

WRITINGS OF H P LIDDON

by H.P. Liddon

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by H.P. Liddon, compiled for study and devotional reading.

3 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00.00. - Liddon, H. P. - Library
2. S. Influences of the Holy Spirit
3. S. The Old Testament Messianic Hope

00.00. - Liddon, H. P. - Library

Liddon, H. P. - Library S. Influences of the Holy Spirit S. The Old Testament Messianic Hope

S. Influences of the Holy Spirit

Influences of the Holy Spirit The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, out canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.—John 3:8. Who has not felt the contrast, the almost tragic contrast, between the high station of the Jewish doctor, member of the Sanhedrin, master in Israel, and the ignorance of elementary religious truth, as we Christians must deem it, which he displayed in this interview with our blest Lord? At first sight it seems difficult to understand how our Lord could have used the simile in the text when conversing with an educated and thoughtful man, well conversed in the history and literature of God's ancient people; and, indeed, a negative criticism has availed itself of this and of some other features in the narrative, in the interest of the theory that Nicodemus was only a fictitious type of the higher classes in Jewish society, as they were pictured to itself by the imagination of the fourth Evangelist. Such a supposition, opposed to external facts and to all internal probabilities, would hardly have been entertained, if the critical ingenuity of its author had been seconded by any spiritual experience. Nicodemus is very far from being a caricature; and our Lord's method here, as elsewhere, is to lead on from familiar phrases and the well-remembered letter to the spirit and realities of religion. The Jewish schools were acquainted with the expression "a new creature"; but it had long since become a mere shred of official rhetoric. As applied to a Jewish proselyte, it scarcely meant more than a change in the outward relations of religious life. Our Lord told Nicodemus that every man who would see the kingdom of God which He was founding must undergo a second birth; and Nicodemus, who had been accustomed to the phrase all his life, could not understand it if it was to be supposed to mean anything real. "How," he asks, "can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Our Lord does not extricate him from this blundering literalism; He repeats His own original assertion, but in terms which more fully express His meaning: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Our Lord's reference to water would not have been unintelligible to Nicodemus; every one in Judaea knew that the Baptist had insisted on immersion in water as a symbol of the purification of the soul of man. Certainly, in connecting "water" with the Spirit and the new birth, our Lord's language, glancing at that of the prophet, went very far beyond this. He could only be fully understood at a later time, when the sacrament of baptism had been instituted, just as the true sense of His early allusions to His death could not have been apprehended until after the crucifixion. But Nicodemus, it is plain, had not yet advanced beyond his original difficulty; he could not conceive how any second birth was possible, without altogether violating the course of nature. And our Lord penetrates His thoughts and answers them. He answers them by pointing to that invisible agent who could achieve, in the sphere of spiritual and mental life, what the Jewish doctor deemed so impossible a feat as a second birth. Nature, indeed, contained no force that could compass such a result; but nature in this, as in other matters, was a shadow of something beyond itself.

It was late at night when our Lord had this interview with the Jewish teacher. At the pauses in conversation, we may conjecture, they heard the wind without as it moaned along the narrow streets of Jerusalem; and our Lord, as was His wont, took His creature into His service—the service of spiritual truth. The wind was a figure of the Spirit. Our Lord would not have used the same word for both. The wind might teach Nicodemus something of the action of Him who is the real Author of the new birth of man. And it would do this in two ways more especially. On a first survey of nature, the wind arrests man's attention, as an unseen agent which seems to be moving with entire freedom. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." It is fettered by none of those conditions which confine the swiftest bodies that traverse the surface of the earth; it sweeps on as if independent of law, rushing hither and thither, as though obeying its own wayward and momentary impulse. Thus it is an apt figure of a self-determining invisible force; and of a force which is at times of overmastering power. Sometimes, indeed, its breath is so gentle, that only a single leaf or blade of grass will at distant intervals seem to give the faintest token of its action; yet, even thus, it "bloweth where it listeth." Sometimes it bursts upon the earth with destructive violence; nothing can resist its onslaught; the most solid buildings give way; the stoutest trees bend before it; whatever is frail and delicate can only escape by the completeness of its submission. Thus, too, it "bloweth where it listeth." Beyond anything else that strikes upon the senses of man, it is suggestive of free supersensuous power; it is an appropriate symbol of an irruption of the invisible into the world of sense, of the action, so tender or so imperious, of the divine and eternal Spirit upon the human soul. But the wind is also an agent about whose proceedings we really know almost nothing. "Thou hearest the sound thereof"; such is our Lord's concession to man's claim to knowledge. "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth"; such is the reserve which He makes in respect of human ignorance. Certainly we do more than hear the sound of the wind; its presence is obvious to three of the senses. We feel the chill or the fury of the blast; and, as it sweeps across the ocean, or the forest, or the field of corn, we see how the blades rise and fall in graceful curves, and the trees bend, and the waters sink and swell into waves which are the measure of its strength. But our Lord says, "Thou hearest the sound thereof." He would have us test it by the most spiritual of the senses. It whispers, or it moans, or it roars as it passes us; it has a pathos all its own. Yet what do we really know about it? "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." Does the wind then obey no rule; is it a mere symbol of unfettered caprice? Surely not. If, as the psalmist sings, "God bringeth the winds out of his treasuries," He acts, we may be sure, here as always, whether in nature or in grace, by some law, which his own perfections impose upon His action. He may have given to us of these later times to see a very little deeper beneath the surface of the natural world than was the case with our fathers. Perchance we explain the immediate antecedents of the phenomenon; but can we explain our own explanation? The frontier of our ignorance is removed one stage farther back; but "the way of the wind" is as fitting an expression for the mysteries now as it was in the days of Solomon. We know that there is no cave of Æolus. We know that the wind is the creature of that great Master who works everywhere and incessantly by rule. But, as the wind still sweeps by us who call ourselves the children of an age of knowledge, and we endeavor to give our fullest answer to the question, "Whence it cometh, and whither it goeth?" we discover that, as the symbol of a spiritual force, of whose presence we are conscious, while we are unable to determine, with moderate confidence, either the secret principle or the range of its action, the wind is as full of meaning still as in the days of Nicodemus. When our Lord has thus pointed to the freedom and the

mysteriousness of the wind, He adds, "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The simile itself would have led us to expect—"So is the Spirit of God." The man born of the Spirit would answer not to the wind itself, but to the sensible effect of the wind. There is a break of correspondence between the simile and its application. The simile directs attention to the divine Author of the new birth in man. The words which follow direct attention to the human subject upon whom the divine agent works. Something similar is observable when our Lord compares the kingdom of heaven to a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; the kingdom really corresponds not to the merchantman, but to the pearl of great price which the merchantman buys. In such cases, we may be sure, the natural correspondence between a simile and its application is not disturbed without a motive. And the reason for this disturbance is presumably that the simile is not adequate to the full purpose of the speaker, who is anxious to teach some larger truth than its obvious application would suggest. In the case before us, we may be allowed to suppose, that by His reference to the wind our Lord desired to convey something more than the real but mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit in the new birth of man. His language seems designed, not merely to correct the materialistic narrowness of the Jewish doctor, not merely to answer by anticipation the doubts of later days as to the spiritual efficacy of His own sacrament of regeneration, but to picture, in words which should be read to the end of time, the general work of that divine person whose mission of mercy to our race was at once the consequence and the completion of His own.

It may be useful to trace the import of our Lord's simile in three fields of the action of the holy and eternal Spirit; His creation of a sacred literature, His guidance of a divine society, and His work upon individual souls.

I. As, then, we turn over the pages of the Bible, must we not say, "The wind of heaven bloweth where it listeth"? If we might reverently imagine ourselves scheming beforehand what kind of a book the Book of God ought to be, how different would it be from the actual Bible. There would be as many bibles as there are souls, and they would differ as widely. But in one thing, amid all their differences, they would probably agree; they would lack the variety, both in form and substance, of the holy Book which the Church of God places in the hands of her children. The self-assertion, the scepticism, and the fastidiousness of our day would meet like the men of the second Roman triumvirate on that island in the Reno, and would draw up their lists of proscription. One would condemn the poetry of Scripture as too inexact; another its history as too largely secular; another its metaphysics as too transcendental, or as hostile to some fanciful ideal of "simplicity," or as likely to quench a purely moral enthusiasm. The archaic history of the Pentateuch, or the sterner side of the ethics of the psalter, or the supernaturalism of the histories of Elijah or of Daniel, or the so-called pessimism of Ecclesiastes, or the alleged secularism of Esther, or the literal import of the Song of Solomon, would be in turn condemned. Nor could the apostles hope to escape: St. John would be too mystical in this estimate; St. James too legal in that; St. Paul too dialectical, or too metaphysical, or too easily capable of an antinomian interpretation; St. Peter too undecided, as balancing between St. Paul and St. James. Our new Bible would probably be uniform, narrow, symmetrical; it would be entirely made up of poetry, or of history, or of formal propositions, or of philosophical speculation, or of lists of moral maxims; it would be modeled after the type of some current writer on English history, or some popular poet or metaphysician, or some sentimentalist who abjures history and philosophy alike on principle, or some composer of well-intentioned religious tracts for general circulation. The inspirations of heaven would be taken in hand, and

instead of a wind blowing where it listeth, we should have a wind, no doubt, of some kind, rustling earnestly enough along some very narrow crevices or channels, in obedience to the directions of some one form of human prejudice, or passion, or fear, or hope. The Bible is like nature in its immense, its exhaustless variety; like nature, it reflects all the higher moods of the human soul, because it does much more; because it brings us face to face with the infinity of the divine life. In the Bible the wind of heaven pays scant heed to our anticipations or our prejudices; it "bloweth where it listeth." It breathes not only in the divine charities of the gospels, not only in the lyrical sallies of the epistles, not only in the great announcements scattered here and there in Holy Scripture of the magnificence, or the compassion, or the benevolence of God; but also in the stern language of the prophets, in the warnings and lessons of the historical books, in the revelations of divine justice and of human responsibility which abound in either Testament. "Where it listeth." Not only where our sense of literary beauty is stimulated, as in St. Paul's picture of charity, by lines which have taken captive the imagination of the world, not only where feeling and conscience echo the verdict of authority and the promptings of reverence, but also where this is not the case; where neither precept nor example stimulates us, and we are left face to face with historical or ethical material, which appears to us to inspire no spiritual enthusiasm, or which is highly suggestive of critical difficulty. Let us be patient; we shall understand, if we will only wait, how these features of the Bible too are integral parts of a living whole; here, as elsewhere, the Spirit breathes; in the genealogies of the Chronicles as in the last discourse in St. John, though with an admitted difference of manner and degree. He "bloweth where He listeth." The apostle's words respecting the Old Testament are true of the New: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." And, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

"But thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." The majesty of Scripture is recognized by man, wherever there is, I will not say a spiritual faculty, but a natural sense of beauty. The "sound" of the wind is perceived by the trained ear, by the literary taste, by the refinement, by the humanity of every generation of educated men. But what beyond? What of its spiritual source, its spiritual drift and purpose, its half-concealed but profound unities, its subtle but imperious relations to conscience? Of these things, so precious to Christians, a purely literary appreciation of Scripture is generally ignorant; the sacred Book, like the prophet of the Che-bar, is only "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." Or again, the "sound thereof" is heard in the admitted empire of the Bible over millions of hearts and consciences; an empire the evidences of which strike upon the ear in countless ways, and which is far too wide and too secure to be affected by the criticisms that might occasionally seem to threaten it. What is the secret of this influence of Scripture? Not simply that it is the Book of Revelation; since it contains a great deal of matter which lay fairly within the reach of man's natural faculties. The Word or eternal Reason of God is the Revealer; but Scripture, whether it is a record of divine revelations or of naturally observed facts, is, in the belief of the Christian Church, throughout "inspired" by the Spirit. Inspiration is the word which describes the presence and action of the Holy Spirit everywhere in Scripture. We know not how our own spirits, hour by hour, are acted upon by the eternal Spirit, though we do not question the fact: we content ourselves with recognizing what we can not explain. If we believe that Scripture is inspired, we know that it is instinct with the presence of Him whose voice we might hear in every utterance, but

of whom we cannot tell whence He cometh or whither He goeth.

II. The history of the Church of Christ from the days of the apostles has been a history of spiritual movements. Doubtless it has been a history of much else; the Church has been the scene of human passions, human speculations, human errors. But traversing these, He by whom the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified, has made His presence felt, not only in the perpetual proclamation and elucidation of truth, not only in the silent, never-ceasing sanctification of souls, but also in great upheavals of spiritual life, by which the conscience of Christians has been quickened, or their hold upon the truths of redemption and grace made more intelligent and serious, or their lives and practise restored to something like the ideal of the Gospels. Even in the apostolic age it was necessary to warn Christians that it was high time to awake out of sleep; that the night of life was far spent, and the day of eternity was at hand. And ever since, from generation to generation, there has been a succession of efforts within the Church to realize more worthily the truth of the Christian creed, or the ideal of the Christian life. These revivals have been inspired or led by devoted men who have represented the highest conscience of Christendom in their day. They may be traced along the line of Christian history; the Spirit living in the Church has by them attested His presence and His will; and has recalled lukewarm generations, paralyzed by indifference or degraded by indulgence, to the true spirit and level of Christian faith and life. In such movements there is often what seems, at first sight, an element of caprice. They appear to contemporaries to be onesided, exaggerated, narrow, fanatical. They are often denounced with a passionate fervor which is so out of proportion to the reality as to border on the grotesque. They are said to exact too much of us, or to concede too much. They are too contemplative in their tendency to be sufficiently practical, or too energetically practical to do justice to religious thought. They are too exclusively literary and academical, as being the work of men of books; or they are too popular and insensible to philosophical considerations, as being the work of men of the people. Or, again, they are so occupied with controversy as to forget the claims of devotion, or so engaged in leading-souls to a devout life as to forget the unwelcome but real necessities of controversy. They are intent on particular moral improvements so exclusively as to forget what is due to reverence and order; or they are so bent upon rescuing the Church from chronic slovenliness and indecency in public worship as to do less than justice to the paramount interests of moral truth. Sometimes these movements are all feeling; sometimes they are all thought; sometimes they are, as it seems, all outward energy. In one age they produce a literature like that of the fourth and fifth centuries; in another they found orders of men devoted to preaching or to works of mercy, as in the twelfth; in another they enter the lists, as in the thirteenth century, with a hostile philosophy; in another they attempt a much-needed reformation of the Church; in another they pour upon the heathen world a flood of light and warmth from the heart of Christendom. It is easy, as we survey them, to say that something else was needed; or that what was done could have been done better or more completely; or that, had we been there, we should not have been guilty of this onesidedness, or of that exaggeration. We forget, perhaps, who really was there, and whose work it is, though often overlaid and thwarted by human weakness and human passion, that we are really criticizing. If it was seemingly onesided, excessive or defective, impulsive or sluggish, speculative or practical, esthetic or experimental, may not this have been so because in His judgment, who breatheth where He listeth, this particular characteristic was needed for the Church of that day? All that contemporaries know of such movements is "the sound thereof"; the names with which they are associated, the controversies which they precipitate, the hostilities which they

rouse or allay, as the case may be. Such knowledge is superficial enough; of the profound spiritual causes which really engender them, of the direction in which they are really moving, of the influence which they are destined permanently to exert upon souls, men know little or nothing. The accidental symptom is mistaken for the essential characteristic; the momentary expression of feeling for the inalienable conviction of certain truth. The day may come, perhaps, when more will be known; when practise and motive, accident and substance, the lasting and the transient, will be seen in their true relative proportions; but for the time this can hardly be. He is passing by, whose way is in the sea, and His paths in the deep waters, and His footsteps unknown. The Eternal Spirit is passing; and men can only say, "He bloweth where He listeth."

III. Our Lord's words apply especially to Christian character. There are some effects of the living power of the Holy Spirit which are invariable. When He dwells with a Christian soul, He continually speaks in the voice of conscience; He speaks in the voice of prayer. He produces with the ease of a natural process, without effort, without the taint of self-consciousness, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Some of these graces must be found where He makes His home. There is no mistaking the atmosphere of His presence: in its main features it is the same now as in the days of the apostles. Just as in natural morality the main elements of "goodness" do not change; so in religious life, spirituality is, amid great varieties of detail, yet, in its leading constituent features, the same thing from one generation to another. But in the life of the individual Christian, or in that of the Church, there is legitimate room for irregular and exceptional forms of activity or excellence. Natural society is not strengthened by the stern repression of all that is peculiar in individual thought or practise; and this is not less true of spiritual or religious society. From the first, high forms of Christian excellence have often been associated with unconscious eccentricity. The eccentricity must be unconscious, because consciousness of eccentricity at once reduces it to a form of vanity which is entirely inconsistent with Christian excellence. How many excellent Christians have been eccentric, deviating more or less from the conventional type of goodness which has been recognized by contemporary religious opinion. They pass away, and when they are gone men do justice to their characters; but while they are still with us how hard do many of us find it to remember that there may be a higher reason for their peculiarities than we think. We know not the full purpose of each saintly life in the designs of Providence; we know not much of the depths and heights whence it draws its inspirations; we can not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. Only we know that He whose workmanship it is bloweth where He listeth; and this naturally leads us to remark the practical interpretation which the Holy Spirit often puts upon our Lord's words by selecting as His chosen workmen those who seem to be least fitted by nature for such high service. The apostle has told us how in the first age He set Himself to defeat human anticipations. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called"; learned academies, powerful connections, gentle blood did little enough for the gospel in the days when it won its first and greatest victories. The Holy Spirit, as Nicodemus knew, passed by the varied learning and high station of the Sanhedrin, and breathed where He listed on the peasants of Galilee; He breathed on them a power which would shake the world. And thus has it been again and again in the generations which have followed. When the great Aquinas was a student of philosophy under Albertus Magnus at Cologne, he was known among his contemporaries as "the dumb Ox"; so little did they divine what was to be his place in the theology of Western Christendom. And to those of us who can look back upon the memories of this University for a quarter of a century or more, few things appear more remarkable

than the surprizes which the later lives of men constantly afford; sometimes it is a failure of early natural promise, but more often a rich development of intellectual and practical capacity where there had seemed to be no promise at all. We can remember, perhaps, some dull quiet man who seemed to be without a ray of genius, or, stranger still, without anything interesting or marked in character, but who now exerts, and most legitimately, the widest influence for good, and whose name is repeated by thousands with grateful respect. Or we can call to mind another whose whole mind was given to what was frivolous, or even degrading, and who now is a leader in everything that elevates and improves his fellows. The secret of these transfigurations is ever the same. In those days these men did not yet see their way; they were like travelers through the woods at night, when the sky is hidden and all things seem to be other than they are.

Since then the sun has risen and all has changed. The creed of the Church of Christ, in its beauty and its power, has been flashed by the Divine Spirit upon their hearts and understandings; and they are other men. They have seen that there is something worth living for in earnest; that God, the soul, the future, are immense realities, compared with which all else is tame and insignificant. They have learned something of that personal love of our crucified Lord, which is itself a moral and religious force of the highest order, and which has carried them forwards without their knowing it. And what has been will assuredly repeat itself.

S. The Old Testament Messianic Hope

The Old Testament Messianic Hope By H. P. Liddon

(1829-1890) The Messianic belief was interwoven with the deepest life of Israel. The promises which formed and fed this belief are distributed along nearly the whole range of the Jewish annals; while the belief rests originally upon sacred traditions which carry us up to the very cradle of the human family. It is important to inquire whether this general Messianic belief included any definite convictions respecting the Being who was its object. In the gradual unfolding of the Messianic doctrine three stages of development may be noted within the limits of the Hebrew canon, and a fourth beyond it: The Seed of the Woman; The Kingdom to David Forever; Messianic Prophecy; and A Jewish Caesar Expected.

I. The "Seed of the Woman" The "seed of the woman" is to bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). With the lapse of years this blessing is narrowed down to something in store for the posterity of Shem (Genesis 9:26), and subsequently for the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 22:18). In Abraham's seed all the families of the earth are to be blessed.

Already within this bright but indefinite prospect of deliverance and blessing we begin to discern the advent of a personal Deliverer. Paul argues, in accordance with the Jewish interpretation, that "the seed" is here a personal Messiah (Galatians 3:16); the singular form of the word denoting His individuality. The characteristics of this personal Messiah emerge gradually in successive predictions. The dying Jacob looks forward to a Shiloh as One to whom rightfully belongs regal and legislative authority (Genesis 49:10), and to whom the obedient nations will be gathered. Balaam sings of the Star that will come out of Jacob and the Scepter that will rise out of Israel (Numbers 24:17). This manifestly points to the glory and power of a higher Royalty than David. Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18-19) foretells a Prophet who would in a later age be raised up from among the Israelites, like unto himself. This Prophet accordingly was to be the Lawgiver, the Teacher, the Ruler, the Deliverer of Israel.

II. Kingdom to David Forever The second stage of the Messianic doctrine centers in the reigns of David and Solomon. The promise of a kingdom to David and to his house forever (2 Samuel 7:16) could not be fulfilled by any mere continuation of his dynasty on the throne of Jerusalem. It implied, as both David and Solomon saw, some superhuman Royalty. The messianic psalms present us with a series of pictures of this Royalty, each illustrating a distinct aspect of its dignity, while all either imply or assert the divinity of the King. In Psalms 2:1-12, for instance, Messiah is associated with the Lord of Israel as His anointed Son. Messiah's inheritance is to include all heathendom; His Sonship is not merely theocratic or ethical, but divine. All who trust in Him are blessed; all who incur His wrath must perish with a sharp and swift destruction. This psalm is quoted from in the first recorded prayer of the church (Acts 4:25-26), again in Paul's sermon at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:33), and also in the argument which opens the Epistle of the Hebrews (Hebrews 1:5; cf. Romans 1:4).

Psalms 45:1-17 is a picture of the peaceful and glorious union of the King Messiah with His mystical bride, the church of redeemed humanity. Messiah is introduced as a divine King reigning among men. His form is of more than human beauty; His lips overflow with grace; God has blessed Him forever, and has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Messiah Is Also Directly Addressed as God

He is viewed as seated upon an everlasting throne. Neither of these psalms can be adapted without exegetical violence to the circumstances of Solomon, or to any other king of ancient Israel; and the New Testament interprets them as picturing the royal triumph of the one true King, Messiah (Hebrews 1:8). In Psalms 72:1-20 the character and extent of this messianic sovereignty are more distinctly pictured. The new kingdom reaches “from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Psalms 72:8). It reaches from each frontier of the Promised Land to the remotest regions of the known world in the opposite quarter. At the feet of its mighty Monarch all who are most inaccessible to the arms or to the influence of Israel hasten to tender their voluntary submission. The wild sons of the desert, the merchants of Tarshish in the then-distant Spain, the islanders of the Mediterranean, the Arab chiefs, the wealthy Nubians, are foremost in proffering their homage and fealty.

All Kings to Bow Down to Him But all kings are at last to fall down in submission before the Ruler of the new kingdom; all nations are to do Him service. His empire is to be coextensive with the world: it is also to be co-enduring with time. His empire is to be spiritual; it is to confer peace on the world, by righteousness. The King will Himself secure righteous judgment, salvation, deliverance, and redemption to His subjects. The needy, the afflicted, the friendless will be the special objects of His tender care. His Name will endure forever; and men shall be blessed in Him to the end of time. This King is immortal; He is also all-knowing and all-mighty. “Omniscience alone can hear the cry of every human heart; Omnipotence alone can bring deliverance to every human sufferer.”

David's Son Is David's Lord In Psalms 110:1, David describes his great descendant Messiah as his “Lord” (cf. Matthew 22:44). Messiah is sitting on the right hand of Jehovah as the Partner of His dignity. He is to reign until His enemies are made His footstool; He is Ruler now, even among His unsubdued opponents. In the day of His power, His people offer themselves willingly to His service. They are clad not in earthly armor, but “in the beauties of holiness.” Messiah is Priest as well as King—an everlasting Priest of that older order which had been honored by the father of the faithful. The Son of David is David's Lord because He is God; the Lord of David is David's Son because He is God Incarnate.

III. Messianic Prophecy The third period extends from the reign of Uzziah to the close of the Hebrew Canon in Malachi. Here messianic prophecy expands into the fullest details respecting Messiah's human life, and mounts to the highest assertions of His divinity. Isaiah is the richest mine of messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. Messiah, especially designated as “the Servant of God,” is the central figure in the prophecies of Isaiah. Both in Isaiah and in Jeremiah the titles of Messiah are often and pointedly expressive of His true humanity. He is the Branch of the Lord (Isaiah 4:2); He is the Rod out of the stem of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1); He is the Branch or Sprout of David (Jeremiah 23:5; Jeremiah 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; Zechariah 6:12).

He is called by God from His mother's womb (Isaiah 49:1); God has put His Spirit upon Him (Isaiah 42:1). He is anointed to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive (Isaiah 61:1). He is a Prophet whose work is greater than that of any prophet of Israel. Not merely will He come as a Redeemer to them that turn from transgression in Jacob (Isaiah 59:20; Isaiah 49:6), He is also given as a Light to the Gentiles, as the Salvation of God unto the end of the earth. Such is His spiritual power as Prophet and Legislator that He will write the law of the Lord, not upon tables of stone, but on the heart and conscience of the true Israel. In Zechariah He is an enthroned Priest, but it is the kingly glory of Messiah which predominates throughout the prophetic representations of this period, and in which His superhuman nature is most distinctly suggested. According to Jeremiah the Branch of Righteousness, who is to be raised up among the posterity of David, is a King who will reign and prosper and execute judgment and justice in the earth. According to Isaiah this expected King, the Root of Jesse, "will stand for an ensign of the people." The Rallying-Point of the World's Hopes

He will be the true center of its government: "Kings will see and arise, princes also will worship...kings will shut their mouths at Him" (Isaiah 52:15). Righteousness, equity, justice, and faithfulness will mark His administration. He will not judge after the sight of His eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of His ears. Instead, He will rely upon the infallibility of a perfect moral insight. Beneath the shadow of His throne all that is by nature savage, proud, and cruel among the sons of men will learn the habits of tenderness, humility, and love. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6-8). "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

Daniel is taught that at the "anointing of the Most Holy"—after a defined period—God will "finish the transgressions," and "make an end of sins," and "make reconciliation for iniquity," and "bring in everlasting righteousness" (Daniel 9:24).

Zechariah, too, especially points out the moral and spiritual characteristics of the reign of King Messiah. The founder of an eastern dynasty must ordinarily wade through blood and slaughter to the steps of his throne, and must maintain his authority by force. But the daughter of Jerusalem beholds her King coming, "just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass." The King "speaks peace unto the heathen"; the "battlebow is broken"; and yet His dominion extends "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth" (Zechariah 9:9-10). The Suffering Messiah

If Messiah reigns in Psalms 45:1-17 and Psalms 72:1-20, in harsh and apparent utter contrast He suffers hugely in Psalms 22:1-31. His anguish has been described in even greater detail by Isaiah. Both writers, however, confidently treat the deepest humiliations and woes as the prelude to assured victory. The psalmist passes from excruciating details of the crucifixion to a declaration that by these sufferings the heathen will be converted, and all the kindreds of the Gentiles will be brought to adore the true God (Psalms 22:1-21). The prophet describes the Servant of God as "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:1-12). He bears our infirmities and carries our sorrows; His wounds are due to our transgressions; His stripes have a healing virtue for us. His sufferings and death are a trespass-offering; on Him is laid the iniquity of all. "His visage is so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." Like a lamb, innocent, defenseless, dumb, He is led forth to the slaughter. "He is cut off from the land of the living."

Yet the prophet pauses at His grave to note that He “shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied,” that God “will divide Him a portion with the great,” and that He will Himself “divide the spoil with the strong.” And all this is to follow “because He hath poured out His soul unto death.” His death is the destined instrument whereby He will achieve His mediatorial reign of glory.

He Is Identified with the Father In Isaiah’s great prophecy, the “Son” who is given to Israel receives a fourfold name: He is a Wonder-Counselor, or Wonderful, above all earthly beings; He possesses a nature which man cannot fathom, and He thus shares and unfolds the divine Mind. He is the Father of the everlasting age or of eternity. He is the Prince of Peace. Above all, He is expressly named the Mighty God. Jeremiah calls Him Jehovah Tsidkenu, as Isaiah had called Him Emmanuel. Micah speaks of His eternal pre-existence as Isaiah had spoken of His endless reign. Daniel predicts that His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away. Zechariah terms Him the Fellow or Equal of the Lord of Hosts, and refers to His incarnation and still more clearly to His passion as being that of Jehovah Himself. Haggai implies His divinity by foretelling that His presence will make the glory of the second Temple greater than the glory of the first. Malachi points to Him as the Angel of the Covenant, as Jehovah whom Israel was seeking, and who would suddenly come to His temple, as the Sun of Righteousness. A Messiah Divine as Well as Human

Read this language as a whole; read it by the light of the great doctrine which it attests, and which in turn illuminates it, the doctrine of a Messiah, divine as well as human. All is natural, consistent, full of point and meaning. But divorce it from that doctrine in obedience to a foregone and arbitrary dictum of negative criticism which insists that Jesus Christ shall be banished at any cost from the scroll of prophecy—then how full of difficulties does such language become, how overstrained and exaggerated, how insipid and disappointing!

IV. A Jewish Caesar Expected The last stage of the Messianic doctrine begins only after the close of the Hebrew Canon. The messianic hope gradually became degraded among the masses of the people. They dwelt more and more eagerly upon the pictures of His worldwide conquest and imperial sway, and they construed those promises of coming triumph in the most earthly and secular sense—they looked for a Jewish Alexander or for a Jewish Caesar. Doubtless there were saints like the aged Simeon, whose eyes longed sore for the divine Christ foretold in the great age of Hebrew prophecy. But generally speaking, the piety of the enslaved Jew had become little else than a wrong-headed patriotism. The people who were willing to hail Jesus as King Messiah and to conduct Him in royal pomp to the gates of the holy city had so lost sight of the real eminence which messiahship involved that when He claimed to be God they endeavored to stone Him for blasphemy. This claim of His was in fact the “crime” for which their leaders persecuted Him to death. Even the apostles at first looked mainly, or only, for a temporal prince. The Jews Reject their Messiah When Jesus Christ presented Himself to the Jewish people He did not condescend to sanction the misbelief of the time. He professed to be the fulfillment at last of the ancient prophecies. Yet when, in the fullness of time He came, that He might satisfy the desire of the nations, He was rejected by a stiff-necked generation because He was true to the highest and brightest anticipations of His Advent. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the divine Messiah of David and of Isaiah and therefore He died upon the cross to achieve the spiritual redemption of humanity, not the political enfranchisement of Palestine. The Lord Our God Is One Lord

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,” was the fundamental law of the Jewish belief and polity. How copious are the warnings against the surrounding idolatries in the Jewish Scriptures! Yet this fundamental truth does but throw into sharper outline those suggestions of personal distinctions in the Godhead—those successive predictions of a Messiah personally distinct from Jehovah, yet also the Savior of men, the Lord and Ruler of all, the Judge of the nations, Almighty, Everlasting, indeed, One whom prophecy designates as God. The Old Testament was in truth entrusted with a double charge: besides teaching explicitly the creed of Sinai, it was designed to teach implicitly a fuller revelation, and to prepare men for the creed of the day of Pentecost.

Predictions that Cannot Be Denied No amount of captious ingenuity will destroy the substantial fact that the leading features of our Lord’s human manifestation were announced to the world some centuries before He actually came among us. With His hand upon the Jewish Canon, Jesus Christ could look opponents or disciples in the face and bid them: “Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me.”

Adapted from *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, H.P. Liddon. Pickering & Inglis LTD. London, n.d.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net