

PSALM II.

TITLE.—We shall not greatly err in our summary of this sublime Psalm if we call it THE PSALM OF MESSIAH THE PRINCE; for it sets forth as in a wondrous vision the tumult of the people against the Lord's anointed, the determinate purpose of God to exalt his own Son, and the ultimate reign of that Son over all his enemies. Let us read it with the eye of faith, beholding, as in a glass, the final triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ over all his enemies. Lowth has the following remarks upon this Psalm: "The establishment of David upon his throne, notwithstanding the opposition made to it by his enemies, is the subject of the Psalm. David sustains in it a twofold character, literal and allegorical. If we read over the Psalm, first with an eye to the literal David, the meaning is obvious, and put beyond all dispute by the sacred history. There is indeed an uncommon glow in the expression and sublimity in the figures, and the diction is now and then exaggerated, as if were on purpose to intimate, and lead us to the contemplation of higher and more important matters concealed within. In compliance with this admonition, if we take another survey of the Psalm as relative to the person and concerns of the spiritual David, a noble series of events immediately rises to view, and the meaning becomes more evident, as well as more exalted. The colouring which may perhaps seem too bold and glaring for the king of Israel, will no longer appear so when laid upon his great Antitype. After we have thus attentively considered the subjects apart, let us look at them together, and we shall behold the full beauty and majesty of this most charming poem. We shall perceive the two senses very distinct from each other, yet conspiring in perfect harmony, and bearing a wonderful resemblance in every feature and lineament, while the analogy between them is so exactly preserved, that either may pass for the original from whence the other was copied. New light is continually cast upon the phraseology, fresh weight and dignity are added to the sentiments, till, gradually ascending from things below to things above, from human affairs to those that are Divine, they bear the great important theme upwards with them, and at length place it in the height and brightness of heaven."

DIVISION.—This Psalm will be best understood if it be viewed as a four-fold picture. (In verses 1, 2, 3) the Nations are raging; (4 to 6) the Lord in heaven derides them; (7 to 9) the Son proclaims the decree; and (from 10 to end) advice is given to the kings to yield obedience to the Lord's anointed. This division is not only suggested by the sense, but is warranted by the poetic form of the Psalm, which naturally falls into four stanzas of three verses each.

EXPOSITION.

WHY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,
3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

We have, in these first three verses, a description of the hatred of human nature against the Christ of God. No better comment is needed upon it than the apostolic song in Acts iv. 27, 28: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." The Psalm begins abruptly with an angry interrogation; and well it may: it is surely but little to be wondered at, that the sight of creatures in arms against their God should amaze the psalmist's mind. We see the *heathen raging*, roaring like the sea, tossed to and fro with restless waves, as the ocean in a storm; and then we mark the people in their hearts *imagining a vain thing* against God. Where there is much rage there is generally some folly, and in this case there is an excess of it. Note, that the commotion is not caused by the people only, but their leaders foment the rebellion. "*The kings of the earth set themselves.*" In determined malice they arrayed themselves in opposition against God. It was not temporary rage, but deep-seated hate, for they set themselves resolutely to withstand the Prince of Peace. "*And the rulers take counsel*

together." They go about their warfare craftily, not with foolish haste, but deliberately. They use all the skill which art can give. Like Pharaoh, they cry, "Let us deal wisely with them." O that men were half as careful in God's service to serve him wisely, as his enemies are to attack his kingdom craftily. Sinners have their wits about them, and yet saints are dull. But what say they? what is the meaning of this commotion? "*Let us break their bands asunder.*" "Let us be free to commit all manner of abominations. Let us be our own gods. Let us rid ourselves of all restraint." Gathering impudence by the traitorous proposition of rebellion, they add—"let us cast away;" as if it were an easy matter,—"*let us fling off 'their cords from us.'*" What! O ye kings, do ye think yourselves Samsons? and are the bands of Omnipotence but as green withs before you? Do you dream that you shall snap to pieces and destroy the mandates of God—the decrees of the Most High—as if they were but tow? And do ye say, "Let us cast away their cords from us?" Yes! There are monarchs who have spoken thus, and there are still rebels upon thrones. However mad the resolution to revolt from God, it is one in which man has persevered ever since his creation, and he continues in it to this very day. The glorious reign of Jesus in the latter day will not be consummated, until a terrible struggle has convulsed the nations. His coming will be as a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, and the day thereof shall burn as an oven. Earth loves not her rightful monarch, but clings to the usurper's sway: the terrible conflicts of the last days will illustrate both the world's love of sin and Jehovah's power to give the kingdom to his only Begotten. To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light. We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us?

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Let us now turn our eyes from the wicked council-chamber and raging tumult of man, to the secret place of the majesty of the Most High. What doth God say? What will the King do unto the men who reject his only-begotten Son, the Heir of all things?

Mark the quiet dignity of the Omnipotent One, and the contempt which he pours upon the princes and their raging people. He has not taken the trouble to rise up and do battle with them—he despises them, he knows how absurd, how irrational, how futile are their attempts against him—he therefore *laughs* at them.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

After he has laughed he shall *speak*; he needs not smite; the breath of his lips is enough. At the moment when their power is at its height, and their fury most violent, *then* shall his Word go forth against them. And what is it that he says?—it is a very galling sentence—"Yet," says he, "despite your malice, despite your tumultuous gatherings, despite the wisdom of your counsels, despite the craft of your lawgivers, *'yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.'*" Is not that a grand exclamation! He has already done that which the enemy seeks to prevent. While they are proposing, he has disposed the matter. Jehovah's will is done, and man's will frets and raves in vain. God's Anointed is appointed, and shall not be disappointed. Look back through all the ages of infidelity, hearken to the high and hard things which men have spoken against the Most High, listen to the rolling thunder of earth's volleys against the Majesty of heaven, and then think that God is saying all the while, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Yet Jesus reigns, yet he sees of the travail of his soul, and "his unsuffering kingdom yet shall come" when he shall take unto himself his great power, and reign from the river unto the ends of the earth. Even now he reigns in Zion, and our glad lips sound forth the praises of the Prince of Peace. Greater conflicts may here be foretold, but we may be confident that victory will be given to our Lord and King. Glorious triumphs are yet to come; hasten them, we pray thee, O Lord! It is Zion's glory and joy that her King is in her, guarding her from foes, and filling her with good things. Jesus sits upon the throne of grace, and the

throne of power in the midst of his church. In him is Zion's best safeguard ; let her citizens be glad in him.

" Thy walls are strength, and at thy gates
A guard of heavenly warriors waits ;
Nor shall thy deep foundations move,
Fixed on his counsels and his love.

Thy foes in vain designs engage ;
Against his throne in vain they rage,
Like rising waves, with angry roar,
That dash and die upon the shore."

7 I will declare the decree : the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my son ; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

This Psalm wears something of a dramatic form, for now another person is introduced as speaking. We have looked into the counsel-chamber of the wicked, and to the throne of God, and now we behold the Anointed declaring his rights of sovereignty, and warning the traitors of their doom.

God has laughed at the counsel and ravings of the wicked, and now Christ the Anointed himself comes forward, as the Risen Redeemer, " declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. i. 4. Looking into the angry faces of the rebellious kings, the Anointed One seems to say, " If this sufficeth not to make you silent, ' *I will declare the decree.*' " Now this decree is directly in conflict with the device of man, for its tenour is the establishment of the very dominion against which the nations are raving. "*Thou art my Son.*" Here is a noble proof of the glorious Divinity of our Immanuel. " For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee ? " What a mercy to have a Divine Redeemer in whom to rest our confidence ! "*This day have I begotten thee.*" If this refers to the Godhead of our Lord, let us not attempt to fathom it, for it is a great truth, a truth reverently to be received, but not irreverently to be scanned. It may be added, that if this relates to the Begotten One in his human nature, we must here also rejoice in the mystery, but not attempt to violate its sanctity by intrusive prying into the secrets of the Eternal God. The things which are revealed are enough, without venturing into vain speculations. In attempting to define the Trinity, or unveil the essence of Divinity, many men have lost themselves : here great ships have foundered. What have we to do in such a sea with our frail skiffs ?

" *Ask of me.*" It was a custom among great kings to give to favoured ones whatever they might ask. (See Esther v. 6 ; Matt. xiv. 7.) So Jesus hath but to ask and have. Here he declares that his very enemies are his inheritance. To their face he declares this decree, and " Lo ! here," cries the Anointed One, as he holds aloft in that once pierced hand the sceptre of his power, " He hath given me this, not only the right to be a king, but the power to conquer." Yes ! Jehovah hath given to his Anointed a rod of iron with which he shall break rebellious nations in pieces, and, despite their imperial strength, they shall be but as potters' vessels, easily dashed into shivers, when the rod of iron is in the hand of the omnipotent Son of God. Those who will not bend must break. Potters' vessels are not to be restored if dashed in pieces, and the ruin of sinners will be hopeless if Jesus shall smite them.

" Ye sinners seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear ;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there."

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings : be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

The scene again changes, and counsel is given to those who have taken counsel to rebel. They are exhorted to obey, and give the kiss of homage and affection to him whom they have hated.

"Be wise."—It is always wise to be willing to be instructed, especially when such instruction tends to the salvation of the soul. "Be wise *now, therefore*;" delay no longer, but let good reason weigh with you. Your warfare cannot succeed, therefore desist and yield cheerfully to him who will make you bow if you refuse his yoke. O how wise, how infinitely wise is obedience to Jesus, and how dreadful is the folly of those who continue to be his enemies! "*Serve the Lord with fear*;" let reverence and humility be mingled with your service. He is a great God, and ye are but puny creatures; bend ye, therefore, in lowly worship, and let a filial fear mingle with all your obedience to the great Father of the Ages. "*Rejoice with trembling*."—There must ever be a holy fear mixed with the Christian's joy. This is a sacred compound, yielding a sweet smell, and we must see to it that we burn no other upon the altar. Fear, without joy, is torment; and joy, without holy fear, would be presumption. Mark the solemn argument for reconciliation and obedience. It is an awful thing to *perish* in the midst of sin, in the very way of rebellion; and yet how easily could *his wrath* destroy us suddenly. It needs not that his anger should be heated seven times hotter; let the fuel kindle *but a little*, and we are consumed. O sinner! Take heed of the terrors of the Lord; for "our God is a consuming fire." Note the benediction with which the Psalm closes:—"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Have we a share in this blessedness? Do we trust in *him*? Our faith may be slender as a spider's thread; but if it be real, we are in our measure blessed. The more we trust, the more fully shall we know this blessedness. We may therefore close the Psalm with the prayer of the apostles:—"Lord, increase our faith."

The first Psalm was a contrast between the righteous man and the sinner; the second Psalm is a contrast between the tumultuous disobedience of the ungodly world and the sure exaltation of the righteous Son of God. In the first Psalm, we saw the wicked driven away like chaff; in the second Psalm, we see them broken in pieces like a potter's vessel. In the first Psalm, we beheld the righteous like a tree planted by the rivers of water; and here, we contemplate Christ, the Covenant Head of the righteous, made better than a tree planted by the rivers of water, for *he* is made king of all the islands, and all the heathen bow before him and kiss the dust; while he himself gives a blessing to all those who put their trust in him. The two Psalms are worthy of the very deepest attention; they are, in fact, the preface in the entire Book of Psalms, and were by some of the ancients, joined into one. They are, however, two Psalms; for Paul speaks of this as the second Psalm. (Acts xiii. 33.) The first shows us the character and lot of the righteous; and the next teaches us that the Psalms are Messianic, and speak of Christ the Messiah—the Prince who shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. That they have both a far-reaching prophetic outlook we are well assured, but we do not feel competent to open up that matter, and must leave it to abler hands.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"Why do nations make a noise," tumultuate or rage? The Hebrew verb is not expressive of an internal feeling, but of the outward agitation which denotes it. There may be an allusion to the rolling and roaring of the sea, often used as an emblem of popular commotion, both in the Scriptures and the classics. The past tense of this verb (*why have they raged*?) refers to the commotion as already begun, while the future in the next clause expresses its continuance.—*J. A. Alexander, D.D., 1850.*

Verse 1.—"Rage." The word with which Paul renders this in the Greek denotes rage, pride, and restiveness, as of horses that neigh, and rush into the battle.

'Εφρίαξαν, from φρυάσσω, to snort or neigh, properly applied to a high-mettled horse. See Acts iv. 25.

Verse 1.—“*A vain thing.*” A medal was struck by Diocletian, which still remains bearing the inscription, “The name of Christians being extinguished.” And in Spain, two monumental pillars were raised, on which were written:—I. “Diocletian Jovian Maximian Hercules Cæsares Augusti, for having extended the Roman Empire in the east and the west, and for having extinguished the name of Christians, who brought the Republic to ruin.” II. “Diocletian Jovian Maximian Hercules Cæsares Augusti, for having adopted Galerius in the east, for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, for having extended the worship of the gods.” As a modern writer has elegantly observed: “We have here a monument raised by Paganism, over the grave of its vanquished foe. But in this, ‘the people imagined a vain thing;’ so far from being deceased, Christianity was on the eve of its final and permanent triumph, and the stone guarded a sepulchre empty as the urn which Electra washed with her tears. Neither in Spain, nor elsewhere, can be pointed out the burial place of Christianity; it is not, for the living have no tomb.”

Verses 1—4.—Herod, the fox, plotted against Christ, to hinder the course of his ministry and mediatorship, but he could not perform his enterprise; ‘tis so all along, therefore it is said, “*Why do the heathen imagine a vain thing?*” A vain thing, because a thing successful, their hands could not perform it. It was vain, not only because there was no true ground of reason why they should imagine or do such a thing, but vain also because they laboured in vain, they could not do it, and therefore it follows, “*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*” The Lord see what fools they are, and men (yea, themselves) shall see it. The prophet gives us an elegant description to this purpose. Isaiah lix. 5, 6. “*They weave the spider’s web Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works.*” As if he had said, they have been devising and setting things in a goody frame to catch flies; they have been spinning a fine thread out of their brains, as the spider doth out of her bowels; such is their web, but when they have their web they cannot cut it out, or make it up into a garment. They shall go naked and cold, notwithstanding all their spinning and weaving, all their plotting and devising. The next broom that comes will sweep away all their webs and the spiders too, except they creep apace. God loves and delights to cross worldly proverbs and worldly craft.—*Joseph Caryl, 1647.*

Verse 2.—The *many* had done their part, and now the *mighty* show themselves.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—“*They banded themselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed.*” But why did they band themselves against the Lord, or against his Anointed? What was their desire of him? To have his goods? No, he had none for himself; but they were richer than he. To have his liberty? Nay, that would not suffice them, for they had bound him before. To bring the people into dislike of him? Nay, that would not serve them, for they had done so already, until even his disciples were fled from him. What would they have then? his blood? Yea, “they took counsel,” saith Matthew, “to put him to death.” They had the devil’s mind, which is not satisfied but with death. And how do they contrive it? He saith, “they took counsel about it.”—*Henry Smith, 1578.*

Verse 2.—“*Against Jehovah and against his Anointed.*” What an honour it was to David to be thus publicly associated with Jehovah! And, because he was his anointed, to be an object of hatred and scorn to the ungodly world! If this very circumstance fearfully augmented the guilt, and sealed the doom of these infatuated heathen, surely it was that which above everything else would preserve the mind of David calm and serene, yea, peaceful and joyful notwithstanding the proud and boastful vauntiness of his enemies When writing this Psalm David was like a man in a storm, who hears only the roaring of the tempest, or sees nothing but the raging billows threatening destruction on every side of him. And yet his faith enabled him to say, “*The people imagine a vain thing.*” They cannot succeed. They cannot defeat the counsels of heaven. They cannot injure the Lord’s Anointed.—*David Pitcairn, 1851.*

Verse 3.—Resolved they were to run riot as lawless, and aweless, and therefore they slander the sweet laws of Christ’s kingdom as bonds and thick cords, which are signs of slavery. Jer. xxvii. 2, 6, 7. But what saith our Saviour? “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” It is no more burden to a regenerate man than

wings to a bird. The law of Christ is no more as bands and cords, but as girdles and garters which gird up his loins and expedite his course.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—“*He that sitteth in the heavens.*” Hereby it is clearly intimated, (1) that the Lord is far above all their malice and power, (2) that he seeth all their plots, looking down on all; (3) that he is of omnipotent power, and so can do with his enemies as he lists. “Our God is in the heavens : he hath done whatsoever he pleased.” Psalm cxv. 3.—*Arthur Jackson, 1643.*

Verse 4.—“*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh,*” etc. Sinners’ follies are the just sport of God’s infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in his are despicable.—*Mathew Henry.*

Verse 4.—“*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.*” They scoff at us, God laughs at them. Laugh? This seems a hard word at the first view: are the injuries of his saints, the cruelties of their enemies, the derision, the persecution of all that are round about us, no more but matter of laughter? Severe Cato thought that laughter did not become the gravity of Roman consuls; that it is a diminution of states, as another told princes; and is it attributed to the Majesty of heaven? According to our capacities, the prophet describes God, as ourselves would be in a merry disposition, deriding vain attempts. He laughs, but it is in scorn; he scorns, but it is with vengeance. Pharaoh imagined that by drowning the Israelite males, he had found a way to root their name from the earth; but when at the same time, his own daughter, in his own court, gave princely education to Moses, their deliverer, did not God laugh?

Short is the joy of the wicked. Is Dagon put up to his place again? God’s smile shall take off his head and his hands, and leave him neither wit to guide nor power to subsist. . . . We may not judge of God’s works until the fifth act: the case, deplorable and desperate in outward appearance, may with one smile from heaven find a blessed issue. He permitted his temple to be sacked and rifled, the holy vessels to be profaned and caroused in; but did not God’s smile make Belshazzar to tremble at the handwriting on the wall? Oh, what are his frowns, if his smiles be so terrible!—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—The expression, “*He that sitteth in the heavens,*” at once fixes our thoughts on a being infinitely exalted above man, who is of the earth, earthly. And when it is said, “*He shall laugh,*” this word is designed to convey to our minds the idea, that the greatest confederacies amongst kings and peoples, and their most extensive and vigorous preparations, to defeat his purposes or to injure his servants, are in his sight altogether insignificant and worthless. He looks upon their poor and puny efforts, not only without uneasiness or fear, but he laughs at their folly; he treats their impotency with derision. He knows how he can crush them like a moth when he pleases, or consume them in a moment with the breath of his mouth. How profitable it is for us to be reminded of truths such as these! Ah! it is indeed “*a vain thing*” for the potsherds of the earth to strive with the glorious Majesty of Heaven.—*David Pitcairn.*

Verse 4.—“*The Lord,*” in Hebrew, Adonai, mystically signifieth my stays, or my sustainers—my pillars. Our English word “*Lord*” hath much the same force, being contracted of the old Saxon word “*Llaford,*” or “*Hlafford,*” which cometh from “*Laef,*” to sustain, refresh, cherish.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 4.—“*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them: the Lord shall have them in derision.*” This tautology or repetition of the same thing, which is frequent in the Scriptures, is a sign of the thing being established: according to the authority of the patriarch Joseph (Gen. xli. 32), where, having interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh he said, “*And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.*” And therefore, here also, “*shall laugh at them,*” and “*shall have them in derision,*” is a repetition to show that there is not a doubt to be entertained that all these things will most surely come to pass. And the gracious Spirit does all this for our comfort and consolation, that we may not faint under temptation, but lift up our heads with the most certain hope; because “*he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*” Hebrews x. 37.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 5.—“*Vex them;*” either by horror of conscience, or corporal plagues; one way or the other he will have his pennyworths of them, as he always has had of the persecutors of his people.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 5, 9.—It is easy for God to destroy his foes . . . Behold Pharaoh, his wise men, his hosts, and his horses plouting and plunging, and sinking like lead in the Red sea. Here is the end of one of the greatest plots ever formed against God's chosen. Of thirty Roman emperors, governors of provinces, and others high in office, who distinguished themselves by their zeal and bitterness in persecuting the early Christians, one became speedily deranged after some atrocious cruelty, one was slain by his own son, one became blind, the eyes of one started out of his head, one was drowned, one was strangled, one died in a miserable captivity, one fell dead in a manner that will not bear recital, one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians were put to death because they could not abide the stench that filled his room, two committed suicide, a third attempted it, but had to call for help to finish the work, five were assassinated by their own people or servants, five others died the most miserable and excruciating deaths, several of them having an untold complication of diseases, and eight were killed in battle, or after being taken prisoners. Among these was Julian the apostate. In the days of his prosperity he is said to have pointed his dagger to heaven defying the Son of God, whom he commonly called the Galilean. But when he was wounded in battle, he saw that all was over with him, and he gathered up his clotted blood, and threw it into the air, exclaiming, "Thou hast conquered, O thou Galilean." Voltaire has told us of the agonies of Charles IX. of France, which drove the blood through the pores of the skin of that miserable monarch, after his cruelties and treachery to the Huguenots.—*William S. Plummer, D.D., LL.D., 1867.*

Verse 6.—"Yet have I set my King." Notice—1. The royal office and character of our glorious Redeemer: he is a King, "This name he hath on his vesture and on his thigh." Rev. xix. 16. 2. The authority by which he reigns; he is "my King," says God the Father, and I have set him up from everlasting: "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The world disowns his authority, but I own it; I have set him, I have "given him to be head over all things to the church." 3. His particular kingdom over which he rules; it is over "my holy hill of Zion"—an eminent type of the gospel church. The temple was built upon Mount Zion and therefore called a *holy hill*. Christ's throne is in his church, it is his head-quarters, and the place of his peculiar residence. Notice the firmness of the divine purpose with respect unto this matter. "Yet have I set" him "King;" i.e., whatever be the plots of hell and earth to the contrary, he reigns by his Father's ordination.—*Stephen Charnock, 1628—1680.*

Verse 6.—"Yet have I set my King," etc.—Jesus Christ is a threefold King. *First*, his enemies' King; *secondly*, his saints' King; *thirdly*, his Father's King.

First. Christ is his enemies' King, that is, he is King over his enemies. Christ is a King above all kings. What are all the mighty men, the great, the honourable men of the earth to Jesus Christ? They are but like a little bubble in the water; for if all the nations, in comparison to God, be but as the drop of the bucket, or the dust of the balance, as the prophet speaks in Isaiah xl. 15, how little then must be the kings of the earth! Nay, beloved, Christ Jesus is not only higher than kings, but he is higher than the angels; yea, he is the head of angels; and, therefore, all the angels in heaven are commanded to worship him. Col. ii. 12 Heb. i. 6 He is King over all kingdoms, over all nations, over all governments, over all powers, over all people Dan. vii. 14 The very heathen are given to Christ, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Psalm ii. 8.

Secondly. Jesus Christ is his saints' King. He is King of the bad, and of the good; but as for the wicked, he rules over them by his power and might; but the saints, he rules in them by his Spirit and graces. Oh! this is Christ's spiritual kingdom, and here he rules in the hearts of his people, here he rules over their consciences, over their wills, over their affections, over their judgments and understandings, and nobody hath anything to do here but Christ. Christ is not only the King of nations, but the King of saints; the one he rules over, the other he rules in.

Thirdly. Jesus Christ is his Father's King too, and so his Father calls him: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Well may he be our King, when he is God's King. But you may say, how is Christ the Father's King? Because he rules for his Father. There is a twofold kingdom of God committed to Jesus Christ; *first*, a spiritual kingdom, by which he rules in the hearts of his people, and so is King of saints; and, *secondly*, a providential kingdom, by which he rules the affairs

of this world, and so he is King of nations.—*Condensed from William Dyer's Christ's Famous Titles, 1665.*

Verse 6.—“Zion.” The name “Zion” signifies a “distant view” (*speculam.*) And the church is called “a distant view” (*specula*), not only because it views God and heavenly things by faith (that is, afar off), being wise unto the things that are above, not unto those that are on the earth: but also, because there are within her true viewers, or seers, and watchmen in the spirit, whose office it is to take charge of the people under them, and to watch against the snares of enemies and sins; and such are called in the Greek bishops (*επισκοποι*), that is, spyers or seers; and you may for the same reason give them, from the Hebrew, the appellation of Zionians or Zioners.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 7.—The dispute concerning the eternal filiation of our Lord betrays more of presumptuous curiosity than of reverent faith. It is an attempt to explain where it is far better to adore. We could give rival expositions of this verse, but we forbear. The controversy is one of the most unprofitable which ever engaged the pens of theologians.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 8.—“Ask of me.” The priesthood doth not appear to be settled upon Christ by any other expression than this, “Ask of me.” The Psalm speaks of his investiture in his kingly office; the apostle refers this to his priesthood, his commission, for both took date at the same time; both bestowed, both confirmed by the same authority. The office of asking is grounded upon the same authority as the honour of king. Ruling belonged to his royal office, asking to his priestly. After his resurrection, the Father gives him a power and command of asking.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 8.—As the limner looks on the person whose picture he would take, and draws his lines to answer him with the nearest similitude that he can, so God looks on Christ as the archetype to which he will conform the saint, in suffering, in glory, in glory; yet so that Christ hath the pre-eminence in all. Every saint must suffer, because Christ suffered: Christ must not have a delicate body under a crucified head; yet never any suffered, or could, what he endured. Christ is holy, and therefore so shall every saint be, but in an inferior degree; an image cut in clay cannot be so exact as that engraved on gold. Now, our conformity to Christ appears, that as the promises made to him were performed upon his prayers to his Father, his promises made to his saints are given to them in the same way of prayer: “Ask of me,” saith God to his Son, “and I shall give thee.” And the apostle tells us, “Ye have not, because ye ask not.” God hath promised support to Christ in all his conflicts. Isaiah xlii. 1. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold;” yet he prayed “with strong cries and tears,” when his feet stood within the shadow of death. A seed is promised to him, and victory over his enemies, yet for both these he prays. Christ towards us acts as a king, but towards his Father as a priest. All he speaks to God is by prayer and intercession. So the saints, the promise makes them kings over their lusts, conquerors over their enemies; but it makes them priests towards God, by prayer humbly to sue out those great things given in the promise.—*William Gurnall, 1617—1679.*

Verse 8.—It will be observed in our Bible that two words of verse eight are in italics, intimating that they are not translations of the Hebrew, but additions made for the purpose of elucidating the meaning. Now if the “*thee*” and the “*for*” are left out, the verse will read thus, “Ask of me, and I shall give the heathen, thine inheritance, and thy possession, the uttermost parts of the earth.” And this reading is decidedly preferable to the other. It implies that by some previous arrangement on the part of God, he had already assigned an inheritance of the heathen, and the possession of the earth, to the person of whom he says, “Thou art my Son.” And when God says, “I will give,” etc., he reveals to his Anointed, not so much in what the inheritance consisted, and what was the extent of possession destined for him, as the promise of his readiness to bestow it. The heathen were already “the inheritance,” and the ends of the earth “the possession,” which God had *purposed* to give to his Anointed. Now he says to him, “Ask of me,” and he *promises* to fulfil his purpose. This is the idea involved in the words of the text, and the importance of it will become more apparent, when we consider its application to the *spiritual* David, to the true Son of God, “whom he hath appointed the heir of all things.”

Verse 9.—The “rod” has a variety of meanings in Scripture. It might be of different materials, as it was employed for different purposes. At an early period, a wooden rod came into use as one of the insignia of royalty, under the name of sceptre. By degrees the sceptre grew in importance, and was regarded as characteristic of an empire, or of the reign of some particular king. A golden sceptre denoted wealth and pomp. The right, or straight sceptre of which we read in Psalm xiv. 6, is expressive of the justice and uprightness, the truth and equity, which shall distinguish Messiah’s reign, after his kingdom on earth has been established. But when it is said in Rev. xix. 15, that he, “whose name is called the Word of God,” will smite the nations, and “rule them with a rod of iron,” if the rod signifies “his sceptre,” then the “iron” of which it is made must be designed to express the severity of the judgments which this omnipotent “King of kings” will inflict on all who resist his authority. But to me it appears doubtful whether the “rod of iron” symbolizes the royal sceptre of the Son of God at his second advent. It is mentioned in connection with “a sharp sword,” which leads me to prefer the opinion that it also ought to be regarded as a weapon of war; at all events, the “rod of iron” mentioned in the Psalm we are endeavouring to explain, is evidently not the emblem of sovereign power, although represented as in the hands of a king, but an instrument of correction and punishment. In this sense the word “rod” is often used When the correcting rod, which usually was a wand or cane, is represented, as in the second Psalm, to be of “iron” it only indicates how weighty, how severe, how effectual the threatened chastisement will be—it will not merely bruise, but it will break. “*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.*”

Now it is just such a complete breaking as would not readily be effected excepting by an iron rod, that is more fully expressed in the following clause of the verse, “Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” The completeness of the destruction, however, depends on two things. Even an iron rod if gently used, or used against a hard and firm substance, might cause little injury; but, in the case before us, it is supposed to be applied with great force, “Thou shalt dash them;” and it is applied to what will prove as brittle and frangible as “a potter’s vessel”—“Thou shalt dash them in pieces.” Here, as in other respects, we must feel that the predictions and promises of this Psalm were but very partially fulfilled in the history of the literal David. Their real accomplishment, their awful completion, abides the day when the spiritual David shall come in glory and in majesty as Zion’s King, with a rod of iron to dash in pieces the great antichristian confederacy of kings and peoples, and to take possession of his long-promised and dearly-purchased inheritance. And the signs of the times seem to indicate that the coming of the Lord draws nigh.—*David Pitcairn*

Verse 10.—“*Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings,*” etc. As Jesus is King of kings and Judge of judges, so the gospel is the teacher of the greatest and wisest. If any are so great as to spurn its admonitions, God will make little of them; and if they are so wise as to despise its teachings, their fancied wisdom shall make fools of them. The gospel takes a high tone before the rulers of the earth, and they who preach it should, like Knox and Melville, magnify their office by bold rebukes and manly utterances even in the royal presence. A clerical sycophant is only fit to be a scullion in the devil’s kitchen.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—“*Serve the Lord with fear.*” This fear of God qualifies our joy. If you abstract fear from joy, joy will become light and wanton; and if you abstract joy from fear, fear then will become slavish.—*William Bates, D.D., 1625—1699.*

Verse 11.—“*Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*” There are two kinds of serving and rejoicing in God. First, a serving in security, and a rejoicing in the Lord without fear; these are peculiar to hypocrites, who are secure, who please themselves, and who appear to themselves to be not unuseful servants, and to have great merit on their side, concerning whom it is said (Psalm x. 5), “*Thy judgments are far above out of his sight;*” and also afterwards (Psalm xxxvi. 1), “*There is no fear of God before his eyes.*” These do righteousness without judgment at all times; and permit not Christ to be the Judge to be feared by all, in whose sight no man living is justified. Secondly, a serving with fear and a rejoicing with trembling; these are peculiar to the righteous who do righteousness at all times, and always rightly attemper both; never being without judgments, on the one hand, by which they are terrified and brought to despair of themselves and of all

their own works ; nor without that righteousness, on the other, on which they rest, and in which they rejoice in the mercy of God. It is the work of the whole lives of these characters to accuse themselves in all things, and in all things to justify and praise God. And thus they fulfil that word of Proverbs, " Blessed is the man that feareth alway " (xxviii. 14) ; and also that of Philip, iv. 4, " Rejoice in the Lord alway." Thus, between the upper and nether mill-stone (Deut. xxiv. 6), they are broken in pieces and humbled, and the husks thus being bruised off, they come forth the all-pure wheat of Christ.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 11.—The fear of God promotes spiritual joy ; it is the morning star which ushers in the sunlight of comfort. " Walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." God mingles joy with fear, that fear may not be slavish.—*Thomas Watson, 1660.*

Verse 12.—" Kiss," a sign of love among equals : Gen. xxxiii. 4 ; 1 Sam. xx. 41 ; Rom. xvi. 16 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 20. Of subjection in inferiors : 1 Sam. x. 1. Of religious adoration in worshippers : 1 Kings xix. 18 ; Job xxxi. 27.—*John Richardson, Bishop of Ardagh, 1655.*

Verse 12.—" Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." From the Person, *the Son*, we shall pass to the act (*Osculamini, kiss the Son*) ; in which we shall see, that since this is an act which licentious men have depraved (carnal men do it, and treacherous men do it—*Judas* betrayed his Master by a kiss), and yet God commands this, and expresses love in this ; everything that hath, or may be abused, must not therefore be abandoned ; the turning of a thing out of the way, is not a taking of that thing away, but good things deflected to ill uses by some, may be by others reduced to their first goodness. Then let us consider and magnify the goodness of God, that hath brought us into this distance, that we may *kiss the Son*, that the expressing of this love lies in our hands, and that, whereas the love of the church, in the Old Testament, even in the Canticle, went no farther but to the *Osculatur me* (*O that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!* Cant. i. 1), now, in the Christian church, and in the visitation of a Christian soul, he hath invited us, enabled us to kiss him, for he is essentially amongst us. This leads us to give an earnest persuasion and exhortation to *kiss the Son*, with all those affections, which we shall there find to be expressed in the Scriptures, in that testimony of true love, *a holy kiss*. But then lest that persuasion by love should not be effectual and powerful enough to us, we shall descend from that duty, to the danger, from love, to fear, " *lest he be angry,*" and therein see first, that God, who is love, can be angry ; and then, that this God who is angry here, is the Son of God, he that hath done so much for us, and therefore in justice may be angry ; he that is our Judge, and therefore in reason we are to fear his anger : and then, in a third branch, we shall see how easily this anger departs—a kiss removes it.

Verse 12.—" Kiss the Son." That is, embrace him, depend upon him all these ways : as thy kinsman, as thy sovereign ; at thy going, at thy coming ; at thy reconciliation, in the truth of religion in thyself, in a peaceable unity with the church, in a reverent estimation of those men, and those means whom he sends. Kiss him, and be not ashamed of kissing him ; it is that which the spouse desired, " *I would kiss thee, and not be despised.*" Cant. vii. 1. If thou be despised for loving Christ in his gospel, remember that when David was thought base, for dancing before the ark, his way was to be more base. If thou be thought frivolous for thrusting in at service, in the forenoon, be more frivolous, and come again in the afternoon : " *Tanto major requies, quanto ab amore Jesu nulla requies ;*" * " The more thou troublest thyself, or art troubled by others for Christ, the more peace thou hast in Christ." . . . " *Lest he be angry.*" Anger, as it is a passion that troubles, and disorders, and discomposes a man, so it is not in God ; but anger, as it is a sensible discerning of foes from friends, and of things that conduce, or disconduce to his glory, so it is in God. In a word, Hilary hath expressed it well : " *Pæna patientis, ira decernentis ;*" " Man's suffering is God's anger." When God inflicts such punishments as a king justly incensed would do, then God is thus angry. Now here, our case is heavier ; it is not this great, and almighty, and majestic God, that may be angry—that is like enough ; but even the *Son*, whom we must *kiss*, may be *angry* ; it is not a person whom we consider merely as God, but as man ; nay, not as man neither, but *a worm, and no man*, and he may be angry, and angry

* Gregory.

to our ruin " *Kiss the Son,*" and he will not *be angry*; if he be, kiss the rod, and he will be angry no longer—love him lest he be; fear him when he is angry: the preservative is easy, and so is the restorative too: the balsamum of this kiss is all, to suck spiritual milk out of the left breast, as well as out of the right, to find mercy in his judgments, reparation in his ruins, feasts in his lents, joy in his anger.—*From Sermons of John Donne, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's, 1621—1631.*

Verse 12.—" *Kiss the Son.*" To make peace with the Father, kiss the Son. "Let him kiss me," was the church's prayer. Cant. i. 2. Let us kiss him—that be our endeavour. Indeed, the Son must first kiss us by his mercy, before we can kiss him by our piety. Lord, grant in these mutual kisses and interchangeable embraces now, that we may come to the plenary wedding supper hereafter; when the choir of heaven, even the voices of angels, shall sing epithalamiums, nuptial songs, at the bridal of the spouse of the Lamb.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—" *If his wrath be kindled but a little;*" the Hebrew is, if his nose or nostril be kindled but a little; the nostril, being an organ of the body in which wrath shows itself, is put for wrath itself. Paleness and snuffling of the nose are symptoms of anger. In our proverbia, to take a thing in snuff, is to take it in anger.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—" *His wrath.*" Unspeakable must the wrath of God be when it is kindled fully, since perdition may come upon the *kindling of it but a little.*—*John Newton.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—Shows us the nature of sin, and the terrible results of it if it could reign.

Verse 1.—*Nothing is more irrational than irreligion.* A weighty theme.

The reasons why sinners rebel against God, stated, refuted, lamented, and repented of.

The crowning display of human sin in man's hatred of the Mediator.

Verses 1 and 2.—Opposition to the gospel, unreasonable and ineffectual.—*Two sermons by John Newton.*

Verses 1 and 2.—These verses show that all trust in man in the service of God is vain. Inasmuch as men oppose Christ, it is not good to hang our trust upon *the multitude* for their number, *the earnest* for their zeal, *the mighty* for their countenance, or *the wise* for their counsel, since all these are far oftener against Christ than for him.

Verse 2.—"Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 495, "The Greatest Trial on Record."

Verse 3.—The true reason of the opposition of sinners to Christ's truth, viz.: their hatred of the restraints of godliness.

Verse 4.—God's derision of the rebellious, both now and hereafter.

Verse 5.—*The voice of wrath.* One of a series of sermons upon the voices of the divine attributes.

Verse 6.—*Christ's sovereignty.* 1. The opposition to it: "yet." 2. The certainty of its existence: "Yet have I set." 3. The power which maintains it: "have I set." 4. The place of its manifestation: "my holy hill of Zion." 5. The blessings flowing from it.

Verse 7.—The divine decree concerning Christ, in connection with the decrees of election and providence. The Sonship of Jesus.

This verse teacheth us faithfully to declare, and humbly to claim, the gifts and calling that God hath bestowed upon us.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 8.—Christ's inheritance.—*William Jay.*

Prayer indispensable.—*Jesus must ask.*

Verse 9.—*The ruin of the wicked.* Certain, irresistible, terrible, complete, irretrievable, "like a potter's vessel."

The destruction of systems of error and oppression to be expected. The gospel an iron rod quite able to break mere pots of man's making.

Verse 10.—True wisdom, fit for kings and judges, lies in obeying Christ.

The gospel, a school for those who would learn how to rule and judge well. They may consider its principles, its exemplar, its spirit, etc.

Verse 11.—Mingled experience. See the case of the women returning from the sepulchre. Matt. xxviii. 8. This may be rendered a very comforting subject, if the Holy Spirit direct the mind of the preacher.

True religion, a compound of many virtues and emotions.

Verse 12.—An earnest invitation. 1. *The command.* 2. *The argument.* 3. *The benediction* upon the obedient.—“Spurgeon’s Sermons,” No. 260.

Last clause.—Nature, object, and blessedness of saving faith.
