

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run.
His kingdom stretches from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

INTRODUCTION.

In Holy Writ, this psalm is attributed to David, Acts iv. 25, and we have no reason to doubt this, although some suppose that Ezra wrote it, and that David is named only in a general way, as he was the author of so large a proportion—author-in-chief of the Psalms. "This psalm is divided into four stanzas of three verses each, just twice as many as Ps. i. These stanzas are a series of four pictures in reference to the Messiah's Kingdom."—*Peloubet*. The "synonymous parallelism" of Hebrew poetry is distinctly seen in this psalm, which is very regularly constructed.

"This psalm will be best understood if it be viewed as a four-fold picture."—*Spurgeon*.

Stanza I (vs. 3). A picture of the nations of the earth combined against the Messiah and His kingdom, and repeating v. 3.

Stanza II (vs. 4-6). A vision of the *Almighty* serenely reposing on His throne, conscious of power, smiling at the puny efforts of the nations; and a voice from Him uttering (v. 6) that He had made Messiah King of the world.

Stanza III (vs. 7-9). A prophetic picture of the Son himself, announcing the Divine decree, which assures him of victory in this warfare, and supreme dominion over all.

Stanza IV. A picture of the poet, in view of what he has seen, advising the people to submit to their glorious Prince, and thus to escape destruction and enter into the blessedness of His kingdom.

"This division is not only suggested by the sense, but is warranted by the poetic form of the psalm."—*Spurgeon*.

The psalm is, in this lesson, treated as a purely Messianic psalm, relating to the *spiritual* David.

EXPOSITION.

PART I.—The nations of the earth angrily arraying themselves against Christ's rule—vs. 1-3.

1. Why. An explanation rather than a question. How useless! for they will neither hinder nor overturn Christ's kingdom. How unreasonable! for ought not Christ to reign, and who can say aught against His rule? How perverse! for nothing but a hatred of right and truth could lead to such rage. Heathen. Literally "nations," especially "nations other than Israel, foreign nations." "At the introduction of Christianity into Germany, the wild dwellers on the *heaths* longest resisted the truth."—*Trench*. Hence the word *heathen* has come to be applied to all who are ignorant of the Christian faith. Rage. This verb refers not so much to the internal feeling of anger, but rather to the external agitation which springs from it. "There may be an allusion to the roaring and roaring of the sea."—*Alexander*. See Acts iv. 27, 28. *Imagine*. "To devise, scheme, plot."—*Peloubet*.

2. The kings. "The many had done their part and saw the mighty show themselves."—*Trapp*. Set themselves, i.e., take a hostile stand. The verb implies deliberation and determination. Against the Lord and against His anointed. The two are one. To oppose Christ is to oppose God—John xv. 23; x. 30. Anointed. The Hebrew word is "Messiah," one of Christ's names. "Christ" is the corresponding Greek word. Anointing was the form used in setting apart any person or thing to a holy use.—See, e.g., 1 Samuel xvi. 13; Leviticus viii. 10. *Inc*. *Christ* is *set apart* to be the Saviour and King of men.

3. The metaphor of this verse is borrowed from resistive animals, which break the cords and throw off the yoke."—*Perowne*. Bands, cords, i.e., the doctrines and commands and authority of Christ. To the unregenerate the rule of Christ is burdensome, galling, like chains to a slave. How

different to the child of God.—See Matt. xi. 28-30. The highest title that Paul desired was this, "a servant of Jesus Christ." Cast away. As if they could free themselves from Christ's authority, as easily as Samson freed himself from the green withes. How often does one meet a skeptic who seems to think that by a *quibble* or a *twist* he has overturned the Christian faith of nineteen centuries. "This is precisely *ziz*—in its very nature and essence: the heart lifting itself up against the perfectly reasonable authority and most righteous claims of the infinite God, the glorious Giver of every good. Against such a God, rebellion is sin; madness; the madness not of insanity, but of supreme folly."—*Combs*.

PART II.—The Almighty contemplating this rage of the nations.—vs. 4-6.

4. **Sitteth in the heavens.** An expression denoting the *majesty* of God.—See Psalm cv. 1-3. **Shall laugh.** An anthropomorphic expression, attributing to God the action of man, an accommodation to our conceptions. This indicates how puny and vain, in God's eyes, are all the attempts of men against the kingdom of Christ. "Those attempts of the kingdom of Satan which in our eyes are formidable, in God's eyes are despicable."—*Harvey*. 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."—*Luther*. See, e.g., Gen. xli. 32.

5. God does not stop by simply despising the rebellion of man, but proceeds to deal with it as it deserves. **Speak.** After men have spoken (v. 3) God speaks, and "the word of our God shall go forth." Will they fear? In v. 3, they evidently left God out of their reckoning, but now God declares himself to their surprise and overthrow. **Wrath.** Not human passion, but righteous indignation against sin. Some would believe that there is no such thing as *righteousness* distinct from *benevolence* in the character of God. This verse would not convey that idea. **Vex.** i.e., terrify, confound, strike with terror and consternation. **Store displeasure.** A stronger word than "wrath."

6. *Ye*. i.e., The Divine address begins, as it were, in the middle of a sentence, as if He had said, you renounce your allegiance, and I, on my part, have set my King, etc.—*Alexander*. **My King.** What office? By what authority? Over whom?—See Philippians ii. 9-11. **Zion.** The fortified hill on which David built his palace and to which the ark of the covenant was brought, and a type of the church of Christ.—See Psalm xlviii. 2, 3; Heb. xii. 22.

7. **Christ** now speaks, "declaring His rights of sovereignty and warning the traitors of their doom."—*Spurgeon*. Vs. 7-9.

7. **I.** The Messiah. The decree. It immediately follows to the end of verse 9, and it contains: (1). The relation of Christ to the Father, v. 7; declared at our Lord's baptism and transfiguration, involving the true divinity of Christ and containing a mystery which man cannot fathom. (2). That the nations of the earth are Christ's, by right of inheritance and by right of acquisition, v. 8. (In reading this verse leave out the words in italics.) (3). Christ's infinite power, v. 9.

8. Christ is King and possessor of all, whether men acknowledge it or not.—Heb. i. 2.

9. The reference is to the absolute manner in which He will crush all rebellion against the Father's will. It is not that He is not merciful; it is that He performs a double work.—*English Lesson Notes*. Compare Matt. xli. 28-30 with Matt. xxi. 44. **Potter's vessel.** "The strongest nature is as earthen-ware compared with the irresistible power of Christ."—*Peloubet*.

PART IV.—In view of the foregoing truths, advice is given to earth's great ones to yield allegiance to Christ—vs. 10-12.

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

All must either *bend* to Christ in faith and love and glad obedience, or else be broken by Him when He rises to judgment.

10. For every reason it is the part of wisdom to yield. Men can give *aces* for not yielding but not reasons.

11. This is the wisdom and instruction of v. 10. Obedience, reverence, joy, profound seriousness, these things we are exhorted to. "There is a difference between *fearing* and the *four* and *trembling* which are a part of Christian experience. Joy and love and faith can mingle with the latter, not with the former."

12. **Kiss the Son.** "An ancient method of doing homage to a king (1 Samuel x. 1)."—*Alexander*. "It expresses a loving, rejoicing homage, the allegiance of the heart."—*Peloubet*. **Lest He be angry.** The awful sin of rejecting Christ and Christ's wrath against it. There is such a thing as "the wrath of the Lamb." Illustrate the two-fold aspect of Christ's character, the *tender* and the *terrible*, by quotations from the gospels. **Perish from the way.** "Lose the way, i.e., to happiness and heaven; or perish by the way, i.e., before you reach your destination."—*Alexander*. **When He shall say, etc.** Might be read, "For His wrath will soon burn."

REMARKS.

1. V. 1. A medal was struck by Diocletian, emperor of Rome, (about 300 A. D.) which still remains, bearing the inscription, "The name of Christians being extinguished," and in Spain two monumental pillars were raised, on one of which was written, "Diocletian, for having extended the Roman empire in the east and west, and for having expunged the name of Christians," on the other "Diocletian, for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ."—*Spurgeon*. Diocletian struck his medal and raised his monuments at least 1600 years too soon, for the Christian faith is not dead yet nor does it show any signs of dying.

2. *Peace*, in the hearing of Frederick the Great, the grounds of Sans Souci, Voltaire said, respecting Christianity, "Crash the viper." On the same spot, not long ago, the emperor William and his queen entertained members of the Evangelical Alliance, met from all parts of the world to advance the Christian faith.—*Joseph Cook*.

3. From earth's first morning the sun has shone, with its light and warmth. How many mists and storms, born of the earth, have sought to hide it from us and have raged as if they would destroy it; but when they have cleared away the sun still shines, as calm and glorious as ever. And why? Because its seat is away yonder in the heavens, where the mists and storms of earth cannot reach. So with the Christian faith. With all the unbelief and opposition of men through these 1900 years, it still remains to enlighten and warm the world. Because it is not of the earth, but has its origin and its seat in the mind and heart of the eternal God.

4. The opposition against Christ's kingdom has by no means ceased; its instrument however is no longer so much the sword, but the pen, and the platform.

5. It is said that a Chinese emperor, learning of a revolt in a distant province, promised to quickly destroy his enemies. He conquered them in war, and then treated the survivors with kindness and humanity. But his officers said to him, "You promised to destroy your enemies!"—"So I have, for they are enemies no longer, but friends. For Christ destroys His enemies, so far as they will yield heartily to every influence Divine wisdom and power can exert. Only those who refuse to be changed into friends will be broken as a potter's vessel."—*Peloubet*.

"What is the best remedy," asked a preacher of a shrewd observer, "for an inattentive audience?" "Give them something to attend to," was the significant reply. "Hungry sheep will look up to the rack if there is any hay in it."