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{Glimpse of Zion's Glory, or the Churches Beauty Specified, 1641}

Omnipotent Reign of Grace

It is the work of the day to cry down Babylon, that it may fall more and more, and it is the work of the day to give God no rest, till he sets up Jerusalem as the praise of the whole earth. {Is.62:7} Blessed is he that dasheth the brats of Babylon against the stones; {Ps.137:9;} blessed is he that hath any hand in pulling down Babylon; and beautiful likewise are the feet of them that bring glad tidings unto Jerusalem, unto Zion, saying, "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." {Rev.19:6} Though Christ's Kingdom be for a while darkened, yet certainly Christ will reign in his Church gloriously, at the which the saints will sing Hallelujah. Why, did not Christ reign before? Yes, but not in that manner that now he is to reign, for the Kingdom of Christ hath been exceedingly darkened in the World; though it now begins to appear a little more brightly, it hath been exceedingly darkened. When Christ came in his own Person, how did he appear to reign, and be the Lord God Omnipotent? I mean outwardly, for he was a man of sorrows; one that was rather a worm than a man; as it is said of him, He was one, in whom appeared no Form and Beauty; for which he should be desired. {Is.53:2} He was bruised by his Father; he was in the form of a servant; yea, made in the likeness of men; being made sin for us, and beaten like a condemned malefactor; yea, made a curse for us; and so how did he reign? They made him a king in way of derision, put a reed into his hand instead of a scepter, and bowed the knee in scorn, and called him the King of the Jews; and thus he reigned outwardly, and not otherwise, in his own Person. And afterwards in the primitive times how did he appear to be Lord God, and to reign there, when the Heathen Emperors reigned over his Subjects, and had their wills imposed upon them? His Subjects were but a company of poor distressed

and forlorn people, wandering up and down, persecuted, and destitute of all comforts. Afterwards when God brought Constantine the Emperor and others to reign, the Church enjoyed a little Peace, though this was but for a little time. In the 8th of the Revelation, it is said there was silence in Heaven for half an hour, which may perhaps be applied to that little time of respite that the Church had in Constantine's time; for when Licinius who was joined with Constantine in the Empire, presently fell off, and grew a Persecutor, then spread Arianism over all the World, that all the World seemed to be an Arian, so that Christ was not acknowledged Lord God; and therefore not {recognized as} reigning. Then Antichrist spread himself, and he set himself up as Lord God, and prescribed laws to the consciences of men, and Christ was cast out {in the hearts of degenerate men} of his Throne; yea, to this day how little hath Christ reigned as to any outward display of his power? The Devil himself appears a greater king, I mean in regard of the multiplicity of his subjects. Divide the World into thirty parts, and there are not above five of those that even acknowledge Christ; and out of those five take them where Antichrist reigns, and how little doth Christ appear to reign? And among them where Christ is acknowledged, and Antichrist rejected, how is his Kingdom persecuted; and of the better sort, how is his Kingdom slighted, and many forward professors and zealous Ministers have trifling thoughts thereof. Yea, even among those that set up his Kingdom, in regard of their miscarriages his Kingdom is darkened; so that Christ doth appear to have but a little reign in the World; and it is a glorious thing spoken of to John, that Christ, "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." What shall we say to these things? That Christ should be King of Heaven and Earth, and should appear so diminutive in his reign as he hath done, and yet doth to this day. Let us stay a little here, and admire at the infinite Depth and Wisdom of God's Counsels that are past finding out. What God should aim at and indicate {if we may speak with holy reverence} to order these things, that his own Son so infinitely dear unto him, should have his glory so darkened in the World as he hath. We may think of some reasons why God doth ordain this; but what his aim and intentions are in the depth of his Counsels, is infinitely beyond us. It may be it is to be a stumbling-block to wicked and ungodly men in his just Judgment that they should see and not understand. {Mt.13:14} And it was upon this ground that God suffered his Kingdom to be darkened hitherto, that Antichrist might prevail, because of much Glory {that is, vindicate Glory as made known in the "day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"} that he intended to bring out of the prevailing of Antichrist in the World; therefore in his Providence he hath so ordained it, as that the Kingdom of his Son for many years should indeed be darkened. And {my Brethren} if the Kingdom of Christ had been kept in Congregations, in that way that we and some other Churches are in, it had been impossible that Antichrist should have got head. But God in his Providence, because he would so order Antichrist to rise and to Rule for a

long time, as he had many things to bring out of the Kingdom of Antichrist, to work for his Glory; therefore God hath left this particular truth {that of his absolute sovereignty & complete reign} to be so dark; that is, the setting up of Christ in his Kingly Office. Thirdly, because God would exercise the Faith and other graces of his Spirit in his own Children, that they might believe in and love Jesus Christ for his spiritual Beauty, though {at particular seasons} there appears nothing but spiritual Beauty, and no outward Beauty, as no outward Kingdom doth appear, but he reign as a Spiritual King only. It was a great and a glorious thing, in those three wise men that came to Christ that offered Frankincense, Gold and Myrrh to Christ when he was in a Manger; and so for God's people now to believe in him, now to love, now to rejoice in him, now to offer all to him; for now his Kingdom is darkened, now he doth appear so despised as he is; for this is a glorious work of Faith, and we should desire much to be found in this way of faith, in looking upon this Spiritual Beauty that is in Christ, and satisfying our souls in that; that so we may not be offended at the darkening of Christ's Kingdom outwardly in the world; and the less Christ doth appear to reign outwardly in the world, the less glorious his Kingdom doth appear outwardly, the more let us labor to bring our hearts under his spiritual Reign of Grace. The more others say, "we will not have this man reign over us," the more let our souls subject themselves to him, and say, "Christ is our KING," and may he reign forever over us; yea, let us labor to sympathize with Jesus Christ in the darkening of his glory and of his Kingdom. Jesus Christ, though he be the glory of his Father, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person," yet is he contented to have his glory darkened for a season. Therefore who are we that we must have glory in this world and outward excellencies, when Christ is willing to be without them? Let us be willing to go like the Witnesses, clothed in Sackcloth, till Christ comes to reign. There are white shining garments prepared, but that time is not yet, though it will not be long. The Bridegroom yet seems to be absent, and therefore it is fit for the Spouse to go low and mean in the mourning weeds as a widow; the trimming of the Bride in her outward glory, may come hereafter, when Christ shall come in glory into the World. Lastly, the Kingdom of Christ is darkened for a while outwardly, and therefore it should teach us to bless God so much the more for that opportunity that we have of setting up Christ as King amongst us; for thus far, the Voice is not heard much, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth abroad in the world, though lately some noise we have heard; but, blessed be God, in our Congregations amongst us, may we hear the Voice, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. It is through our own wretched wickedness, if his Kingly Power be not fully set up amongst us in all his Ordinances; and that we should have an opportunity to set up his Kingly Power amongst us here, while it is so much opposed, and so little known in the world, it is a great mercy indeed. Therefore let us take heed of abusing that opportunity we have, for darkening the Kingly Power of Christ,

which we profess to set up; especially in these {apostate} times, when there comes to be a Voice, though confusedly, from the Multitude, and some kind of Voice of thunder from the great ones. But though it be dark for a while, certainly he shall reign, and the Voice will be glorious and distinctive, saying, "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."