

THE  
**WORKS**  
OF  
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CONTAINING  
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &C., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA, DIS-  
COURSES INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT,  
SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,  
A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS,  
MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED  
**MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c.**

BY THE REV. R. CECIL, A. M.

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**COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.**

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## SERMON XI.

### MESSIAH'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh into thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.—And he shall speak peace unto the Heathen.—ZECH ix. 9, 10.*

THE narrowness and littleness of the mind of fallen man are sufficiently conspicuous in the idea he forms of magnificence and grandeur. The pageantry and parade of a Roman triumph, or of an eastern monarch, as described in history, exhibit him to us in what he himself accounts his best estate. If you suppose him seated in an imperial carriage, arrayed in splendid apparel, wearing a crown or tiara ornamented with jewels, preceded and followed by a long train of guards and attendants, surrounded by the unmeaning acclamations of ignorant multitudes, you see the poor worm at the summit of his happiness. He has no conception of anything greater than this. And the spectators are generally of the same mind. They admire, and they envy, his lot; and there is hardly a person in the crowds around him, but would be very glad to take his place, were it practicable. Yet this great little creature would surely be mortified, if, in the height of his self-complacence, he could consider, that he had the very same regard for a pre-eminence in finery, the same desire to be admired and envied, and felt the same kind of satisfaction in distinction above his fellows, when he was a child of ten years old. He is in effect a child still, only he has changed his play-things, and now acts upon a larger scale, but with the same trifling and contracted views.

How different was Messiah's entry into Jerusalem foretold in this prophecy, the accomplishment of which we read in the evangelists! And how differently was he affected by the objects around him! He poured contempt upon the phantom of human glory. This King of kings and Lord of lords was meek and lowly, riding upon an ass's colt, Luke xix. 35–38. And though a secret divine influence constrained the multitude to acknowledge his character, and, with some accommodation to the customs of the times, to strew their garments in the way, as they proclaimed the King who came in the name of Jehovah; yet he appeared unmoved by their applause. Had the history of Jesus, like those which we have of Socrates or Cyrus, been merely the work of a human writer, ambitious to adorn a favourite character with the most splendid qualities of a philosopher or a hero, we should never have known how his mind was engaged in this situation. The Saviour must be divine, his historian must be inspired, the fact must be true; for man could not have invented such a circumstance, that this meek and lowly Saviour took no notice of the zeal and homage of his friends, because his heart was filled with compassion for his enemies, who were thirsting for his blood.

For it was then, amidst the acclamation of his disciples, that he beheld the city and wept over it, while he foretold the evils which the rejection of him would bring upon it. "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes."

An angel proclaimed his birth to the shepherds; and wise men from the east paid such attention to the new-born Saviour, that the jealousy of Herod was excited, and attempts made to destroy him. But this wonderful infant was brought up in a state of obscurity, in a place of no repute, and known by no higher description than that of the carpenter's son. In the course of his ministry he appeared and was treated as a poor man, he had no certain dwelling-place, he submitted to receive supplies for his support from the contributions of a few of his followers, for the most of them were poor like himself. And though he wrought many wonderful works for the relief of the necessitous and miserable, he admitted no alteration in his own external state, but was content to be poor and despised, for our sakes, to the end of his life. I think the only occasion on which he permitted a public acknowledgment of his person and character, was when he fulfilled this prophecy. And still he was the same meek and lowly Saviour. As his kingdom was not of this world, neither were there any marks of human grandeur in his procession. He approached Jerusalem, attended, indeed, by a concourse of people, but riding upon an ass, and weeping for his enemies.

The passage of the Messiah which follows the chorus of the heavenly host, is taken from these verses. It does not include the whole of them. In one clause there is a small alteration in the expression, but it does not affect the sense. Instead of, "He is just, having salvation," it is, "He is a righteous Saviour."

We may notice,

I. The prophet's address,—“O daughter of Zion and Jerusalem.”

II. The exhortation to joy,—“Rejoice and shout.”

III. The cause assigned for this joy,—“Thy King cometh.”

IV. The characters of the King,—“A righteous Saviour.”

V. His great design,—“To speak peace to the heathen.”

I. The address,—“O daughter of Zion and Jerusalem.” Zion and Jerusalem are indifferently used as emblems of the church, or professing people of God. When they occur together, as here, contradistinguished from each other, Zion, the city of David, the seat of government, and of the temple-worship, may denote the principal persons of the ecclesiastical and civil state; and Jerusalem may be expressive of the people at large, the daughters of a place signifying, according to the Hebrew idiom, the inhabitants. They boasted that they were the Lord's peculiar people; they had the prophecies and promises concerning Messiah in their hands, and were professedly expecting and waiting for his appearance. They are, therefore, called upon to rejoice in it. But when he actually came, though he came to his own, to his own nation, city and temple; his own people, to whose affection and allegiance he had the justest claim, received him not, John i. 11.

There were a few, however, who truly waited for him as the hope and consolation of Israel, at the time of his birth; and many more were afterwards convinced by his gracious words and works, that he only had the words of eternal life, and became his followers. By their acknowledged principles, they were all bound to acknowledge that prophet whom Moses had foretold God would raise up among them like unto himself (Deut. xviii. 15–19; Acts vii. 37), that is, to be, as he had been, a lawgiver, to institute a new dispensation of the true religion; and their refusal involved them, as a nation, in the punishment, which Moses had likewise denounced against those who should refuse to hearken to him. Thus their peculiar advantage in possessing a divine revelation, while the rest of mankind were left ignorant of the will of God, proved an aggravation of their guilt, and rendered their obstinacy more inexcusable, and their condemnation more severe. I am bound to take every opportunity of noticing the striking parallel in this respect, between the Jewish nation in our Saviour's time, and the nations, who, since that period, have admitted the New Testament as a revelation from God. By assuming the Christian name, and so far calling the Saviour Lord, while they reject the spirit and design of the gospel, and treat the ministers of it with neglect or contempt, they tread in the steps, and share in the guilt, of those who pretended to expect Messiah, and yet crucified him when he appeared among them. In person he could be crucified but once; but the scripture speaks of those who crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame. How far this is the case of the persons who can bear to hear of his passion and his kingdom when made the subject of a musical entertainment, but upon no other occasion, deserves their serious consideration.

II. The exhortation can only be complied with by those who are sensible of their need of a Saviour, and his authority and ability to save. To these the prophet brings a joyful message, and they will rejoice and shout. The joy of harvest (Isa. ix. 3), and of the victors in war when dividing the spoil of the vanquished, is celebrated with shouting. But sinners who by the knowledge of Messiah, are delivered from going down into the pit, from the dominion of the powers of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of God, experience a joy far superior, in kind and degree, to any satisfaction that temporal things can afford. It is a joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. Jesus, when known and received by faith, is, in the highest sense, light to those who sit in darkness, health to the sick, food to the hungry, and rest to the weary soul. Thus many rejoiced in his goodness when he was upon earth; and he still has a people, and will have to the end of time, who do and shall rejoice in him upon these accounts, though every spring of temporal joy should be dried up. They who know his name, and put their trust in him, are warranted to appropriate those strong expressions of another prophet: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be

no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18.

III. The ground and cause of this joy is assigned,—“Thy King cometh.” Messiah is a king. This title he avowed to Pilate (Mark xv. 2), by whose order it was affixed over him upon his cross. That this was not a slight and arbitrary circumstance, but providential and important, we may, I think, infer from the care taken by the evangelists to preserve the remembrance of it, for it is recorded by them all. He is, indeed, King of kings, King and Lord of nations, King of worlds; but he is here spoken of as King of Zion. The kingdom he came to establish upon earth is not of this world, nor like the kingdoms of the world. The maxims, language, interests, and aims of it, are peculiar to itself. His power and providence rule over all; but he is only known, admired, and willingly obeyed by the subjects of his spiritual kingdom, who, though they are in the world, are not of it, but strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. Their true citizenship is in heaven, Phil. ii. 20. These are his peculiar people. And though they partake with others in the changes and trials incident to this mortal life, and have their several departments and duties assigned them according to his will, as members of society, and it does not yet appear what they shall be (1 John iii. 2); they are even now the children and servants of the Lord, and he manifests himself to them as he does not to others. Happy are these his subjects who dwell under his shadow. He rules them, not with that rod of iron by which he bruises and breaks the power of his enemies, but with his golden sceptre of love. He reigns by his own right, and by their full and free consent, in their hearts. He reigns upon a throne of grace, to which they have at all times access; and from whence they receive, in answer to their prayers, mercy and peace, the pardon of all their sins, grace to help in every time of need, and a renewed supply answerable to all their wants, cares, services, and conflicts. So that, though they are surrounded with snares, and fiercely opposed by many enemies, they cannot be overpowered, for the Lord himself is their king and their Saviour. We have,

IV. Two characters of this King,—“He is just, having salvation,” or, as it is in the passage of the Messiah, “He is a righteous Saviour.”

1. He is righteous.—His kingdom is founded in righteousness. It is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death, by which he made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. As his people receive and expect all from his hand, so likewise for his sake. Such is his command, and such is his promise. “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it,” John xiv. 14. In pleading their cause, and managing their concerns, he is their righteous advocate. And therefore, because his intercession is founded upon a righteous stipulation, which he has completely fulfilled, he does not say, “Father,” I ask, but “I will, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory,” John xvii. 24.

2. He is a Saviour.—Having salvation in himself; yea, he is their salvation,

Isa. xii. 2. His wisdom, power, compassion, and determined purpose, are all engaged to save them fully, freely, and for ever; to save them from guilt, from Satan, and from sin, through all the dangers and trials of this life; to save them to the uttermost, till he fixes them finally out of the reach of all evil, and puts them in possession of all the happiness of which their natures are capable, in a conformity to his own image, and the enjoyment of unclouded, uninterrupted communion with God.

V. His great design was not confined to Israel after the flesh; “he shall speak peace to the Heathen” also. His kingdom comprises, besides the believing posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a great multitude gathered from amidst all nations, people, and languages, from the east and the west, from the north and the south, Luke xiii. 28, 29. Though the Heathen were universally alienated from God, by evil works and an evil conscience, he has undertaken to reconcile them, and to bring those near who were once afar off. By their knowledge of him, their prisons shall be opened, their chains broken (Isa. xlv. 14), their condemnation reversed, and they shall be renewed, and accepted in the Beloved, as the true children of Abraham. He shall likewise conciliate peace between Jew and Gentile, make of both one people (Eph. ii. 13–16), pulling down the walls of separation and prejudice, that with one heart and mind they may love, serve, and praise him. For where faith in him obtains, all distinctions are lost and superseded. There is then, neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all, Col. iii. 11.

Much has been already done by the gospel. Multitudes have been turned from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God. And we expect a time when this promise will be more extensively and literally fulfilled; when the kingdom shall be the Lord’s to the end of the earth; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, all Israel shall be saved, and the nations shall learn war no more.

From these characters of the Saviour, we may collect the character of his people. For they beholding his glory, are changed (according to the measure of their faith) into the same image. The incommunicable perfections of God, such as his sovereignty, and all-sufficiency, can only produce in his people correspondent impressions of reverence, submission, and dependence; an attempt to be like him in these respects would be highly impious, and was indeed the original source of our apostacy from him. Man, by indulging a desire of being like God, rebelled against him, aspired at independence, and preferred the gratification of his own will to the righteous and equitable commands of his Maker. The unavoidable consequence of this madness is misery. It is not possible that he should be happy, till he be reduced to his proper state of subordination. But that light of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, which is revealed to the renewed heart by the gospel, has a transforming effect upon those who receive it; they are made partakers of a divine nature, and resemble him, whose they

are, and whom they serve, in righteousness, goodness, and truth, Eph. v. 9.

They are righteous as he is righteous. I speak not of their relative state, as they are accepted and accounted righteous in the Beloved, but of their real character. They learn of him to love righteousness and hate iniquity, Psal. xlv. 7. Their principles are right, drawn from the revealed truths of God. They comport themselves as becomes weak and unworthy sinners, and ascribe the glory of their salvation to the Lord alone; and therefore the general tenor of their conduct is governed by the righteous rules of his precepts; of which they have the most endearing and animating exemplification in the conduct of their Saviour; from him they learn to frame their tempers, desires, and hopes, and thus give evidence that they are, in deed and in truth, a saved people. His love, in proportion as it is realized in their hearts by faith, teaches them likewise to love one another, and to exercise benevolence to all men. When they understand the true nature of his spiritual kingdom, which consisteth not in external distinctions and forms, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. xiv. 17); and that it is his great design to form to himself a people from amongst the nations of the earth, who shall be one body, enlivened by one and the same spirit, they acquire a large and comprehensive mind. They rise above the influence of names, parties, and divisions; are freed from the narrow views and interests of self; and put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance and forgiveness (Col. iii. 12), in conformity to the pattern and will of their great exemplar. Thus he speaks peace to them, and hushes all their angry tumultuous passions into a calm.

Such is the spirit and tendency of the gospel. Let us try ourselves by this touchstone, measure ourselves by this rule, and weigh ourselves in these balances of the sanctuary. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, have put off the old man, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds. If he be indeed your King, your consciences will bear you witness that you revere, imitate and obey him. If he be your Saviour, you certainly must be sensible yourselves, and others must observe that you are different from what you once were.

And if any of you should be convinced, that hitherto you have been a Christian only in name and in form, but destitute of that which constitutes the life and power of real godliness, this will be a good beginning. For though it be high time that you should in good earnest attend to these things, blessed be God it is not yet too late. He is a righteous and a gracious Saviour; seek him as such, and he will speak peace to you also. His sure promise is recorded for your encouragement, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out," John i. 37.