

# MESSIAH, GOVERNOR OF THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH

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*Jesus Christ—the Prince of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5).*

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The Church of Christ is, comparatively, a small society. Those who were given to the Son, in order to be redeemed by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit, are really a great multitude, which no man can number; but the sincere followers of the Lamb, at any period since the publication of the gospel, when compared with the wicked of the world, are a very little flock.

In the Church, men are connected upon principles different from those which usually lie at the foundation of human associations. The laws of this society, the punishments annexed to disobedience, and the means of defense which the members use, are all spiritual. Christians, nevertheless, consider themselves under obligations to sacrifice all earthly considerations to the interest of religion. The visible Church has, consequently, a tendency to absorb every other interest, and render all other societies subservient to itself. This is observed by the world, and contributes to excite a spirit of hostility to the gospel. “The heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. The kings of the earth 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 2:1-3).

Christianity being thus threatened by the constituted authorities of the nations, can the Church in their dominions escape destruction? Yes! Christ is Prince of the kings of the earth. This secures her from ruin, and animates the hope of her children.

The Apostle John stood in need of the comfort which the knowledge of this truth afforded. From his great age, his public employment, and his ardent zeal, he had acquired an extensive and painful acquaintance with the hostility which existed in the breasts of rulers to the cause of Christ. During the persecution of Domitian he was banished to Patmos. This island, now

called Patino, is situated in the Archipelago, on the coast of Natolia, between the isles of Samos and Nicaria. Although, at present, the residence of the Caloyer monks of the convent of St. John, it was then a desert. The lonely inhabitant of this unfrequented spot, the venerable Apostle, had leisure to mourn over the distresses of the Church of Christ, while there was power on the side of the oppressor. Here he received the revelation, which so clearly describes the mediatory authority, and the manner of its exercise over the nations for the safety of the Church.

Being in the Spirit on the Lord's day, Jesus Christ appears to him as "the faithful and true witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5). It is this last character of the Mediator which I design to illustrate in this discourse. In the words we are to observe the *title* given to Messiah, a Prince—and the character of his subjects, Kings.

A prince is a member of the royal family; but ἄρχων [*archon*], [the] word in the original text, is more: it is one who is [himself] a ruler. Sensible of this, our translators have generally rendered it ruler, throughout the New Testament (Luke 8:41; John 3:1; Acts 4:8; etc.).

The subjects of this Ruler are the kings of the earth, in their official characters. βασιλεύς [*basileus*] is not a personal designation, nor is it confined to the chief magistrate of a monarchical or despotic government. It would be a perversion of Scripture and of common sense to affirm that nations governed by kings were ruled by the Mediator, while of other forms of government he took no notice. It is moreover to be observed, that it was in his mediatory character Christ appeared to the Apostle John. In this character he describes him as the faithful and true witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. From these words the following truth is proposed for discussion: *Christ, as Mediator, rules over all the nations of the earth.*

## **Confirmation of This Doctrine**

I shall endeavor to confirm this doctrine; and, in order to do so, recourse must be had to the sacred Scriptures. These are they which testify of Christ.

To revelation alone we are indebted for our knowledge of the system of grace, and of the mediatorial character. The efforts of unassisted reason would never have discovered the great mystery of godliness. No, not from a view of the natural world; for the human intellect is not able to trace any necessary connection between creation and the redemption of sinners by a Mediator: nor from the dispensations of Providence; for although these are all subservient to the system of grace, the connection is too mysterious to be ascertained by the mind, without supernatural aid. In the Bible we have a sure word of prophecy, to which we do well that we take heed. Having submitted to its authority, we must embrace all the doctrines explicitly taught in it, and employ our powers of reasoning in deducing inferences from its established axioms; for when such deductions are legitimate, they are of divine authority. If the evidences of Scripture declarations, and of fair inferences from Scripture premises, be admissible, I shall not have great difficulty in proving the doctrine of the proposition.

1. There is a moral fitness in the mediatorial person to be the Governor among the nations.

Civil society, under whatever form of visible government, cannot be managed, as it respects the system of created being, by a more suitable character than Messiah. An appeal to the common sense of men about the qualifications of a legitimate authority, and to the sacred oracles about the person of the Mediator, will settle this point. And if it shall appear that the King of Saints is morally fit to be King of Nations, we shall have good reason to conclude that he does officiate in that capacity.

He who may lawfully be invested with authority over moral agents, individually or collectively, must, of necessity, possess a due measure of *wisdom*, of *energy*, and of *moral excellency*. Without intelligence, none is capable of governing rational creatures. Common sense rejects the authority of an ass or an idiot. Without power to execute the purposes of wisdom, government would be a nullity. Authority, without ability to act, would be contemptible and useless. And however extensive the intellectual capacity, and energetic the arm of the ruler, without [unless] he also possess[es] a moral disposition, he cannot be recognized as the governor of moral agents. The greater his natural endowments of knowledge and physical force, if he

be destitute of benevolent principle, the more dangerous and destructive will be his authority. Common sense would shudder at a proposal to have a malicious spirit, a devil, to be the ruler of moral agents, the chief magistrate of any civil society. It is, moreover, proper, that the occupant of the chair of state among any people be united to them by natural ties, by sympathy, and by a participation in their troubles.

All these qualities are concentrated in Messiah. He is clothed with every divine attribute. His are wisdom infinite, power almighty, and moral excellency supreme. He is God. He is also man. He is our brother. He has a special interest in men. He has a fellow-feeling of our infirmities. As God, he had a perfect knowledge of what we are, what we feel, and what we desire. But the Mediator has a knowledge which, as God, he could not have possessed—an *acquired*, an *experimental* knowledge of the human nature, and of all its sinless pains and infirmities. Astonishing thought! The Son of God learned obedience by the things which he suffered (Hebrews 4:15; 5:8). Say, then, is it not proper that he should be appointed as the King of kings, and owned universally as the Governor among the nations?

2. It is necessary that Messiah should rule the nations; because otherwise the mediatorial office would be inadequate and imperfect.

It would be presumptive in man to affirm that the system of grace necessarily flowed from the divine perfections, while the Scriptures uniformly resolve it into the good pleasure of Jehovah's will. But, adopting for truth the system of redemption through the blood of Jesus, we are capable of perceiving a necessary connection between the leading members of that system and the great body. If our divine Lord has actually purchased, by his suffering unto the death, those who were given to him by the Father, it is necessary that he be appointed head over all things to the Church. But more particularly,

First, It is necessary that Christ have power over the nations, that he might commission his ministers to go into them to preach the gospel (Matthew 28:18,19). Unless his authority were paramount to that of the existing governments, it would have been an usurpation, inconsistent with divine perfection, to have sent his ambassadors to negotiate with the inhabitants of the earth.