

MESSIAH THE PRINCE,
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.
By William Symington.
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 22.

CHAPTER 8.
THE MEDIATORIAL DOMINION
OVER THE NATIONS.
(Continued.)

[Continuing “the Acts of Christ’s regal administration towards this class of his subjects.”]

Secondly. Messiah watches over and directs all occurrences connected with nations. National concerns are numerous and diversified. The origin of national associations, whether it be warlike aggression, internal revolution, arbitrary usurpation, or voluntary compact, involves a vast variety of interest and events. So also the progress of nations, whether this is connected with the management of internal and foreign relations, the counsels of statesmen, the conduct of generals, or the prowess of armies. Nor is it less so with the circumstances which occasion the dissolution of states. Yet these, in all their aspects and bearings, are ordered and controlled by the Mediator. They form prominent parts of that universal providence which, as before shewn, is placed under Messiah. The wheels of providence, in all their intricacy, are propelled by the God-man, Mediator. And, as for that department of providential arrangements which respects nations, the control of Messiah is fully illustrated and confirmed in the Apocalypse. ► The events unfolded in this book have respect to the nations of the earth in general, and more especially to such as are connected with the Roman empire, the fourth great monarchy, in whose decline and fall are involved the interests of the principal European powers. But these events are represented as developed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, the divine Mediator, who opens the sealed book of God’s purposes respecting the nations, blows the trumpets of divine warning, and pours forth the vials of Jehovah’s wrath;—thus carrying forward the scheme of predetermined decrees, till Babylon the great is overthrown, till all thrones of iniquity are overturned in its downfall, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.

Thirdly. Jesus, as king of nations, exacts obedience to his commands. The moral law and all the precepts of Scripture are administered by Christ. Communities, as well as individuals, are under the divine law. Such commands, therefore, as are found in the Word of God, applicable to nations and their rulers, are to be regarded as issuing from the divine Mediator, who is invested with all possible sovereignty and power;—with not merely physical control, but moral dominion. It follows that wherever we find nations commanded to serve the Lord,

and civil rulers required to promote the public good—to restrain evil—to administer the laws with equity, impartiality, and benevolence—to set a good example in intelligence, morality, and religion—and to give countenance, protection, and aid to the Church, we are to recognise the authority of the Redeemer. ► The duties of subjects are, perhaps, more frequently inculcated in Scripture than those of rulers; yet are not either the qualifications or the duties of rulers entirely overlooked. And if rulers are, as we have shewn, under moral subjection to Messiah, in those passages of Scripture which prescribe their qualifications and duties they are addressed by the Redeemer. Such are the following:—‘Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment: but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man: for the judgment is God’s. Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. Be wise now, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. He is the minister of God to thee for good. He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.’¹ These and similar precepts and prescriptions, if all power is given to Christ, must be regarded as emanating from the mediatorial throne, and as enforced by the gracious but sovereign authority of the Redeemer. It follows that national communities and civil office-bearers, who disregard or neglect them, are guilty, not only of a contravention of the people’s rights, but of rebellion against Jesus, the King of nations.

Fourthly. And here we have another act of Christ’s regal administration, for this rebellion he overrules for good. The nations oftentimes refuse to serve him. ‘The kings of the earth have set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.’ [Psalm 2.2-3.] Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, is not the only king who has made his people to sin; Herod and Pontius Pilate are not the only rulers who have ‘of a truth conspired’ against Jesus of Nazareth. National honour and personal aggrandisement are more commonly the objects they pursue than the glory of God, the honour of Christ, or the good of his people. His prescribed qualifications are not seldom contemptuously disregarded, and his commands trampled under foot. The power with which they are invested is too often employed to persecute and oppress his Church, and to support his enemies. ‘The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.’ [Rev. 17.12-13.] But all this is overruled for the accomplishment of ultimate good by the Divine Mediator. ► He makes the wrath of man to praise him. The nations and their rulers may refuse to serve him, but they cannot prevent him from serving himself by them. By their counsels and treaties, their ambitious wars and lawless transactions, he fulfils his own sovereign purposes. Their

1 Deut. 1.16,17; Deut. 16.18; 2 Sam. 23.3; Psalm 2.10,11; Psalm 82.2-4; Rom. 13.3,4.

conspiracy against his rights he causes to issue in the development of the weight of his arm; their persecution of his Church, in her purification; and the countenance they afford to his enemies, in the chastisement and overthrow of his impenitent foes. The Assyrian is the rod of his anger; and when he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, Christ executes by him his own righteous decrees. [Isa. 10.7.] But for this comforting assurance, what friend of the Redeemer could look abroad, without the most gloomy forebodings, on the tyranny, oppression, blasphemy, and iniquity of every sort and degree, which are practised among the nations of the world, under the convenient cloak of civil power. ‘The Lord, Jehovah-Jesus, reigneth. He rules in the midst of his enemies. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.’ [Psalm 110.2; Psalm 46.2-3.]

Fifthly. Christ, as Mediator, executes the righteous judgments of God on wicked nations and rulers. ‘The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.’ [John 5.22,27.] The treasures of wrath, as well as those of grace, are at his disposal. We read not only of ‘the wrath of *God*,’ but of ‘the wrath of the *Lamb*.’ Nor is it merely the solemnities of the final judgment that are administered by him, but those judicial dispensations which are unfolded in the providential occurrences of the present state. Among these, the judgments inflicted on civil communities stand conspicuous. The moral character of nations, and the moral responsibility of rulers, shew the possibility of national and official sins. By cherishing a spirit of pride, self-confidence, and independence of God; by practising tyranny, cruelty, and oppression; by indulging a perverse, ungrateful, and turbulent temper; by prostituting their power and influence to the encouragement and support of irreligion, blasphemy, and immorality; or by employing the sceptre and the sword in hostile opposition to the tenets and institutions of true religion;—civil communities may be guilty of such heinous iniquity as to call forth the retributive judgments of God. ► National crime, when carried to a height, operates as a conductor to draw down the lightning of vengeance from the eternal throne. And what we here wish to be remarked is, that it is the province of the King of nations to execute these judgments. He is the mediatorial Angel, described in the Apocalypse, as ‘taking the censer, and filling it with fire of the altar, and casting it upon the earth,’ causing ‘voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.’ [Rev. 8.5.] These judgments, whether they consist in a dark and confounding infatuation, seizing hold of the thoughts and counsels of men in power; or in a sudden paralysing of the hearts of the people, by which they are disarmed of all their wonted fortitude, and reduced to a state of the most cowardly and effeminate timidity; or in the pressure and succession of those fearful calamities which induce ignominy, disorganisation, and ruin; or in those terrible things in righteousness, by which the Almighty speaks to the guilty and makes bare his holy arm against the workers of iniquity:—whether they be brought about by the whirlwind of war, by the blast of famine, by the withering breath of pestilence, or by the earthquake of popular commotion:—in whatsoever they consist, by what means soever they are effected, they are the doings of Him who is Governor among the

nations. ► In general, we are assured, with regard to rebellious princes, that ‘He shall speak to them in wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure; shall break them with a rod of iron, and shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ‘The Lord shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath; he shall fill the places with dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries’ [Psalm 2.5; 110.5,6.] ‘The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.’ By whom this sentence is carried into execution, we are not left to conjecture. ‘Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, *mighty to save*. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.’ [Isa. 60.12; 63.1-4.] Here we have the almighty Saviour executing the most awful judgments on his enemies. ► With regard, in particular, to those great empires, prefigured in Nebuchadnezzar’s image, the Chaldean, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, we know that it is the kingdom of the Messiah, under the government, of course, of its glorious Head and Prince, that ‘shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.’ [Dan 2.44.] While, with respect to the judgments already executed, or yet to be executed, on the kingdoms of the Roman empire, the nations of the Latin earth, we find them directly and unequivocally ascribed to the same source. ‘He that overcometh,’ saith the Son of God, ‘and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the *nations* (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers), even as I received of my Father. The kings of the earth hid themselves from the wrath of the *Lamb*. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he should smite the *nations*: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.’ [Rev. 2.26,27; 6.15,16; 19.15.] ► We are thus bound to believe that those occurrences by which guilty nations are scourged and chastised for their sins, are not merely brought about in providence, but ordered and directed by the Mediator. And whether, therefore, we behold the desolating sword cutting off the inhabitants, or the blasting mildew destroying the crops, or commercial stagnation obstructing the sources of wealth, or wasting disease stalking with ghastly power over a land, or the upheavings of popular commotion overturning the foundations of social order, we recognise the wisdom, and might, and righteous retribution of Prince Messiah, carrying into execution the divine decree, *The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.* [Isa. 60.12.]

Sixthly. The Prince of the kings of the earth opens up a way for the universal dissemination and success of his Gospel among the nations. The religion of the Cross is to be universally diffused. This supposes that the ministers of Christ are to circulate throughout the nations, making overtures of reconciliation to their inhabitants, and urging upon them the claims of their divine Sovereign. ‘Go ye and teach *all nations*, baptizing them,’ &c., is the command of the

Redeemer to his ministering servants. But it is only in virtue of his sovereignty over the nations, that he could issue such a mandate: and in this way only could those invested with his commission be warranted to demand admission for themselves and reception for their message by the nations of the earth. ► When the ambassadors of Jesus visit foreign lands to disseminate the knowledge of the Gospel, however exclusive the laws and strict the prohibitions of these lands against foreign intrusion, they are not to be regarded as lawless aggressors. Jealous potentates may refuse to acknowledge the King in whose name they come; the subservient functionaries of these potentates may use all means to shut them out from their dominions: but they have a right to enter, and as faithful and authorised ambassadors, have a right to negotiate with the inhabitants of all lands in behalf of their Sovereign Lord. It may be their duty to use caution, and exercise prudence, in introducing themselves into heathen kingdoms; but still they are to regard themselves as fully entitled to be heard, in the name of him by whom they are sent. The sovereignty of their Lord spares them the moral degradation of feeling that they are doing what is illegal,—that they are violating the principles of international law,—that they are acting the part of contraband traders. ► What they are doing may be unauthorised by man, may be contrary even to the will and command of the rulers of those regions of the earth into which they have gone: but they proceed in the name of One whose authority extends over all nations, who claims all the kings of the earth as his subjects, and whose commands cannot, without rebellion, be disputed. *He* has said to them, ‘Go and teach all nations:’ and, when the jealousy of heathen princes interferes to impede them in the execution of this commission, by arresting them on the confines of their territory, and commanding them to ‘depart from their coasts,’ they are entitled to refuse, and to plead as an excuse for so doing the obligation to obey God rather than man. Without the supremacy of Christ over the nations, however, the missionaries of the Cross could have no right thus to penetrate into all lands;—the apostolic commission could not, indeed, be lawfully executed. In consequence of this supremacy, however, they may circumnavigate the globe, may touch at every island that studs the ocean, may make a descent on every coast, may pass every boundary, may knock at the gates of every palace, may address every crowned head, may pervade the length and breadth of every kingdom, and ask admission, in name of the King of kings, for themselves and for their message.

Nor is the right of his ambassadors to proceed, the only thing that is secured by the Messiah’s headship over the nations. Provision is thus made for the opening up of a way, for the success of their cause, and the protection of their persons. There may be much in the prejudices, the opinions, the habits, and the manners of the inhabitants, much in their legal institutions and superstitious rites, to present barriers to the introduction of the pure and self-denying religion of Jesus: but, notwithstanding all, the Prince of the kings of the earth can open a way for his own cause in the midst of all obstructions. Nothing can baffle his counsel; nothing withstand his might. Difficulties disappear at his approach: before him mountains become a plain. ‘He hath the key of David; he openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. Behold,’ says he, ‘I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.’ [Rev. 3.7,8.] Yes; the herald of salvation in foreign lands may have numerous

discouragements, and may often find reason to say with the great apostle of the Gentiles, ‘there are many adversaries;’ but, believing in the dominion of Christ over the nations, he need not despair of being enabled to add, ‘a great door and effectual is opened unto me.’ [1 Cor. 16.9.]

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Discussion Questions:

1. What is the second act of kingly administration which Christ exercises toward the nations?
A. He “watches over and directs all occurrences connected with nations”: Providence over national concerns.
2. What is the third act of kingly administration which Christ exercises toward the nations?
A. As king of nations, Jesus exacts obedience to his commands. The particular duties of subjects and rulers must be fulfilled in light of his combined physical and moral power.
3. When national communities and their officers disregard their duties, is this wrong done only to the rights of the people?
A. No, this is rebellion against Jesus, the King of nations. (Jer. 10.7.)
4. What is the fourth act of kingly administration which Christ exercises toward the nations?
A. When societies and their rulers act in rebellion to him, he overrules their rebellion for good.
5. What is especially noted in history as the blessed providential-fruit of the persecution of Christians?
A. This often serves for the purification of the Church.
6. When tyrants exercise their power with severity, yet effectively for the good of God’s Church, fulfilling of his decree, or out-pouring of His justice, — do they intend such things?
A. Not usually. They are likely oblivious, like the Assyrian power: Isa. 10.7.
7. What is the fifth act of kingly administration which Christ exercises toward the nations?
A. “Christ, as Mediator, executes the righteous judgments of God on wicked nations and rulers.”
8. What is to be observed about those national disturbances and calamities which visit nations when there are “voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake” brought upon them for their sins?
A. These are all the work of the mediatorial Angel casting fire upon the earth (Rev. 8.5,) or the just working of him who is “Governor among the nations.” (Psalm 22.28.)
9. What divine decree is being enforced by Prince Messiah when these disturbances serve to overturn the foundations of social order or dissolve existing states and nations?
A. “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” [Isa. 60.12.]
10. What is the sixth act of kingly administration which Christ exercises toward the nations?
A. “The Prince of the kings of the earth opens up a way for the universal dissemination and success of his Gospel among the nations.”
11. Are Christian missionaries morally obliged to cancel or suspend their labors due to either legal restrictions in the nations they enter, or the higher expectations of international law?
A. No. They do not need to feel they are doing wrong while they are doing what their Lord has commanded.
12. What other advantage comes to such missionaries by Christ’s headship over the nations?
A. Provision is made for their success, and every obstruction can be providentially overcome by their Lord.