

MESSIAH THE PRINCE,
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.
By William Symington.
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 33.

CHAPTER 10.
THE PERPETUITY OF THE
MEDIATORIAL DOMINION.

In harmony with these views of this difficult passage, especially with the first, is the opinion of an eminent German divine, one of the most triumphant combatants of the system of theology which is unhappily too fashionable in that country. From his dissertation on the meaning of ‘the kingdom of heaven,’ we give the following extract, for whose length it is presumed no apology is necessary, as the work from which it is taken is not generally circulated.

‘The declarations of David (Psalm 110.1) and of St. Paul, (1 Cor. 15.24,28),’ says Professor Storr, ‘ought not to be taken in an opposite sense. Nor does it seem difficult to perceive, that their meaning is far different from this. For, since an *eternal* priesthood is attributed to the Messiah, and this is very closely allied to his *kingdom*, it is evident that they do not intend to deny eternity to the latter. Therefore εως in Psalm 110.1, does not mean, that, when every enemy has been subdued, the government is to be taken away from Christ, but as the general object of this whole psalm is to shew that the designs of his enemies against the divine prince would at length have an ending altogether different from that which they expected, it was in exact conformity with such a design to establish this point, especially, that the divinely appointed Lord should reign, until all his enemies should be subjected to *his own* power. Which does not mean that he to whose government the enemies should be subjected (which circumstance proves of itself the continuance of that government) should then resign his power; but, on the other hand, the result of the whole matter is declared to be this, that they who had refused to acknowledge this prince, and wished to remove him by force from his government, are all *overthrown* and confounded, while he *himself*, on the contrary, *is sitting at the right hand of God*. ► He shall reign for a considerable time in the midst of enemies, securely expecting an end of the rebellion; but, while he himself is sitting at the right hand of God, it shall at length come to pass that all his adversaries shall be reduced under subjection to *his* authority. Such being the meaning of the psalm, and this sense of it being recognised by St. Paul himself, who has evidently made the dignity of the Messiah, described in the psalm, coequal with his life, which he shews to be eternal, we seem to be going quite in opposition to his design, by supposing that in 1 Cor. 15 any *end* is assigned to the Messiah’s kingdom. Therefore, the government, which, it is said in verse 24, he shall restore to God, even the Father, must not be supposed to mean *Christ’s* government, but that of *every opposing power*, which is evidently

declared to be *destroyed*, that the power may be restored to God. For since those who set themselves against Christ, at the same time resist *God* also; the government is restored to God when it is restored to *Christ*, subduing those who are at the same time the enemies of himself and of God, and thus recovering the government for God and for himself, from the enemies who had usurped it. ► That this is the meaning of the passage under discussion, appears to me to be confirmed also by what immediately follows. For St. Paul clearly shews, in 1 Cor. 15.27, that verse 25 by no means expresses, in the words ἄχρις οὗ, a limit and end of Christ's government; but that all that we are to understand is, that all things, and therefore all enemies also, are to be subjected to the empire of Christ. According to this interpretation, therefore, the general drift of the apostle will be this; that for all the friends of Christ who, after the example of himself who was the first that rose again, have been recalled from death to a life of blessedness, an end is at hand to which both the expectations of believers are directed, and the divine promises, upon which these expectations rest, all point. For that this is as it were the scope and end of the divine promises, that the empire of Christ will at length so far prevail, that all enemies shall be subjected to him, of whom death must be reckoned the last which will be destroyed by the resurrection of those who have died in faith. For that God has put all things, and therefore all enemies, under him. That, therefore, when Christ shall have destroyed death and also every opposing power, and thus shall have restored the kingdom to the Father, *i.e.*, when he shall have caused it to come to pass that God everywhere prevails and his majesty is universally acknowledged, some rejoicing exceedingly in God their King and deriving their whole pleasure and happiness from this source, from which they see and inwardly feel it to flow, *i.e.*, from the all-powerful and benignant government of God, with never-ceasing reverence,—others, on the contrary, feeling with terror the power of his just government, and not daring to open their mouths against him;—then shall come the end. ► Nor should it seem strange, that the discourse in verse 24, changed from the government of Christ, who, it was said, should destroy every opposing power, to the Father to whom the kingdom is said to be delivered up by Christ. The reason of this, the apostle adds, in verses 27, 28: 'When it is written that all things are put under him (by another), it is manifest, that he is to be excepted who put all things under him. Since, moreover, all things are put under him (by the Father), the Son himself also will be subject to him, who has put all things under him, so that God is therefore all in all.' ► When St. Paul magnificently describes that great power of the *man* Jesus, which is able to overthrow every enemy, and even death itself, this kingdom of Christ, thus august, and delivered from the injury and destruction of every opposing power, he gives to God the Father, not in order to shew that it ceases to be Christ's, but that all things may at last be referred to the glory of God the Father; especially as the psalms which he had in his mind, when he spoke of that τέλος, treated the same subject in a similar manner. But as we read that the Father subjected all enemies to Christ, and that Christ subjected them to himself, so he who is said in 1 Cor. 15.24, to restore the kingdom to the Father, after the discomfiture of his enemies, may also be said to assert the authority and dignity of his own government. In other

places, we certainly find it said that, even after the conquest of his enemies, Christ shall continue to reign.¹

It thus appears, that the passage in question admits of being explained, on various principles, in harmony with the sentiment that the mediatorial character and reign are to continue for ever. We do not take upon us to determine which of these views is the correct one, but we beg it to be remembered that, whether we have hit on the right interpretation or not, in any of the preceding observations, the passage itself asserts the perpetuity in question, and of course must be capable of explanation consistently with this view. The Son is to be *subject to the Father for ever*, which cannot be if he is not to be Mediator for ever. Having thus, we hope, successfully removed this stumbling-block which meets us at the very threshold of our subject, we proceed to submit farther evidence in support of the sentiment that Christ as Mediator is to reign for ever.

1. We go at once to the Scriptures. ‘Thy throne, O God, is *for ever and ever*.—His name shall endure *for ever*,—Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth *throughout all generations*.—Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be *no end*, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth, even *for ever*.—In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which *shall never be destroyed*: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall *stand for ever*.—His dominion is an *everlasting* dominion which *shall not pass away* and his kingdom that which *shall not be destroyed*.—He shall reign over the house of Jacob *for ever*; and of his kingdom there shall be *no end*.—An entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the *everlasting* kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign *for ever and ever*.’² ► All these passages refer to the reign of Christ as Mediator. The language employed is strongly and fully expressive of perpetuity. It is true, the terms in question are not always expressive of absolute eternity; but they are the strongest, be it remarked, that can be found to denote strict perpetuity; and, where they must be understood with any limitation, this arises from the nature of the subject spoken of, and not from the terms themselves. They express in themselves the longest possible duration of which the things spoken of admit. Unless, therefore, it can be proved that there is something about the mediatorial dominion which renders it necessary that it should terminate, the passages quoted must be understood as affirming, without doubt, that it shall endure for ever. Stronger phraseology cannot be found to prove even the eternity of God’s existence, or of future rewards and punishments.

The doctrine in question is confirmed and illustrated by the resplendent title, given to Christ, of *King of glory*. In a psalm which is admitted to refer to the ascension of the Redeemer, this designation is applied to him emphatically again and again. Myriads of angelic

1 Dissertation on the meaning of *the kingdom of heaven*, by Gotlobb Christian Storr, late Professor of Theology in the University of Tübingen.—*Biblical Cabinet*, No. IX., pp. 26-37.

2 Psalm 45.6; 72.17; 145.13; Isa. 9.7; Dan. 2.44; 7.14; Luke 1.33; 2 Pet. 1.11; Rev. 11.15.

heralds, as they demand admission for him within the portals of the celestial palace, shout, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the *King of glory* shall come in;' and when the question is propounded, 'Who is this King of glory?' they meet it with the unhesitating response, 'The Lord of Hosts, he is the *King of glory*.' [Psalm 24.7-10.] To remove all hesitation about the application of this sublime passage to the Mediator, we have only to advert to the writings of the apostles, where we find him spoken of under the same magnificent appellation. 'Which none of the princes of this world knew,' says Paul, 'for had they known it, they would not have crucified the *Lord of glory*.' [1 Cor. 2.8.] 'My brethren,' says James, 'have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.' [James 2.1.] ► These passages, when compared with another in which Jehovah is spoken of as '*the God of glory*,' [Acts 7.2,] cannot fail to leave the impression, on the mind of the humble and candid reader, that the divine Mediator, in his official capacity, is to exercise an undoubted sovereignty over the eternal world, regulating and dispensing for ever the communications of celestial bliss. *Glory* is the term peculiarly employed, both by the inspired writers and by others, to denote the state of heavenly felicity, prepared for the people of God, which is to continue for ever; and the title *king* or *lord* denotes government over that state. So far from supposing that this title does not belong to him, or that it belongs to him only for a limited period, it would seem more consonant with Scripture and right reason to conclude, that it is to constitute his most appropriate and enduring designation, and that all his other titles, *King of Sion, King of saints, and King of nations*, are to merge at last in this one, KING OF GLORY.

2. It would seem necessary, to the proper *reward of Christ* for his mediatorial work, that the duration of his reign should extend beyond the period of the consummation of all things. We have before adverted to the claim which he has to reward, and have spoken of the mediatorial dominion itself as partaking of the nature of reward. But, up to the moment of the final judgment, his work itself shall be unfinished. He shall be all the while doing the work for which he is to be rewarded. Till the end of all things, he shall be constantly engaged subduing his enemies; converting them into friends; carrying on the work of grace in their hearts, and carrying forward the scheme of divine dispensations in the world; gathering his people's souls to himself; raising their bodies from the dead; acquitting them from all condemnation; and consigning the wicked to never-ending punishment. During all this period, he is, in a sense, making to himself a kingdom. His reward, as consisting in the full possession of his kingdom, distinguished from his work in preparing it for himself, it thus appears, cannot commence till the time when, according to the supposition of some, his mediatorial character is to cease altogether. No small part of this reward, indeed, is to consist in the perfect salvation of the redeemed; but they will not and cannot be made perfect in soul and body till the last day; not till then can the blessed Redeemer present his church 'holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight—a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' And are we to suppose that, just when the kingdom is completed, the government of it is to be abandoned? that, just when it has reached the summit of its perfection, he who has brought it to this pitch is

to cease to have any connexion with it? that just when he has established his throne, completed his conquest, and secured the privileges and glory of his subjects, that moment the crown is to be plucked from his head, and the sceptre to drop from his hand? How much more natural to think, that then his crown shall beam forth with a brighter lustre, and his sceptre be swayed with more undisputed sovereignty!

It will not do to say, 'that the glory of having once possessed the kingdom and administered it with wisdom and righteousness will ever remain to him, and will call forth a tribute of praise from the countless myriads of his subjects.'³ For it cannot be that glory and praise for the work of redemption, are to be ascribed to him in any other character than that of Redeemer. He cannot be rewarded in one character, for work which he performs in another character. He cannot be rewarded as God, for what he does as Mediator. That he should be rewarded personally, is indeed utterly impossible, on any supposition whatever; but, even supposing it possible, it is contradictory to speak of his being rewarded essentially for work that is official. We need have no hesitation, therefore, in joining in the apostolical doxology, in which everlasting praise is ascribed to him as Mediator:—'To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and FOR EVER. Amen.' [Jude 25.]

3. Indeed, that the mediatorial character and dominion should cease, would seem to be *impossible*. The relation subsisting betwixt the Redeemer and the redeemed must be perpetual. If *they* are to retain for ever the character of redeemed, *He* must surely retain that of Redeemer. A redeemer there cannot be without some that are redeemed: no more can there be redeemed without a redeemer. And, unless the Redeemer can forget the redeemed, there must be feelings of delight and complacency, and deep affection, and interest, with which *He* must ever regard *them*: and, unless the redeemed can forget their Redeemer, there are sentiments of gratitude, and love, and high esteem, and regard, with which *they* must ever respect *Him*. But that either Redeemer or redeemed should ever, through eternity, forget one another, is altogether inconceivable. It thus appears to be impossible that the mediatorial character should ever cease. Indeed, so powerfully is this consideration felt by one of the writers quoted above who hold the idea of a termination of the mediatorial reign, that, after speaking of it, he adds, 'It is self-evident that it can, in no respect, diminish the honours of the Redeemer, or abate the regards of the redeemed. To suppose this would be to suppose the loss of memory itself in those pure and blessed minds.'⁴ We ask nothing more than what is here admitted, as a proof that the mediatorial character and reign shall never terminate.

It is rendered impossible, also, by the inseparable union subsisting betwixt the divine and human natures of Christ. This union, formed at his incarnation, is indissoluble. When his humiliation terminated, his human nature was raised from the dead and taken by him to glory. In the kingdom of glory, it is destined to form a monument of divine condescension and love throughout eternity. Annihilated it cannot be; the very thought is revolting. A separate subsistence it never had, and never can have; the idea of such a thing is scarcely less shocking.

3 Dr. Dick.

4 Dr. P. Smith.

There is no alternative, then, but that it shall abide for ever in close and mysterious union with the person of the Son of God. Need we any thing more to convince us, of the absolute perpetuity of the mediatorial character? In what other character can he exist as ‘God-man, Emmanuel, God with us’?

But how, admitting it to be possible, are we to suppose that the cessation of the mediatorial dominion shall be brought about? Is it to be understood that he will abdicate the throne himself, voluntarily, and of his own accord? The office and the honour attached to it are too dear to him to admit of his doing so, without some necessity for it which has never yet been shewn to exist. Shall he be dethroned, forcibly deprived of his power, and degraded from the office which he has so honourably and efficiently filled? It is impossible to conjecture by whom this should be done. It cannot be by his own people; for they feel his rule to be at once their safety and their honour. It cannot be by angels; for they also are made subject to him, and delight to do him homage. By devils it cannot be; for they, like his other enemies, shall then be put under his feet. There is but one other supposable source from which such an event can originate, and it is more unreasonable than all the rest—his Father. But He who has given him power, and set on his head a crown of purest gold, has destined that ‘upon himself shall his crown flourish, and given him length of days FOR EVER AND EVER.’

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Discussion Questions:

1. What is the first argument, relayed from the dissertation of Professor Storr?
A.

2. Does Dr. Symington urge one particular interpretation of 1 Cor. 15.24 as the way in which the passage must be understood, in order to defend the continuance of Christ’s mediatorial reign?
A.

3. What are some other Bible passages we can refer to, in order to ascertain the duration of Christ’s reign as mediator?
A.

4. What other title, with its special qualification, may lead us to conclude Christ’s reign is everlasting?
A.

5. What second reason of Dr. Symington, may be added to collection of Bible verses to prove this?
A.

6. What third reason of Dr. Symington may further prove his conclusion?
A.