

THE MELCHISEDEC PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

THE blessing of Abram, by Melchisedec, runs thus—“Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand.”

It is familiar to every reader, that the apostle uses Melchisedec as the type of Christ, according to the word of the oath—“Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

We would say a few words on this Melchisedec Priesthood of Christ,—its extent and blessing. And first, it is not that which Christ the Lord now exercises. Not that He is not a priest after that order—we know fully that He is, by the Epistle to the Hebrews, and from the 110th Psalm, and that He is not of any other. But the exercise of His priesthood is according to the typical character of Aaron's on the day of atonement, as the same epistle shows. The whole of the present order of things answers to the day of atonement—is typified by it. The High Priest is gone within the veil, with the blood of the sacrifice—even of Himself—His own blood. So there, as yet, He is, whom the heavens must receive till the time of the restitution of all things, which God hath promised by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. This, then, is the time during which the Lord, though a priest after the order of Melchisedec, after the power of an endless life, made with an oath for ever, *εις το διηνεκες*, a continuous, not a successional Priesthood; yet exercises it practically for us according to the type, though not according to the order of Aaron, as within the veil, on the great day of atonement. Accordingly the apostle, after declaring the order of His

Priesthood, enters upon and dwells exclusively in detail upon the Aaronic Priesthood, as characteristic of that which the Lord Christ now exercises. He shews that He exercises it, anti-typically, within the vail, the Priesthood being, in its exercise, now one entirely of a heavenly character. He is gone within, not the typical vail, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. The blood is not of bulls and goats, with which the patterns of things in the heavens were purified, but His own blood; those better sacrifices by which the heavenly things themselves could be purified. The very glory with which Jesus is said to be crowned is spoken of in the words in which the consecration garments of Aaron and his sons after him, are described in Exodus. (Compare Heb. ii. 7, and Exod. xxviii. 2, in LXX.) The whole of the 8th and 9th chapters shew the present exercise of the Lord Christ's Priesthood to be after the Aaronical pattern, though He be in no sort after the Aaronical order. It is the very reasoning and subject of the epistle; and in the 9th chapter the analogy is entered into in detail, so as to enable us to apply the details of the priestly services of the Levitical order to our present condition; as, however imperfectly, is commonly known in the Christian church. It is manifest, then, that the type of Melchisedec here presented to us, as indicative of the Priesthood of Christ, in its exercise leads us to further results and wider exhibition than that in which He now so graciously, and blessedly for us, secures the life, and blessing, and salvation of His people in heavenly places; Himself far above all heavens, at the right hand of the majesty on high, having by Himself purged our sins. The Priesthood of Christ is clearly after the order of Melchisedec, and solely so; its exercise now is as clearly after the type of the order of Aaron solely; and that as exhibited on the great day of atonement within the vail. Not but that there is a great deal revealed now as to Aaronic types, which could not be seen in the type itself, which was a shadow, not the very image, the vail is now rent behind Him, and we are enabled to follow Him within, and see where He is set down, to our comfort and everlasting joy. But there is a glory besides, not yet fulfilled;

a glory of its own character—a glory properly Christ's, and taught us in this type of Melchisedec, the exercise of which we find yet to come; and all that develops Christ's glory is precious to the saints: it is the Lord's glory, the glory of the Son of the Father, his own glory, too, as well as the Lord's glory. On this I would speak a little.

The Priesthood of Melchisedec is, then, that royal dominion of Priesthood in which, as representing the Most High God, and speaking also for man to Him, in return of praise Christ blesses from Him (as now in His possession) heaven and the uttermost parts of the earth, through and in the seed of God. We find even in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, the first great type of earthly and Gentile dominion but opening out its corruption, his greatness reached unto heaven, and his dominion to the end of the earth; and this is put in such a strong light, that as far as earth goes, the Adamic dominion is (Dan. ii. 38) in a remarkable manner attributed to him. He may have been guilty, and the first exhibition of Gentile apostate dominion, still this characteristic of universal dominion is attached to him. He was the man (in whatever pride of character he filled it) set in power. The mystery of his non-acknowledgment of God in it, was to be brought out in him; and the seven times of a beast's heart in this selfish and proud dominion; it was the man of the earth, not the Lord from heaven acting as man in the power of righteousness; the king of Babylon, not the Son of David, not the Lord from heaven ruling in Jerusalem as witnessing the true God; but it was a dominion given, and typically exhibiting this dominion over the earth, though to illustrate its abuse in man's hand; hence the seed of God even brought into captivity, not blessed as in power and deliverers; a dominion given in connexion with that *αὐτοκράτωρ* in which administrative power was put into the hand of man, in the commission to kill whoever killed, which was given to Noah. The other characteristic of the evil and apostasy of it was the setting up a false god—an image; but the result was that God was owned by the king "the Most High God:" God is acknowledged in this character. The seven times

punishment comes, till he knows that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. Thus much for all short of dominion in heaven (though his greatness reaches to that), all earthly dominion.

But there is another portion of the Divine inheritance corrupted and debased, the scene of power, however, and blessing. His greatness reached to the heavens: but what do the revelations of God show us to be in the heavenlies? "The saints of the Most High (that is of the heavenlies עֲלִיּוֹנִין) shall take the kingdom;" but we find that we are wrestling with principalities and powers, with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph. vi. 12); that is, power apostate from God, holding the earth; exceeding great power, and spiritual wickedness, principalities and powers, holding the heavenlies; the earth, and the heavenlies alike, possessed by evil in present power. We find the saints of the heavenlies (Dan. vii. 8) taking the kingdom, and the *people* of the saints of the high places or heavenlies עֲלִיּוֹנִין given the kingdom, and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom *under* the whole heaven (ver. 27). In this it is that God has His title, as may be seen in Daniel, of Most High (the second word Most High in ver. 25 being different in the original from the first given above), that Most High whom Nebuchadnezzar was obliged and made willing to acknowledge; thus the earthlies and heavenlies will, as regards government in association with God, be set in blessing under the name of the Most High. But we have more definite statements on the subject: In the day of the full glory of the Lamb, there shall be one Lord, and His name One; the God of the whole earth shall He be called: in that day shall Jerusalem be called the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it; and the Son of Man appearing in His glory, King of the Jews, even Jesus of Nazareth, shall be on the throne, and not on the cross; and not in Hebrew, nor in Greek, and Latin only; but in every language of power which despised Him, shall men join in owning the inscription of the Lord of glory, even Jesus of Nazareth, "This is the King of the Jews;" when the earthly king-

dom of our Lord and of His Christ is come. This is not, indeed, the limit of His glory, though it be much to have destroyed them that destroyed the earth, and fill it with blessing, the mountain of the Lord's house, being established in the top of the mountains, with especial blessing to the seed of God, under His righteous reign. All power is given Him in heaven, and thus we find the blessing identified with the person and heavenly presence of Jesus. Accordingly we find in the promise, the purpose of His will in the Ephesians, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, "He should gather together in one, all things in Christ; both which are in heaven and which are upon the earth." Now the mystery which belongs to *us* is not merely that we should have the sure mercies of David by virtue of His resurrection; that will be made sure to the Jews (Acts xiii. 32-34), in the day when He shall see them, even the believing remnant, and He shall sit upon the throne of David His father, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever, all nations serving Him, and the nation and kingdom which will not serve Jerusalem, shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted, but Jerusalem shall be called the city of the Lord; the Zion of the Holy One of Israel shall be an eternal excellency; its sun no more go down, but the Gentiles come to the brightness of its rising. This will be the portion of the despised ones, in all whose affliction He has been afflicted, *over* whose apostasy and rejection of Himself He could but weep. Those tears are not shed in vain, but mark a reaping in joy, when the joy shall be as the joy in harvest and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. But we have a yet better portion, not blessings, great as they are, secured in His resurrection, but to be raised together with Him, and to sit with Him in heavenly places. "He hath blessed us in heavenly places;" and the very purpose of that epistle to the Ephesians is to shew, that, made sons with Him, we are to be with Him in heavenly places, the body of Him, the Head to the Church *over* all things; we have not merely the fruits, but the working towards ourselves of that exceeding great power, which was wrought in Him, when "God raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His

own right hand in the heavenly places." (See Ephes. i. 19 to ii. 7.) But we look at this only in government now in connection with the throne of Melchisedec. Thus when He gathers together in one all things in Christ, we find, under the blessing of His throne, the Jews in the earthlies the centre of blessing, and all nations blessed in them through Him (see Acts iii. 25), and the saints in the heavenlies, sitting there as raised with Christ, and having overcome through grace, sitting down in His throne, as He overcame and sat down in His Father's throne; and thus witnesses together of the universal dominion of Him, to whom all power is given in *heaven* and on *earth*, at once Son of God and Son of man; Lord over all, as well as God over all, blessed for evermore. But there is another character (for what of blessing does He not fill?) which we find the Lord here shewing forth. He is a Priest upon His throne (Zech.): and here we have the real full exercise of the Melchisedec Priesthood; and now see how all the things referred to are brought together in it; we speak of Christ as Priest after the order of Melchisedec, in the day of His power on *His* throne. He had sat on His Father's till His foes were made His footstool, but now—gathering all things in heaven and on earth into one—He sits on His own throne.

That dreadful evil had come in, that Satan, sitting in heavenly places, had made the poor inhabitants of earth worship demons, gods many, and lords many; and earthly power was associated with false worship and apostasy, as we see typified in the great image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Hence misery, also persecution and degradation of the children of God; the corrupter and murderer being in heavenly places, corruption was the portion of his subjects, *death of those* who were not so exempt. Now that which was specifically opposed to this, was this title of the Most High God; so Nebuchadnezzar is bound down to confess the Most High God. And this name we find in the passage we are considering—"Blessed be Abram of the Most High God." Now this remarkably concurs with what we find connected with the call

of Abram,—“Your fathers,” says Joshua (xxiv.), “served other gods beyond the flood.” The call of Abraham, therefore, was not the judgment upon unrighteousness against God alone known and owned, but the call and witness of the Most High God. When the perverseness of man made gods many, and lords many, He was then the Most High God. We have seen further the heavenlies and the earthlies are united in one, in Christ; whose is all power in heaven and earth; and here, accordingly, Abraham is blessed of the Most High God, *Possessor of heaven and earth*; and as the title of the Most High God is given here, and witnessed in the Priesthood of Melchisedec, who was Priest of the Most High God, so also shall the blessing run in this full and unhindered channel, Possessor of heaven and earth. O what blessing in that day when there shall not be principalities and powers in heavenly places to taint the very source of blessing in powers above: no scene of deceived corruption below to make evil what God had made good; nor spirit of rebellion to bring the curse of opposition to God, the God of blessing, upon the wearied corrupters of their own mercy; but one whose it is, Possessor of heaven and earth, when the Lord shall hear the heavens and the heavens shall hear the earth standing in the Priesthood, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and the corn and the oil shall hear Jezreel. O what blessing when the Most High takes (ever His in title) possession of heaven and earth, and our High Priest is His High Priest.

Thus we have total exclusion of all other gods but one, the only one; the world or heaven above knowing none but one; no creature above or on the earth taken to be a god but the Most High God, known as the *Possessor of heaven and earth*. What rest in that! what rest and security! while Satan has the power, while those hold the possession subject to his power, sorrow, discord, and death, are the sad and unwelcome companions of man's voyage; he is seduced to every folly, he is but as the convict in the ship, its guidance and its power is in other hands. Now the Most High is Possessor, and where shall be the tempter then? not

in heaven, the Most High possesses that ; not on earth, the Most High reaches in His possession to that ; and the very ends of the earth shall feel the blessing of His pervading comprehensive blessedness. But this Melchisedec, though Priest of the Most High God, had other characters : He was King of righteousness (compare Isaiah xxxii.) ; for where righteousness is, there is blessing. He was King of Salem, which is King of peace ; for the fruit of righteousness is peace ; the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. The Melchisedec Priesthood is the security of the blessings of these from the Most High God ; the union of heaven and earth under Him, and the mutual blessing of both known in Him, and the common recognition of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth. But we have also to look at the object of this blessing—Abram. Now *naturally*, Abram is the father of the natural seed.—“I know that ye are Abraham’s seed,” saith the Lord to the Jews. Here then he stood the father of Israel (and in them of the blessing of many nations), blessed from the fulness of the Most High God, by the King of peace and of righteousness ; the representative of the natural seed of Israel, blessed from on high, in the earthlies, with all the fulness of blessings from God Most High, Possessor, &c. But Abram stood, however, as we know, also as representative of the seed which inherit the heavenlies,—Christ and ourselves. “If ye are Christ’s, ye are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise ;” “and they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham ;” and thus (though by subsequent development, for it was hidden as yet) he stood as the representative of the heavenly seed also, and the blessing of the Most High found its actual scope, as He was Possessor of the heavens, those who were in Jesus, having their place there, as well as of the earth, all being gathered together in one, in Him. Thus, in the title of God—in the Priest himself—in the object of the blessing, we find the great character of universality according to the mystery of His will, His good *pleasure* which He hath purposed in Himself, “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He should gather together

in one, all things in Christ :”—the Jews, being the objects and channels of earthly blessing ; and we, sitting in heavenly blessings—Priests with Him—ministers of all blessings, and kings withal. In the character of the Priesthood, as exercised in the passage before us, we see the plain distinction from the Aaronical Priesthood : that Priesthood was a Priesthood of intercession—“ He ever liveth to make intercession for us,” the saints of God, in our weakness : here is the constant object of His sure and never failing care and intercession. He has appeared in the presence of God for us ; and, I will add, the people of God (I mean the Jews), though under the cloud of His rejection, still waiting till the great High Priest shall come forth, the witness of the acceptance of the blood of the atonement, carried within the veil ; and remaining a people blinded indeed, but sustained outwardly as the people of God, by virtue of that service of intercession, till He shall come forth and bless them in the name of the Lord. We know that He has sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high ; we can see through the rent veil into the holiest of all, and see our Jesus there ; and still, though longing and waiting for the time of His appearing, are content, because we know that Jesus is glorified, and His glory sure, waiting only till His enemies be made His footstool, and that the long suffering of God is salvation, that He delays because He is yet waiting to be gracious and calling sinners, and that He will surely come—He will not tarry. But the priestly act of Melchisedec, was *blessing*, not *intercession* ; blessing from the Most High God—blessing the Most High God. Here then, is the exercise of the Priesthood in its Melchisedec character—the king of righteousness and peace blessing the seed of God’s acceptance, a blessed refreshing thought ; evil removed, and blessing flowing out through the great High Priest, the Priest of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, unhindered. How do our hearts long for that day, the coming forth of Him our souls long for, yet know, the universal blessing from the Most High God of heaven and earth ; what a word shall be pronounced in that day ; how shall heaven and earth ring with the welcome witness of the

blessing of the heavenly ; the earthly seed be unfettered in its praise ; the bondage of corruption gone from the creature, whose rejoicing, though God was ever good and showed His goodness in it, was restrained till the heirs of the inheritance of God, joint-heirs with Jesus, were manifested to be sons of God ; for, lest a cloud should rest on the brow of the heirs of God's inheritance—the Church of the first born, the creation in bondage through them, must wait for their manifestation for its happiness ; must be dependent on their deliverance for its joy, as suffering through their fault : for neither is the blessing of Abraham thus widely spread, the only thing ; but honour redounds and praise on high—Blessed be the Most High God who hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. This blessing is after the full destruction of the enemies of the people of God, after the victory over the gathered kings and great ones of the earth, “the hosts of the high ones also, that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth ;” for there is one Most High, who is Possessor of both, and one King Melchisedec, King of Salem, where praise waits for the God of all the earth. Thus is the echo above and below in that centre of both—one in Him ; one with the Father, the Most High God ; and who, Himself, took on Him Abraham's seed, now come forth in His kingly glory to bless us from God Most High, and God from us.—The Man of Blessing, the Blessing Man, the Lord Most High.

But we remark in interpretation, most definitely in connection with all we have said, that it is blessing and refreshment after, and consequent upon the destruction of all the enemies of those who are represented by Abraham, bringing down and destroying those who destroy the earth by the Lord's power, Himself the servant to refresh ; all victory is but in some sort weariness, for victory, if a time of joy, is a time of weariness ; if we had none to meet after it, it would be the sorrowful consciousness of destruction, needed, perhaps, for deliverance, but destruction still, God's strange work. But it is not so with the delivered there, nor with us, but in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the

Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps, joy of deliverance. And who shall be there to refresh? even that one who cometh forth to bless, He brings forth bread and wine, the bread of Salem where the King dwelt, but now the servant of the victors, to give the joy of deliverance, and the refreshing of love; the wine of the kingdom drank new, great deliverance to their parched lips, that they may open in refreshment, and praise, and speak, and think of Him, how great soever, who brought it forth, their Melchisedec making them to sit down to meat, and as him that taketh the yoke from off the neck; the servant of that blessing always, though beyond controversy the less is blessed of the greater.

Thus then we have in this little sentence the accomplished character of the Most High God; over, and as to, all things in heaven and earth. The one true God, known in blessing, universal blessing, and the unity of all things in Christ; the centre of all this blessing, the benediction Priesthood of Melchisedec, the blessing by Him of the redeemed of God. This consequent upon the victory of these, over all their confederate enemies, and the deliverance of every captive; and they all made partakers of the food and wine of the kingdom, brought forth for their joy, and His own rest and delight, by the King of Salem, of righteousness and peace, ministering blessing from the Most High to them, offering it up for them to the Most High. The victory over, the refreshment, as the joy of it from the blessed source, the blessing from His own mouth, the blessing from the Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, proved so in His redeemed, to whom He gives the joy and inheritance, the habitation of both. May the blessing of Melchisedec, of Christ, the Lord, our King, dwell on our spirits; may we see it in spirit, and may it, in type, be our joyful portion now that He is the servant of intercession for us. He is Head, the witness, and the leader of all our praise, in the ages of the fulness of blessing (even when God shall be all in all), as now in the poor congregation of His saints. How imperfectly all the joy of this could be declared, our own enjoyment of it must most

surely tell. May the Spirit of our God teach a more skilful tune to those who may take the lesson into their hands, because the chord struck unskilfully has awakened the thoughts of praise in their hearts; and after all, our dying notes here are but poor witnesses to that new song which we shall sing in abiding notes of praise. And may the sweetness of the instrument itself strike some heart as yet untuned, To hear or know how sweet is the melody of heaven, of Jesus' praise, they and we have yet to learn, in the hope and glory of the blessing which rests not only on His head, but is in His heart toward the redeemed of God in full creation, for we are called to inherit a blessing. We have a better portion than reigning, our calling to be with Him, still His reign will be the source of sweet and rich blessings to a delivered earth. (Rev. xi. 15.)