

XI. - The Messiah.

And I saw in the visions of the night, and behold, there came one with the clouds of heaven, as the son of man; and he came to the Ancient of Days, and they drew near unto him.

And unto him was given dominion, and honor, and kingdom; that all peoples, nations, and tongues should honor him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, neither shall his kingdom be corrupted.

DAN. Vil: 13,14.

Christ's Kingship does not replace the reign of the Fathers, in but serves as its instrument. It is through the Royal Majesty of Christ that the Kingdom of the Triune God comes into its own. The prophecy of Israel and Jesus' own connection to Israel confirm this. He is not only our Mediator, but also the Messiah. In itself it was quite conceivable that the Son of God had taken on our nature through a new creation as in Paradise. Why could not the Word become flesh, without seeking connection with the existing human race? We also discussed elsewhere the question why God the Lord, after the fall of this generation into sin, did not destroy this human race and put another generation, a new one, in its place. But this has not happened. There may have been appearances, in which the Lord appeared to Abraham, to Hagar or to Jacob in a human form, but this passed. It did not stay. It was not the Incarnation. The Incarnation itself, on the contrary, is a direct connection to the existing, the sinful human race, and in that human race specifically to Israel as a nation, and in Israel to the House and Family of David, and in the House of David to Mary, the blessed one among women. Next to the lineage in Israel runs the prophecy in that same Israel. Thus, two lines run parallel. A single branch is set apart from our lineage in Abraham, who will be the father of all believers, and from that branch the House of David buds, and to that House of David, Mary is finally the budding flower. That is, if we may express it this way, the line to the flesh. But next to it runs a completely different line, because from Paradise a Messiah arises in the prophecy, who later on through Abraham attaches himself to that same Israel, and that is the line not of the flesh, but of the spirit. In Israel's history you see the two, the line of the flesh and the line of the spirit, at times intertwined, at others walking side by side, at times even rubbing up against each other. In David they are as one, in Rehabeam they diverge, in Manasseh they collide. them. But when both lines have finally come to their conclusion, and Messiah appears on the banks of the Jordan, in Capernaum and in Jerusalem's

Temple, then there has been a connection from God's side not only to our human nature, but also to the existing human race.

God's work in paradise is not destroyed in order to replace it with a second work of creation. Satan does not take away the first generation of the paradise as booty, so that God the Lord, after this first failure, has to try it with a second generation. No, the other way around, that first generation of paradise, as leprous as it is, is wrested from Satan, then cleansed of its leprosy, and, after being cleansed in this way, admitted to the kingdom of glory. The Incarnation was therefore the joining of a sinful generation. The sinful state of that generation was the very reason why God the Lord could not be all and in all in that generation. Thus, the spiritual rule of God Triune over this generation could not yet be direct. And here lay the necessity of the intervention of an intermediary, of a Messiah, who on the one hand would be God Himself, and on the other hand a member of that existing human race; who would be Head of that race, in so far as it was reborn; and precisely this is brought about and revealed in Christ's Royal Reign. Two periods can be distinguished here. The first is the period that begins with Bethlehem and that will end when the Last Judgment has been held and the Kingdom of Glory begins; and then follows the second period, when the Kingdom of Glory has come, and on a new earth, and under a new heaven, there is nothing more than reborn humanity. In the first period, sin and grace stand side by side, and grace does triumph, but without sin and all its demonic power having yet been eradicated and burned away. The last enemy has not yet been conquered. The struggle, which aims to bring all of God's enemies under the feet of Alessias, is still going on. But one day it will end. Then the power of Satan and sin will not only be completely conquered, but also nullified. Then the human race, pruned and shaken, will have sprouted new splendor, sinless and pure, and then the struggle to bring about the kingdom of eternal peace will be over. In the first period the circle of the Kingdom of God, which is foreshadowed in David the hero who fights God's battles, and then the second period of Christ's royal reign, which was foreshadowed in the peace reign of Solomon. This first period still continues today. The present living race is also in that period. The reconnection of the spiritual life of our generation to God Triune thus exists in Christ and through him in his members, but not yet to our generation as such. Hence the intermediate dominion of Christ, as an instrumental dominion, in which the Redeemer covers the sinful in us, and is Himself one with the Father. But once the battle, the struggle, is over, and once sin has been wiped out for all, then the Father Himself joins the reborn generation, and God will be

Triune all and in all, that is, not only in some of our generation, but in our entire human race as such. And even then, the Christ will still be the Head of this reborn humanity and the King of this generation as His people, but the intermediate link will then fall away. The connection will then be complete. God and his humanity are one in Christ. They are all one, just as Thou, Father, is one. in me and I in Thee." The answer and application of the supreme prayers, no longer, as now, to the few, but to what God, in the creation of our family, had set before Himself as the goal of His holy Kingdom.

The Messiah therefore does not suddenly appear in our generation after paradise, but a long preparation precedes his coming. And that is according to the pattern in Abraham and his seed, in the people of Israel, in the tribe of Judah, in the House of David, in the family from which Mary was born, and finally in the person of Mary as the Mother of God. In addition, the spiritual line in the prophecy runs from paradise, which also concerns Abraham to the people of Israel, and continues in this people until the time when David's house was thrown down, the greater part of Israel wandered into exile, and even the Temple was destroyed. And now it is remarkable in this prophecy that it steadily prophesies two things, on the one hand the restoration of God's own rule over his people, but on the other hand also the coming of a Messiah, of an intermediary, of a Mediator, who will stand between God and his people, and who will initially lead the royal reign. Here again, the two moments. On the one hand, that God himself must be king and, on the other hand, that a Messiah appears who exercises this royal rule in his name exclusively for God and to his honor, without there being the slightest mention of a contradiction between the two. Also, in the reign of the Messiah, it is the reign of God that is maintained. In Psalm 96 the coming not of a Messiah, but of Jehovah himself is announced: "Jehovah rules; the world will be established, it will not be moved. He will judge the nations in all righteousness. Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth rejoice, and the sea shine with its fullness before Jehovah, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth." And likewise in Psalm 98: "You rejoice before Jehovah, all the earth, cry out for joy, and sing joyfully and psalmically before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the nations in justice." Isaiah also says: "Your God will come to avenge you with the retribution of God. He will come and redeem you." Still stronger it sounds in Isaiah 40: "O, Zion, thou proclaimer of good tidings, lift up thy voice with might, fear not, say unto the cities of Judah, Behold here is thy God. For behold, the Lord Jehovah shall come against the strong, and his workmanship is before

him." Or also in Isaiah 52: "Jehovah will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your retreat." Not differently does the Lord express it in Ezekiel: "So says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I, yes I, will inquire after my sheep and will seek them out, as a shepherd seeks out his sheep." Thus, the constant announcement that it is Jehovah himself who will approach his people and assert his royal rule.

Throughout Revelation always that one thought: In sin man breaks away from the community with his God, but God will heal that broken community. Man has departed from God, but God seeks out, investigates and traces the man who has wandered away, and will not rest until the original community has been fully restored. The approach of the Father of spirits to the spirit of man is the essence of the whole work of revelation. When Satan, in the fall of man, attempted to dethrone God, God Himself opposed this, and did not rest until all the original fellowship had been restored.

He will not rest until man has once again bowed down in adoration at the footstool of His feet. That is why there can never be any question of the intervening royal rule of Christ replacing or limiting the royal rule of God Triune. Revelation as a whole has but one purpose, and that one purpose is precisely to restore the complete dominion of God over man, whom He created in His own image.

But when Scripture proceeds to explain how, and in what manner, this restoration of God's dominion over mankind will take place, then the view is opened from the very beginning of Paradise that it can only be effected by the Son of Man, presented as the female seed in the promise of Paradise. And with this the Scriptures insert the prophecy of Jesus' instrumental Kingship as an intermediate link in the prophecy of God's coming to his people. That inserted prophecy then widens more and more, until it assumes the character of Messianic prophecy in Israel, i.e. becomes the foretelling of a King-Priest, born of Israel, who will extend his rule over all nations and peoples, and who, after a hard and fearful struggle, in which he himself will first suffer, will at last hold the judgment, and then bring in the kingdom of eternal peace. And now in this prophecy both thoughts are constantly combined, both that Jehovah Himself will rule His people, and that Jehovah will do this through the Mediator. On the one hand it is said: "Jehovah, will search for my sheep like a shepherd," but on the other hand, "I will raise up a shepherd for them, who will pasture them, my servant David will be their shepherd." Or also both together in Ezekiel 34:24: "I Jehovah shall be their God, and my servant David a king in their midst." The two ideas thus, of a direct and of

an instrumental reign, go together, without excluding each other. Also, in the reign of the great King who will appear as Messiah, it is God's reign that confirms itself.

History also shows you this same distinction and conjunction of the personal rule of Jehovah and the assigned rule of the Messiah in the course of life itself. It is already revealed to Abraham that kings will spring from his loins. Jacob in his blessing speaks of the Scepter of Judges and of a Silo that will come, to whom the nations will submit. Bileam also sings at Israel's journey to Canaan of a "sounding of the King" that is with them. Even Moses points out the consequences that the appearance of a King will have for the people. But with all this, in the first part of this history the King himself remains absent. The Messiah has not yet come, and neither has his example or type. For the time being, only one idea prevails in all of this history, and that is that of Jehovah's reign. Abraham could very well have assumed the title of King as soon as he had gained a foothold in Canaan. He, who fought a battle with his allies against Kedar Laömer and defeated him, was not nearly as powerful as Melchizedek, who held the title of King of Salem. Many other kings of the time were also certainly less powerful than Abraham in that region. Yet there is no question of Abraham taking the title of King. We see the same thing with Isaac, and then with Jacob. And even more so in what you see at the time of the exodus from Egypt. At that time, the lineage of Abraham had already grown into a large and numerous people that could bring armed troops of thousands and tens of thousands into the field, and that people had a head, Moses. Not Aaron, the priest, but Moses remains the leader and captain of all the people until his death. Not in the patriarchal sense, because he did not have this exercise of authority by family, but by virtue of his appointment by God. Nothing would have been more obvious than for Moses to have assumed or received the royal title. But here, too, the kingship did not materialize; something that is all the more evident because Moses not only led and saved the people, but also organized them and brought them under fixed laws. But under all this, it remains in Israel pure and direct Theocracy. Jehovah Himself is Israel's King, and there is no King under Him. After Moses' death, Joshua acts as an energetic general. He overcomes most of the then Kings of Canaan, and takes their cities and strongholds, but he too does not hold the title of King. Jehovah alone is honored as King in Israel. Among the Judges, it is no different. Richter after Richter appears and is honored as a leader in wider or narrower circles, but the idea of a king only appears with Abimelech in Shechem and has no hold on the pious people. First under Samuel this becomes different. When this Seer grew older, the people began

to feel other needs, and then they called for a King "like the other peoples had", and from this moment on the royal power appears among Israel, in distinction to the royal rule of Jehovah. Yet it is precisely here that the contrast between what was called a King on earth, and what in Messianic prophecy would be the King intended by God, and represented in an earthly example, becomes apparent.

Kingship, as the other nations knew it, is in irreconcilable conflict with the Kingship of Jehovah. To Samuel it is said unequivocally: "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should no longer be King over them." The King, who acts first, is therefore a final deception. Saul's Kingship is not only diametrically opposed to Jehovah's Kingship, but also to the Messiah Kingship. He therefore goes down, and his Kingship perishes. And now God himself begins to establish the exemplary Kingship of Israel. David, Isaiah's son, is called from behind the flock. He is anointed and strengthened to lead Israel's battles, and in spite of all opposition his Kingship is finally recognized by all Israel, and this King is crowned with the covenant promise that God will build him a house, and that in this Davidic House the Kingship will one day assume a lasting and eternal character. But with this Kingship deployed by God Himself, the Theocracy does not fall. Jehovah remains Israel's King, and David "as the man of God's heart" exercises his high rule. After him now appears in Solomon, his son, the second phase of the exemplary Messiah-Kingship. The first phase would be struggle and wrestling. After that, in the second phase, the glory of peace would break through under the Messiah-King, and it is this future glory that is foreshadowed in Solomon's reign. Immediately afterwards, however, Israel was robbed of all illusion, as if the kingdom of the Messiah had already come to David's natural house. Already with Rehabeam, the ideal of the Messiah-Kingship was separated from the real monarchy in Jerusalem. The largest half of the people fell away. Idolatry again increases hand over fist. There are Kings of David's house who go along with this, and even stir up that evil of apostasy from Jehovah. In between these are the better kings, who restore the Theocracy so that the covenant of God with David may endure. But however high some of these kings stood, this realization gradually dawned on the pious people that the real King had not appeared in this series of kings. As a result, the prophecy of Jesus' Kingship increasingly separates itself from the real Kingship in Jerusalem, takes on an ideal spiritual character, and raises the expectation of a Messiah who will soon come as a miracle, and in whom God Himself will approach His people.

But in the meantime, the separation of the ideal from what was in view goes even further, because finally the whole of the Kingdom in the House of David is destroyed, the people themselves are driven into exile, and the Temple in Zion is disturbed. Now everything is gone in the Holy Land. There is no more King, there is no more free people, there is no more Theocracy, there is no more Temple and no more sacrifice of atonement. Israel could not have been driven more powerfully from the real world to the ideal. And it is especially thanks to the exile that the Messianic prophecy of Jesus' kingship as coming from above, as spiritual in character, and as destined to be a reign over all nations, breaks through ever more clearly in the prophecies. In the Psalms and the first Prophets, too, you will find clear indications that leave no doubt about this, but at the beginning the Messianic prophecy of Jesus' Kingship is still shrouded in a mystical veil, and it is only under and after the exile that both the ideal and the personal character of the Messianic Kingship take firm shape. It is not separated from the House of David by this. Rather, the conviction that the Messiah will be a sprout from the house of David is steadily gaining in certainty. But the earthly glory fades, and the greatness of the Messiah-King fades into the. Man of Smart e, in the "Shepherd who shall be pierced." All that remained was a severed trunk, and from that trunk a risen one shall come forth. The idea of reconciliation, the idea of the priest mixes with the idea of the King, and the majesty of the King who is to come is no longer derived from Solomon's elven throne, nor from David's warrior trophies, but from his higher origin. The divine nature of this ideal King begins to shine through. "Therefore, O God, thy God has anointed thee with oil of joy." Divinely great, despised to the world and cast out by the world, this King will be. The Messiah becomes the suffering Messiah on earth. There will be a downfall in blackness and in death in the form that the prophecy shows you. From Israel His image is thereby loosened. It will be a reign that will encompass all nations, but a reign to which he can only come by rising from the dead. Only then will the struggle against all evil powers begin, and only when that final struggle is completed can the glory of the kingdom of peace, which is sung about by prophet after prophet, break forth.

In the meantime, however, four centuries had elapsed before the Messiah promise, thus richly developed, was fulfilled. In those four centuries, the voice of prophecy had been hushed, Israel as a nation-state had risen and fallen in an entirely different form, and Israel's expectations of the Messiah had been completely changed. What had already acquired a spiritual, universal and ideal character in the prophecy, has in the course of these four centuries been reduced to a national scale and taken to

be a matter of fact. It now became a Messiah who would come to deliver the Jews from their oppressors, from Herod the Idumean and from the Roman legions that were dominating the whole country. Thus, all higher ideas were lost, all ideal ideas faded, the spiritual faded away, and when at last the spiritual Messiah himself appeared, these two diametrically opposed ideas clashed: 1e. On the part of Jesus, a Messiah-Kingship, which with its starting point in divine nature, meant the restoration of God's supreme rule in a spiritual sense over all nations and peoples, and therefore had to go through suffering to reach glory; and 2e. on the part of the people, the expectation of the re-establishment and liberation of the Jewish nation-state, in order to go out with broad armies and to conquer the surrounding peoples, as in David's days. In the struggle between these two diametrically opposed ideas, the Jewish nation-state collapsed. When the Christ had appeared, that nation had fulfilled and exhausted its calling, and what remained was not Judaism but the glory of its Messiah, who, though he died, in overcoming death, established in his own person the spiritual reign of Jehovah over all nations and peoples.