

MESSIAH THE PRINCE,
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.
By William Symington.
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 4.

CHAPTER 3.
CHRIST'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE KINGLY OFFICE.

1. *Personal dignity* forms a primary and conspicuous feature in the regal qualifications of the Messiah. This, if not always deemed essential in a king, is generally regarded as fit and proper. This general sense of its propriety may be inferred from the ease with which men in every age have gone into the principle of hereditary government. A degree of personal dignity or natural majesty, either real or adventitious [*extrinsic, from circumstances*], seems essential to qualify for rule. That the reins of government should be placed in the hands of one entirely destitute of everything of this nature, is repugnant to all our feelings of propriety. On this principle proceeded the answer to the question put by Gideon to Zebah and Zalmunna:—‘What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.’ [Judges 8.18.] ► To the same purpose is the reflection of the wise man:—‘Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning. Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles!’ [Eccl. 10.16,17.] Now, great is the personal dignity of our mediatorial King. He is the SON of GOD—a title by which he is designated times without number in the Scriptures. Into the question, whether his sonship be personal or official, we cannot be expected fully to enter here. The remark we have made, however, proceeds on the supposition that it is *personal*; for, if he were the Son of God only in an official or figurative sense, sonship could never be adduced as qualifying for the very office from which it derived its own existence. Sonship cannot both be derived from, and qualify for, office at the same time. ► But that the title in question may safely be viewed as denoting personal dignity, as involving something supernatural or divine, as implying a constructive assumption of such dignity as belongs only to God, is borne out by the circumstance, that his assuming this title was considered, by the highest legal and ecclesiastical authorities of the Jews, as sufficient to expose him to the charge of blasphemy, because by doing so he thus made himself equal with God;—an inference which he never once attempted to deny, while he vindicated himself from the imputation which it was falsely understood to involve. ‘Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.’ [John 5.18.] ► The sonship and office of Christ are, also, frequently spoken of as different; they are often set in opposition to one another, and even introduced as distinct parts of the same simple propositions; as, for example, when it is said, ‘He preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God’—‘I

believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ [Acts 9.20; 8.37.] Besides, official sonship is a common thing, but that of Christ is spoken of as peculiar and exclusive; whence he is called God’s ‘own Son,’ and his ‘only begotten Son’ [Rom. 8.32; John 1.14.]—language expressive of a relation supreme in dignity, unique in nature, without a parallel, absolutely his own. That he is qualified for mediatorial dominion by his personal dignity as the Son of God is very impressively set before us in the words of the angel to Mary:—‘He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.’ [Luke 1.32.] If the land may be pronounced blessed whose king is ‘the son of nobles,’ how greatly blessed must that kingdom be whose ruler is ‘the Son God!’

2. The personal dignity, however, is not, in this case, such as to prevent a *near relationship* to the subjects of his spiritual kingdom. ‘Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother.’ [Deut. 17.15.] Such was the law respecting the appointment of the supreme ruler among the Jews. It was founded in reason and in accurate views of human nature, as only one who is related by natural ties can enter fully into the feelings of the people, participate in all their troubles, and sympathise with them in all their joys and sorrows. Reason revolts at the idea of a man ruling over angels, or of an angel ruling over men; and it is the same general principle which dictates the impolicy and impropriety of appointing a foreigner to the supreme government of a nation.

To qualify him for ruling over man, it would thus appear to be necessary that Christ should possess human nature. The height of his personal dignity as the Son of God, seems to preclude the possibility of natural relationship to his subjects. By the mystery of the incarnation, however, this difficulty is overcome. A human nature, miraculously provided by the power of the Holy Ghost, was, by a voluntary act of assumption on the part of the Son of God, taken into close and indissoluble union with his person: the Son of God became also the Son of man. The Word was made flesh. He who, as God, was removed far above everything human, as man became qualified for exercising all the sympathies of humanity; and, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, was thus fitted for ruling in the hearts of his people with all the sensibilities of a brother. ► When his incarnation was announced by the angel, he was spoken of in his regal character. ‘Thou shalt bring forth a son, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.’ [Luke 1.31.] His personal dignity is not in this way lessened; the lustre of his divine majesty is not diminished: but there is something superadded which gives us greater boldness in approaching him. When we come to our King with perfect freedom, pressing our suit with eagerness and expressing our confidence that the petition we present shall be granted, were we questioned as to what it is that gives us all this ease, we might reply in the words of the men of Judah to the men of Israel of old—*Because the king is near of kin to us.* [2 Sam. 19.42.]

3. Jesus is farther qualified for mediatorial dominion, by his *knowledge* and *wisdom*. ‘These are indispensable regal qualifications. That authority of any kind, particularly supreme authority, should be held by one who is ignorant or foolish, shocks all our sentiments of

propriety. 'Be wise, O ye kings' (Ps. 2.10). The kings of Israel were required to read in the book of the law; and Solomon, the most distinguished king of antiquity, and one of the most remarkable types of Christ in his regal office, was wiser than all the men of his day. We speak now, not so much of knowledge in general, as of that which qualifies for rule;—knowledge of the principles of government; of the laws of the kingdom; of the character, state, and necessities of the subjects; and of the nature and bearing of foreign relations. Such knowledge is essential to the useful exercise of power. ► The knowledge of Christ, in all these respects, is extensive and perfect. He knows well the principles of the government which he is delegated to administer; for they are founded on the nature of God and man, and on the relation subsisting between them; and with these, being Immanuel, God with us, he cannot but be most thoroughly acquainted. He knows well the laws of his kingdom, being himself the lawgiver by whom they were all framed and promulgated, and having himself yielded perfect obedience to them all. He knows all his subjects, in the minute variety of their circumstances, characters, necessities, and desires; 'he needs not that any should testify of man, for he knows what is in man, and he searcheth the reins and hearts.' [John 21.17; 2.25; Rev. 2.23.] He is thoroughly acquainted with the rival kingdom of this world, from which he has to reclaim his subjects, and against whose assaults he must defend them; with the kingdom of darkness, from which he has to save them; and with the kingdom of light, with which he has to induce them to form, not a partial or temporary confederacy merely, but a final and permanent alliance.

Nor is wisdom less important than knowledge. Wisdom to foresee, judgment to contrive, prudence to execute, are essential to a ruler. Jesus, 'the king eternal,' is at the same time 'the only wise God' (1 Tim. 1.17). His understanding is infinite. He can lay down the best plans and devise the best measures for promoting at once the enlargement, the usefulness, and the happiness of his kingdom.

In short, nothing can fail either from ignorance or from indiscretion, There is no lack of information or of prudence. No event can occur unforeseen by him. He is prepared for every occurrence. Nay, such is his wisdom, that what his enemies design for injury, he, by skilful management, can cause to operate powerfully for good.

4. But all these qualities will be of no avail without power. Dignity to adorn, relationship to sympathise, and wisdom to project, can be of no use, unless there be also energy to execute. Force of mind, energy of character, and powerful resources are requisite in a king. Besides skill to plan for the good of his subjects, he must have ministers, finances, armies, to enable him to realise his schemes. Uncontrollable power is one of the regal qualifications of Christ. 'Wisdom and *might* are his' (Dan. 2.20). He possesses all the resources of omnipotence. He is 'the Mighty God,' 'the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come—the Almighty.' Creation, providence, regeneration, and resurrection, proclaim the extent of physical and moral energy that he has at his command, in order to conduct the administration of his mediatorial kingdom. ► His ministers are qualified, by their numbers and endowments, to execute his sovereign pleasure. He can call to his aid all the perfections of Godhead, and all the fulness of

the new covenant. The elements of heaven, apostate spirits, and angels of light, are under his control, advancing his cause and opposing his enemies. At his command, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera; a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet an apostle, in fulfilment of his gracious designs; and it was no empty boast, that he could have commanded more than twelve legions of angels. With such vast might, with such immense resources, no purpose can fail from inability to carry it into execution. His people shall be willing in the day of his power. He is mighty to save. Where the word of this King is, there is power. [Psalm 110.3; Isa. 63.1; Eccl. 8.4.]

5. High *moral excellence* is another indispensable qualification. Without this, dignity serves only as a passport to iniquity; relationship and knowledge confer only greater capacity of mischief; wisdom degenerates into low cunning; and power becomes mere physical force, more to be dreaded than the hurricane or the lightning. Rectitude of intention, justice of administration, and exemplary conduct, are the constituents of that moral excellence which Scripture, reason, and common sense concur in demanding as necessary to qualify for conducting a proper and effective government. ► These elements of moral worth meet, in the highest degree and in perfect combination, in the character of Prince Messiah. ‘The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre’ (Psalm 45.6); ‘Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints’ (Rev. 15.3). Rectitude of intention characterises all his plans. Everything is designed for the good of his people and the glory of the Godhead. Other kings may have sinister ends to serve: even when doing what is right in itself, they may have an ultimate respect to their own personal aggrandisement, or to the advancement of some favourite courtier; or, supposing them moved solely by a regard to the good of their subjects, they may be seeking this at the expense of some neighbouring state. ► No defect of this nature can ever attach to him of whom we are speaking. He can have no intentions but what are benevolent and righteous; nor can he, even for the fulfilment of these, ever overlook what is due to the honour and glory of God. His administration, too, is perfectly equitable. When the intentions of men are the best that can be supposed, the administration is not always such; while, in other cases, both the intention and the administration are the reverse of just. The rights, and liberties, and property of the subjects, are too often sacrificed, by unprincipled rulers, to schemes of lawless ambition or iniquitous favouritism. The administration of Christ, on the contrary, is impartial, righteous, infallible; no one is wronged that another may be benefited; and every act is such as entitles it to meet with ready and implicit submission.

Exemplary behaviour is necessary to give due moral effect to official administration. Laws however wise, acts however equitable, intentions however pure, cannot have the same influence on others when they proceed from persons who are themselves destitute of moral character. No government, however good in itself, can be expected to be successful, which is administered by a known profligate. It is wisely required that he that ruleth over men must be ‘just, ruling in the fear of the Lord.’ [2 Sam. 23.3.] It were unreasonable to expect principles to be acted upon, and laws to be obeyed, which are inculcated by persons who are themselves

violating them every day. ► He is likely to be most useful who can appeal, as Samuel did of old, to his people: ‘I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold here I am; witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed, whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes herewith?’ [1 Sam. 12.2,3.] Jesus set his subjects an example of perfect holiness. His conduct was unimpeachable; his behaviour was unaffected with the slightest moral obliquity. All the laws of his kingdom, whether personal, relative, or religious, were recommended by his example, as well as enforced by his sovereign authority. Perfect moral excellence adorns his character. He is not only the righteous Lord who *loveth* righteousness, but he *practised* it so fully and so constantly, as to entitle him, in presence of his most inveterate enemies, to put forth the challenge: ‘Which of you convinceth me of sin?’

6. Nor is Jesus deficient in the more gentle qualities of *meek compassion, tender mercy, and munificent bounty*. Great wisdom and stern integrity may be combined with a harsh, repulsive, and unfeeling disposition, but such a combination can be regarded only in the light of a defect. ‘*Mercy and truth preserve the king, and his throne is upholden by mercy.* [Prov. 20.28.] In the qualifications of Sion’s King, the combination in question is complete. In him, justice and compassion honourably harmonise. ‘*Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other*’ (Psalm 85.10). While ‘*he loves righteousness and hates wickedness,*’ all ‘*his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia*’ (Psalm 45.7,8). To the daughter of Sion, her King is announced at once as ‘*just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass*’ (Zech. 9.9). ► He can have compassion upon the ignorant and them that are out of the way. Although having all the resources of destruction at his command, he bears patiently with the disobedience and rebellious insults of his subjects. He waits to be gracious. To the most worthless criminal he extends the golden sceptre of his love. His munificence is exhaustless; his bestowments most bountiful and liberal. Plenty, liberty, honour, are dispensed with open hand. What shall be done to the man whom this King delights to honour, cannot be told or conceived. ‘*He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the soul of the needy.*’ [Psalm 72.4,6,7,12,13.]

7. *Authority* is necessary to the valid exercise of power. Other qualifications cannot confer this; nor can the abundance in which they may be enjoyed make up for the want of it. There are two ways in which legitimate authority may be conveyed—divine appointment and popular choice. The latter, however just and proper among men, cannot obtain here; as it is one of the peculiarities of the case before us, that the king chooses the people, and not the people the king. ‘*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.*’ [John 15.16.] Divine appointment, therefore, is here the only proper source of authority. Not that his right to rule is not confirmed by

purchase and by conquest; but these are not in themselves sufficient; in their very nature they presuppose an authority founded on the appointment of God. This, then, is the origin of that authority by which the Messiah is qualified for the exercise of mediatorial dominion. It is a matter of such importance, and admits of such amplitude of proof and illustration, that we shall devote a section to it by itself. 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand' (John 3.35).

Such is the beauty of Christ's regal qualifications. Here, dignity and condescension, grace and majesty, are admirably blended. There is nothing redundant, nothing defective. There is nothing present that can be wanted, nothing wanting that is required, and every part is in due proportion and delightful harmony.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the first of the qualifications we may consider essential to a supreme civil ruler?
A.
2. When Scripture speaks of Jesus as Son of God, is the sonship ascribed to him personal and real, or official and figurative?
A.
3. What is the second qualification essential to a supreme civil ruler?
A.
4. What kind of Knowledge and Wisdom is contemplated as a third qualification fitting Jesus Christ for the exercise of Mediatorial Dominion?
A.
5. What things are contemplated under the term 'power' as the fourth qualification for Christ's kingly government?
A.
6. What is a fifth indispensable qualification for the exercise of kingly rule?
A.
7. What becomes of Great Power in a Ruler without due Moral Excellence?
A.
8. What is the consequence of a nation adopting good laws and constitutions while appointing rulers without upright character and life?
A.
9. Is rigid severity as an enforcer of the law an ideal for a supreme ruler?
A.
10. What is the last necessary qualification for a supreme or kingly ruler?
A.