

## MESSIAH'S REIGN ON THE EARTH

*(The Morning Watch; or Quarterly Journal on Prophecy and Theological Review, Vol. II, 1830, England)*

THE strange notions which men in general entertain respecting the kingdom of the Messiah must be traced to a neglect of the sacred Scriptures; for I do not find in them one passage to support the common opinion of the spiritual reign, but every where do I find the future manifestation of Christ as King declared in language which none can gainsay or resist, without doing the most awful violence to the sacred text.

In treating on the kingdom of our Lord, I shall begin with that memorable declaration of David which he uttered at the close of his eventful reign. The passage to which I refer is contained in 2 Sam. 23: 3, 4: " He that ruleth over men must be just" or, as some read the Hebrew, ' He that ruleth in manhood is the Just One, ruling in the fear of God; and as the light of morning shall rise the sun, a morning unclouded, shining with splendour, with showers like grass from the earth.' Such ill the character of Him whom David by the Spirit declared should hereafter sit upon his throne; and such the description of his reign. The peace and glory of David's reign were frequently interrupted by internal commotions. and by family afflictions; but he here speaks of a reign which should be unclouded without any thing; ever to interrupt its peace and joy: a glorious reign, ,shining with, splendour. Solomon's reign answered in some measure to this, and as a type it served to shew forth the power and glory and unchangeableness of that kingdom which the Son of David will ere long establish on the redeemed earth.

Let us, then, inquire, First, of whom David here speaks;  
" He that ruleth over men is the Just One."

This expression can leave no doubt upon our minds that the Person here referred to is the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is the only person in the Scriptures that bears this title; and there is no one besides him, either in heaven or in earth, to whom it can possible apply. St. Peter in the 3rd of the Acts applies it to Christ: speaking of the crucifixion of the Son of God, he says, "but ye denied the Ho1y One and the Just:" In like manner does Stephen speak in the 7th chapter: " Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and the murderers." St. Paul also, in the 23rd chapter, speaking of his conversion, says, that whilst he was in Damascus, Ananias came to him, and. said, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth." Here, as in the foregoing passages, the emphatic expression, that Just One, is proved to be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Paul beheld with his eyes and heard speak on his way to Damascus. We could adduce many other passages in proof of this, and shew in a variety of ways that none but Jesus is entitled to the appellation of the Just One. But, taking this for granted on all hands, we shall proceed to describe his kingly office, and to shew from the holy Scriptures that this same Jesus shall yet sit upon the throne of his father David, and reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients gloriously.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ was anointed unto the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. Into the two first he has entered fully, but unto the last he has not yet attained. It would be most absurd to deny that he shall appear, and be manifested as King, as truly and as literally as he fulfilled his prophetic and priestly offices. As Prophet, he appeared on the earth and taught the people, and their hearts rejoiced at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth: as the great High Priest of our profession, he literally offered up a spotless sacrifice unto God, well-pleasing and acceptable in his sight; and finally. in the character of Priest he passed into the heavens, even into the most holy place, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us: and when he has fulfilled his mediatorial work he shall as truly assume his kingly character, and take unto himself his great power and reign. Although he is anointed to his kingly

office, he has not yet entered upon it; nor will he, till the death of him of whom Saul was the type, even Antichrist, the man of sin, who shall fall in the battle of Armageddon. If Jesus was fully entered on his kingly office he would be seated on his throne: but as yet he has none: as it is written in the 110th Psalm, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." Now, Jesus sits upon the throne of his Father, but hereafter he shall sit upon his own throne. Our Lord himself fixes the time of his accession to the throne of his kingdom to his second coming: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, THEN shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." And that our Lord is not now seated on this throne is most evident from another passage, which reads thus: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." It is most evident, then, that Christ at present acts the part of a Mediator; that he is now interceding for us, as the High Priest of our profession; and that he is not yet entered on his kingly office, nor seated on his throne.

2. The Scripture, declare, in the plainest language, and in the most unequivocal terms, that the "Lord Jesus Christ, who now appear, in the presence of God for us, shall descend from heaven and reign on this redeemed earth as King. In proceeding to lay before you, my readers, some of the passages of Scripture bearing on this point, let me entreat of you to lay aside for a moment all pre-conceived opinions, and to hear what the Lord saith: and settle it first in your hearts, that all that the Lord hath spoken shall be accomplished; not one word shall fail thereof. Without this, the Bible is an empty book. Take away the letter of the Bible in other words, say that every sentence shall not receive a literal and exact fulfilment and you divest it at once of its spirit, its power, and its life; you destroy the hopes of the Christian, and become the abettors of infidelity! Ob, let us contend for it, and let us bind it to our hearts as a most precious truth never to be forgotten, that the whole Bible shall be most literally and substantially fulfilled, and that not one jot or tittle of it shall fail.

The first passage to which we shall direct our attention is contained in the 9th chapter of Isaiah: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father (or the Father of the everlasting age), The Prince of Peace. 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 establish it from henceforth, even for ever." Now this is a most comprehensive prophecy: it begins at the birth of our Lord, and carries us on to the period of his second advent. We know how literally the first part of this prophecy has been fulfilled, for it is an historical fact that the Virgin Mary did conceive and bear a Son: and all that we now contend for is, that the remaining part of this prophecy shall be fulfilled in the same way as the former; that Jesus shall be manifested as the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace; and that he shall sit upon the throne of his father David of David after the flesh. Some say that they believe the former because it is accomplished: we believe the latter because it is promised. This is faith, the other is not faith. Some say, that Christ now sits upon the throne of David: but "heaven is my throne," saith the Lord, and how then was David's throne in heaven? Others suppose that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is meant by these expressions: but when, I would ask again, was David's throne erected in the believer's heart? Oh! we do not so interpret other passages of Scripture. Nor does the Holy Spirit so interpret this. God, speaking by the Prophet Amos, says, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof: and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." See also Micah 4: 6-13, Luke 1:33, and the other parallel passages. If we turn to the 21st of Ezekiel, we shall find that the different changes in the governments of the world are but as so many preparatory steps which ultimately lead to the reign of the Just One: "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is, and I will give it him." Although, therefore, the Son of David has not yet taken possession of the land, according to the everlasting covenant made with

the seed of Abraham (Gen. 15:18, with Gal. 3: 16), the promise of the Almighty Father still standeth good. Accordingly, in the Apocalypse (which is a shewing forth of the coming of the Just One), when the period of his manifestation is arrived, O great voices are heard in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. "If we turn to the Prophet Daniel, we shall find it declared that the fourth monarchy, which is the Roman, and which we now behold in its last and degenerate state, shall be succeeded only by the reign of Christ. In the 2nd chap. 44th ver. it is thus written: "And 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." The same truths are repeated in the 7th chap. vers. 13, 14: " I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days; and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.' It is worthy of observation, that in all these passages the Redeemer's reign is spoken of as commencing with the destruction of the Roman empire. In the 21st verse it is said, "The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given unto the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." This deserves particular attention. And I would remark here, that both in the Old and New Testament the reign of our Lord is ever spoken of as subsequent to the destruction of Antichrist, and not prior to that period. Thus, in the 31st of Isaiah, where the destruction of the Assyrian is spoken of, it immediately follows, "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." In the 24th it is declared, that "in the day that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth that are on the earth," that "then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients gloriously." And in the following chapter the prophet speaks of the resurrection of the dead, and the advent of our Lord, as a consequence of the destruction of Moab, and makes it the precursor of millennial blessedness; and then follows the song of praise which "shall be sung in that day in the land of Judah" (25: 1-7).

There are many other passages of Scripture which speak to the same effect, but I shall refer at present but to one more as illustrative of this great truth. In the 19th of Revel. we have a most sublime description of the coming of the Just One: the battle of Armageddon ensues; the beast and the false prophet are taken; the infidel party, who are gathered together to make war with the Lamb, die, not the common death of all men, but they go down alive into hell, like the company of Dathan and Abiram; and the remnant are slain with the sword of Him who sitteth on the horse, and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. On this, Satan is east out; and then follows the millennial reign: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." This is the commencement of the Redeemer's reign, "whose kingdom shall have no end. "Then shall it be said, in the language of the 47th Psalm, "The Lord Most High is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth on the throne of his holiness." . Most manifest it is, from these passages alone, that he that shall rule over men is the Just One; and that when he has completed his mediatorial office, and not before, he shall come forth from the most holy place, and pass from the priestly into the kingly office. He, having received the kingdom (as we are taught in the parable of the nobleman who went into a far country), shall return to set it up. (Dan. 7: 9, 10, 13, 14). Then he shall be King, yea, King of kings and Lord of Lords. Then shall be understood the nature of that testimony which he bore before Pontius Pilate, when he said, "Art thou a king then?" and Jesus replied, "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." This is the truth unto which Jesus bore testimony; and it is remarkable, that for this testimony he was put to death: for such was his accusation affixed to his cross,

written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin; "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." What marvel, "then, if those who now stand up for the truth should in like manner suffer persecution 1 The wonder would be if it were not so, for "the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." But it is a consoling thought, that every one that is of the truth will attend to this (John 19: 37). And what if it be now especially brought forward, in these days of religious profession; as a test of discipleship? True it is that every sincere disciple of Jesus will "love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4: 8); will WATCH for his coming (Luke 12: 37; 1 Thess. 1: 10); and will pray for it (Rev. 22: 20). He will long to see the King in his beauty, to see him sit upon the throne of his glory, when this devil possessed world shall be rescued from the enemy, and Christ shall bruise him under his feet; and therefore he prays God to quicken his coming: "That it may please thee of thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory: through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Let us notice, in the second place, the blessedness of Christ's reign on earth. This is declared in 2 Sam. 23: 4, to which we have already referred: "And as the light of morning, a morning unclouded, shining with splendour, with showers like grass from the earth." The language here employed to convey an idea of the blessedness of that day is very striking and beautiful. It is not sufficient to liken it to the "morning," nor unto "a morning without clouds," but to a morning "shining with splendour." The presence of the Redeemer will disperse every thing which opposeth the happiness, peace, and joy of his people. The clouds of ignorance, of sin, and sorrow, which now hang over them, will flee away, and their present trials shall be turned into the fulness of eternal and ineffable joy.

The language here used to illustrate the blessedness of the Redeemer's kingdom will apply to the judgment he will execute at his coming. He will then discern between the righteous and the wicked; will separate the chaff from the wheat, the goats from the sheep. Now they are mixed together; and much uneasiness and many a cloudy day arise to the church on account of it: but then these clouds will have passed away; the wicked will be driven from the presence of the Lamb with an everlasting destruction; and the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

The figures employed in the passage under consideration will serve to illustrate the happiness and exalted felicity of the righteous on that day. The servants of the Redeemer are now often under a cloud: they are tried in various ways-by the loss of friends, by the hard speeches and persecutions of the ungodly, But then they shall no longer be oppressed or afflicted: it will be an unclouded day to them, a day shining with splendour. They will then "receive their adoption, even the redemption of their body," which shall be "made like unto Christ's glorious body;" and "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; either shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." The whole company of heaven shall now meet around the throne of God and the Lamb. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, or any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Yes, the morning of the Redeemer's advent will be unto them "a morning without clouds," a morning "shining with brightness." The dew of that morning will be "as grass upon the earth," even "as the dew of herbs; and the earth shall cast out her dead." The Prophet Isaiah, foreseeing this, says (25: 7, 8)," And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nation,. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it."

The day of the Lord's coming will be also "a morning shining with splendour" is regard to " Israel after the flesh: "for at the second coming of the Lord " he will set his hand a second time to recover the

remnant of his people which shall be left," &c. (Isai. 11: 11-16). The same thing is declared by the Prophet Jeremiah, 23: 5-8: " Behold; the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his day Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely," &c.

The advent of our Lord will be "a morning shining with splendour," in respect to Jerusalem at that time. Now she is "become a proverb, and a by-word among all nations;" but then she shall be called " Beautiful for situation: the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, on the side of the north the city of the great King: God is well known in her palaces as a sure refuge," &c. (Ps. 48.); "And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there" (Ezek. 48: 35). Then it shall be said of Zion, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee: and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising... Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation; and thy gates Praise... The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shalt be ended. Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my bands, that I may be glorified." (Isai. 60.)

The figures used by David to illustrate the blessedness of the Redeemer's reign, may be applied to himself as the Just One: " For he shall govern the people in righteousness; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (Isai. 11: 3, 4). " Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness. and righteousness remain in the fruitful field: and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isai, 32: 16, 17). Now shall the people "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more " (Isai. 2: 4). This blessed state of things is ever spoken of in the Scriptures as the effect of the righteous government administered by the Just One: " Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers, and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us" (Isai. 33: 20-22). In the 72nd Psalm (which can apply to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ) there is an expression very similar to that used by David in 2 Sam. 23: " He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth;" The subject is continued to the end: " In HIS days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts: yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper... His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." In one word, his reign will be "as the morning, a morning unclouded, shining with splendour, with showers like grass upon the earth."

These expressions will also apply to the universal knowledge and holiness which will then pervade the whole earth. The Sun of Righteousness, rising upon Zion, shall diffuse his beams to the farthest verge of the green earth. Then " they shall no more say, Know the Lord; for all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest; and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea: " the whole " earth shall be filled with his glory, and all the heathen shall praise him."

At this time, also, the creation itself shall lift up its head, and rejoice in sharing the blessings of redemption. Now it is labouring under the Fall, being cursed for man's sake; but when the Lord comes it "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God" (Rom. 8: 19-22). " Then shall the earth yield her increase" (Ps. 67: 6); so that "the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that draweth forth; and the mountains shall drop new wine, and all the hills shall melt." (Amos 9:13). Then, also, "shall the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the falling together; and a little child shall lead them: and the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox: and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Isai. 11: 6-9).

Thus have I endeavoured to give a brief outline, from the holy Scriptures, of the blessed state of the world under the reign of Messiah. Those words of David seem so forcibly to apply to what has been advanced, that I cannot avoid repeating them: " He ruling in manhood is the Just One, ruling in the fear of God; and as in the morning, a morning unclouded shining with splendour, with showers like grass from the earth."

There are some important inferences to be drawn from this subject. 1. We may learn from hence, that this blessed state of things eill not be brought about till our lord comes. Till then, things shall wax worse and worse; iniquity shall abound; and the earth shall be filled with violence, even as in the days of Noah. 2. That Christ will not sit upon the throne of his glory till he comes to reign; and that then he will fulfil all that was spoken of him in his kingly character. 3. That this should be the great object of our desires. Such was the state of David's mind, 2 Sam. 23: 3-5: "These were the last words of David:" (ver. 1). The last words of men generally respect that which ia nearest their hearts: so it was with David; "This," he says, "is all my salvation, and all my desire" (ver. 6). The last words of Peter were spoken in reference to the same subject: "Knowing that I must shortly put off' this my tabernacle, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have always these things in remembrance: for we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:14-16). It is manifest, then, both from the Old and New Testament saints, that, instead of our Lord's reign upon the earth having little or no place in our affections, as is the case with the professing church at the present moment, it should fill our hearts and influence us continually. The language of our hearts should ever be, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly!" and if this is not the language of our hearts, we have reason to doubt whether we belong to Christ or no: for if we love him we shall love his appearing; and we do well to remember, that to none but such will the crown of glory be granted in that day (2 Tim. 4: 8). Let us "not be the last, then, to bring the King back again; and when he comes, we "shall sit down with him on his throne, even as he overcame and sat down on the throne of his Father."

JOHN HOOPER