

God's Alternatives

Acts 8: 34; Acts 17: 7; Matthew 2: 12.

F. A. Hughes.

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In speaking of the alternatives of God there is no suggestion that God was forced, through existing circumstances, to bring in His own thoughts. On the contrary, all that we refer to was in the mind of God before the failing ways of man were ever seen, And we see how true the word is, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts," (Isaiah 55: 8, 9). This must ever be so, for man's thoughts centre around himself, whereas the thoughts of God are centred in Christ, the Son of His bosom. The prophet could say of the "many nations," "They know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they His counsel," (Micah 4: 12). From the earliest days God proclaimed against the thoughts of man, that they were "only evil continually," (Genesis 6: 5); whereas we read that God's thoughts towards us are abundant and *wonderful* (Psalm 40: 5); and in Psalm 139 we are told again of their abundance and *preciousness* (vv. 17, 18). Again the Psalmist says, "Thy thoughts are *very deep*", (Psalm 92: 5); they are eternal in their conception, and their full display will involve an eternal day; but they have been expressed in a blessed Man.

Of this glorious Man our first Scripture speaks! "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some *other man*? Then Philip . . . preached unto him *Jesus*". In verse 8 of this chapter we read of a man who was "giving out that himself was some great one; To whom they all gave heed . . . saying, This man is the great power of God." Pride and self-exaltation have ever been the features marking man, and thus they have become an easy prey for Satan — he whose thoughts and desires have always been marked by opposition to God and His Christ. What a contrast we see in the blessed Man whom Philip preached! "The place of the Scripture which he read was this . . . In His humiliation His judgment was taken away . . . for His life is taken from the earth." Here was a blessed Man whose movements were exactly opposite to those of every other man. Others "loved darkness," (John 3: 19), He "loved righteousness," (Hebrews 1: 9); there was "none that doeth good, no, not one," (Rom. 3: 12); He "went about doing good," (Acts 10: 38). Men were marked by "walking after their own lusts," (Jude 16, Eph. 2). He came specifically to do the will of God (Heb. 10: 9); the heavens were opened upon Him and the Father's voice was heard declaring His good pleasure in that blessed Man, (Matt. 3: 17, etc.). From the heart of man sevenfold evil proceeds (Matt. 15: 19), but He could say, "I am meek and lowly in heart," (Matt. 11: 29). Over and over again we find the *compassions* of His heart flowing out to needy ones; whereas He had to rebuke even His disciples for their *hardness* of heart, (Mark 8: 17). In the face of the opposition of the Pharisees, "every man went unto his own house," (John 7: 53); but "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives," (John 8: 1); He would be alone with His God in whose love He found *His home*. He had "all power" in His blessed hands, (Matt. 28: 18), yet the same gospel tells us "a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench," (Matt. 12: 20). Other men used power in tyranny, He used power in the tenderest love; He healed the blind, the deaf, the leper; He fed the hungry crowds; He comforted the broken hearts; He spoke peace to sin-stricken consciences; yea "He hath done *all things well*," (Mark 7: 37).

He respected nature's ties even in a moment of direst agony (John 19: 26); yet He never allowed such ties to divert him from His devotion to the will of God (John 2: 4); and whilst every other man was enslaved by the influence of Satan, He, as living by the word of God, completely vanquished him,

(Matt. 4: 1-10). "Every man at his best state is *altogether vanity*" (Psalm 39: 5), and the children of men have become "*altogether filthy*" (Psalm 53: 3); but He is "*altogether lovely*" (Solomon's Song 5: 16).

This then is the "other Man," God's beloved Son; the One preached by Philip; the One witnessed to by the Holy Spirit throughout the whole of the present dispensation; the One in whom all blessing for man is secured. The whole purpose of God is steadfast in His blessed hands; the will of God is enshrined in His heart; and eventually He will hand back to God a scene filled to the full with the glory of God, from which every taint of the first man's failure has been removed, in order that "God may be all in all," (1 Cor. 15: 28).

Beloved brethren, do we wonder that the Eunuch "went on his way rejoicing"? Could it be otherwise with any one of us if the testimony as to this "other Man" has gripped our hearts? He is competent to carry out the entire will of God; He is competent abundantly to satisfy our hearts.

In our second Scripture we have two kings brought before us in one verse — a striking contrast. The features of Caesar have been apparent in earthly kings from the beginning. The first king in Scripture is Nimrod (Genesis 10: 9, 10); his name means "Rebel;" the beginning of his kingdom was "Babel," that awful system which is seen in Revelation 18 as having completely enslaved the "souls of men." Violence and corruption, the very weapons of Satan himself, have thus in large measure marked the kingdoms of men from beginning to end.

God's king is beautifully portrayed for us in many Scriptures. when *God* gave the people a king, He "took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young," (Psalm 78: 70, 71), and how blessedly we see this Shepherd character related to divine glory; "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that dwellest between the cherubims shine forth (Psalm 80: 1). And then do we not see divine greatness and shepherd care in One blessed Person who can be none other than He who is spoken of in our verse, "another king, one Jesus"? "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah . . . out of thee shall he come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; *whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*", (Micah 5: 2). He, the Eternal One, is the Ruler of His people!

Again we read, "Rejoice greatly . . . O daughters of Jerusalem; behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just (see 2 Samuel 23: 3), and having salvation; lowly, and riding on an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass," (Zechariah 9: 9); and as we read Matthew, chapter 21, we have no doubt to whom the prophet refers, it is "another King, one Jesus." All those precious features, so different from the features of earthly kings, shone out in their perfection in Christ.

As we read the end of the gospels, we are confronted with the awful fact that this King was rejected. In John 19, we see several references to the kingship of Jesus, yet we read in verse 15 the solemn pronouncement of the chief priests, "We have no king but Caesar." These two kings brought together again — God's King refused — Caesar chosen! Solemn have been the governmental consequences to God's earthly people.

The cross has been lighted up with the kingship of Jesus. "And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross . . . JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."

"By weakness and defeat,

He won the mead and crown."

In that mighty stoop He triumphed over all the powers of evil and, in suffering, established the foundations of that kingdom of which there is no end.

God could say by the Psalmist, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion," (Psalm 2:

6). All opposition is futile — the inheritance shall be His even to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The malefactor recognized His kingship; and have not our hearts been attracted to Him in the supremacy of His suffering love? The whole of this world's power and glory was judged at the cross, and at the same time He — the Christ of God — becomes the absorbing Object to faith, (John 12: 31-33).

In Revelation 17, we see the two characters of kingship brought together again, but the "other King, one Jesus," is no longer the rejected One. Ten kings combine their forces against him, but as the Lamb, "He overcomes them; for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings," (v. 14). The lowly King, the suffering Lamb, has triumphed, and in Rev. 19 we see Him coming forth as "King of kings, and Lord of lords," implementing His victory and destroying the powers of evil.

Can we not sing with gladsome heart:-

"King of glory, set on high,
Girt with strength and majesty,
We Thy holy Name confess;
Thee with adoration bless"?

The wise men of Matthew 2, following the lead of "His Star," came to Him, and having found Him, "fell down, and worshipped Him." Their treasures would perhaps speak of His Names in that Gospel, "Emmanuel . . God with us" — the gold; "Jesus" — the frankincense: "a Nazarene" — the myrrh. It is said "they departed . . *another way*".

If by the Spirit's power we, beloved brethren, have been given to see the uniqueness of this blessed Man — this "other Man," and if we have seen in Him the glory of true Kingship, all based upon what He is essentially in His Person, should not we be found treading "another way"? A way of faithfulness and loyalty to Him; a way of moral superiority to all that we find in this world; a way of faith, and withal a way of holy joy as the preciousness of "the second Man . . the Lord from heaven" fills our hearts.

Lord of glory, we adore Thee!
Christ of God, ascended high!
Heart and soul be bow before Thee,
Glorious now beyond the sky!
Thee we worship,
Thee we praise
Excellent in all Thy ways.
Royal robes shall soon invest Thee,
Royal splendours crown Thy brow;
Christ of God, our souls confess Thee
King and Sovereign even now!
Thee we reverence,

Thee obey
Own Thee Lord and Christ alway.