is 'serving the Lord Christ.'

The same is the case with respect to the *government* of the church. In every social body, order is essential to edification, and government is essential to order. This itself would seem to furnish a presumptive argument in favour of the sentiment that Christ has given to the church a regular form of government, in opposition to the opinion of those who contend that this matter has been left to be regulated by the wisdom of men, and to be modified agreeably to the various circumstances of those among whom the ordinances of religion happen to be set up. According to this view, there is no form of church government which may be said to possess divine authority. To a sentiment so vague and loose, it may be sufficient to reply, that, when it is considered how important a thing government is to every society, it is perfectly incredible that Christ should have left his church without any specific directions on this point: the more so that human wisdom, so liable to err at all times, is incompetent to determine a matter on which so much depends: to which it may be added that, on the above supposition, there would be no room whatever for submission to the authority of Christ in the point in question. ► It seems much more reasonable, therefore, *a priori*, to conclude that the grand principles of ecclesiastical government are laid down in the Scriptures, to which, and not to the ever-shifting ground of expediency, the appeal is to be made. It is true, those who advocate the opinion, that the Scriptures contain a regular prescribed plan, are not all agreed as to what that plan is. But this is no argument against the principle for which we contend, inasmuch as, at least equal diversity of sentiment prevails with regard to the doctrines of the Gospel, among those who hold that the Bible is the only standard of doctrinal truth. ► It cannot be expected that we should enter now into the discussion of what that form of government is which Christ has prescribed in his Word; although, in other circumstances, we should not shrink from the task of attempting to make it appear that, if not direct statement, at least fair Scripture inference, and the example of the primitive Christians, warrant us to adopt the presbyterial model, or that form in which different individual churches are regarded as parts of a grand whole, and the office-bearers as representatives of the people, forming a gradation of church courts, by which all controversies are to be settled, with a right of appeal from the lower to the higher. It is enough, in present circumstances, in proof of the fact that Christ has instituted in his church some form of government, to refer to those passages of Scripture in which ecclesiastical officers are

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*hymn* as a verb, the passage might have been translated, "having hymned a *psalm*, they went out," etc.—JTK.

represented as invested with the power of rule. 'We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are *over you* in the Lord. Let the elders that *rule* well, be counted worthy of double honour. Obey them that have the *rule* over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.'<sup>3</sup>

Closely connected with its government, is the *discipline* of the church. By this we understand the provision Christ has made for admitting persons to the fellowship of the church; for exercising a salutary vigilance over its members; and for administering censure in case of offences. The term has, perhaps, been too much restricted to the last of these objects; but a little reflection will be sufficient to convince that the others also ought to be included. The purity, peace, and order of the church, depend much on this institution of Christ being properly administered in all its legitimate objects. That he has made provision for these, appears from the power with which he has invested office-bearers in the church, to receive qualified persons into communion; to exercise a watchful inspection; to take cognizance of offences against the laws of Christ's house; to cite and examine offenders; to administer censure according to the nature and degree of the offence; and either to restore to, or finally eject from, the fellowship of the body, as the person may appear to have profited or not by the censure administered. ► The authority of Christ in this, as in the other institutions of his house, is a merciful authority. It is a proof of his love, designed to promote the best interests of the offenders themselves, as well as of the body at large to which they belong, and, if rightly improved, a manifest and decided blessing. 'If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear. A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.'<sup>4</sup>

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What is the ultimate end contemplated in the existence of the church?  
A.
2. What is one of the subordinate ends contemplated in the church's existence.  
A.
3. What are two other great ends served by the presence of the church in the world?  
A.
4. What are the two ways in which the laws of Holy Scripture can be viewed as coming to the Church?  
A.
5. What are some of the ordinances of the Church provided for in the laws of the Redeemer?  
A.

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3 1 Thess. 5.12; 1 Tim. 5.17; Heb. 13.17.

4 Matt. 18.17; 1 Tim. 5.20; Titus 3.10.