

THE BIRTH, GIFT, GOVERNMENT, AND GLORIOUS NAMES OF
JESUS CHRIST, AS SAVIOUR OF SINNERS.*

ISAIAH ix. 6,

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

THESE words bear a joyful intimation or declaration of a great privilege afforded to the children of men; in which the prophet himself shares as one of them, and so is the more feelingly touched with it; and therefore God has employed men to preach Christ to men, that the glad tidings may be brought by such as have equal need of and interest in them with themselves. "For unto us a child is born," &c.

The words are thus plainly connected with the preceding; for the discovery of which we must look back to ver. 2: where the prophet speaks of the light of the gospel breaking up in a dark world by Jesus Christ, as is clear from Matth. iv. 12—16. See the case of sinners before Christ appears to them; they are all in darkness, in a blind, uncomfortable, and dangerous condition. (1.) Some are walking in that darkness, they are bestirring themselves for happiness, and to mend their condition, but they see not their way. Such were the Jews, and all formalists. (2.) Some sitting in that darkness, thickest darkness, pining away in their sin, and not aiming to mend their condition, but like condemned malefactors in a dungeon. Such were the Gentiles, and all profane, carnal persons, having no view but to this world's happiness.

Christ coming unto them, their darkness is dispelled. They that walk, see light which they so much wanted; it breaks up to them in their way. Those that sit, it shines in on them, makes its way into their dungeon. Both see where they are, and how to get their condition mended, how hopeless soever it was.

The effect of this light or saving illumination by means of the gospel; ver. 3, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy; they joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." (1.) The increase of the church, by the enlightened sinner's coming to Christ; as where a light is struck up in darkness, all gather about it. (2.) Great joy; some indeed, viz. the unbelieving party among the Jews, had no more joy in it, than owls have in the sun's shining; they

* Several sermons preached at Ettrick in the years 1725 and 1726.

grudged it, and fretted at it. And so do the enemies of Christ's kingdom at the success of his gospel. But to the spiritual nation of believers the joy is great on that occasion. Christ's new friends on their coming in, and his old friends whom they join, rejoice together; the former on the happy change of their condition, the latter on the increase of the family.

This joy for the greatness of it is compared, (1.) To the joy of harvest, when people get the corn happily cut down and gathered in. (2.) To the joy of a victorious army, when the battle is over, and they are dividing the spoil of their enemies. A gospel harvest, wherein sinners are reaped and gathered in to Christ, a gospel victory over the devil, and dividing the spoils, are most joyful times; as much more joyful than these, as souls are more precious than sheaves of corn, or the precious things of the world.

The cause of this joy, is a great deliverance or salvation brought about to the nation, ver. 4, "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian." They were under a burdensome yoke; that is, the yoke of the law as a covenant of works, binding them to obedience under pain of the curse; now that is broken, and they rejoice on that account. They were obliged to carry heavy burdens on their shoulders, by a staff over their shoulder, as the Levites carried the ark; that is, they were under the power and dominion of sin, as real drudges to it, in the several lusts thereof, as those who, to the worst of masters, never want the burden-bearing staff off their shoulder; now that is broken, and they joy. They were under a rigid exactor, a tyrant swaying a sceptre over them; that is, they were under the power of the devil; now his sceptre is broken, he has lost his power over them; and they joy.

How quickly was it done? (Heb. Thou hast made to knap asunder.) The yoke, staff, sceptre, were broken with a touch, suddenly and freely; and that by means very unlikely in the eye of sense, as in the day of Midian, when Gideon with his three hundred men, holding lamps in pitchers in their hands, and breaking the pitchers, and blowing with trumpets, but fighting none, routed Midian quite, Judg. vii. So Christ overcame the devil, by his dying on the cross, and the preaching of the gospel mostly by a few fishermen.

The perfection of it shall be such, that the yoke, staff, and sceptre, shall become a burning and fuel of fire, ver. 5, it shall be absolute; or rather the knapping asunder shall become a burning.

Now in the text, the prophet leads us to the author of all these great events; and answers the question, How can these things be done, and done in favour of us poor sinners? "For unto us a child

is born," &c. says he. The events are indeed great beyond expression, but so is the author of them. There is a great deliverer working this great deliverance, viz. the Messiah, Jesus Christ, of whom only it can be understood, and the ancient Jews did understand it. And herein we have,

1st, His relation to us. Wherein he is held forth, (1.) As "a child born to us," viz., as Samson was to Israel, born to be our deliverer; Judg. xiii. 5, brought into the world on that very occasion. (2.) As a son given to us, given of the Father as a gift suitable to our necessity. (3.) As one upon whom the management of the ruined affairs of lost sinners is devolved, in order to retrieve them.

2dly, The incomparable excellency of this our relative. He is a Child, a Son, a Governor, quite extraordinary. Hear his name shewing his nature and perfections. We cannot comprehend his glorious excellencies; he is "Wonderful;" we may see and wonder at them, but can never fully reach them. For wisdom, he is the "Counsellor," with whom the Father took counsel, and whom he has appointed the Counsellor of poor sinners in their most perplexed cases. For power, he is "The Mighty God," to whom nothing is too hard to do. For continuance, he is "The Everlasting Father," abiding for ever and ever; so that through the whole of time, and through eternity, his wisdom and power shall be forthcoming. And then for meekness, and accessibleness to poor rebel sinners, though he be a "Prince," he is "The Prince of Peace;" speaking, working, granting peace, yea, he died for peace. A wonderful one!

Thus much for a general view of the words; to be in our progress more particularly explained.

The expression may be observed to be full of holy exultation. The prophet expresseth himself in a triumphant manner on this subject. In his days Christ was not come; but he saw him in the promise, by faith; and he speaks of him with as great certainty as if he had been come. He saw the need the world had of him; he felt the need he himself had of him; he believed him to be given to lost sinners for a Saviour, a Saviour in whose hand no one's case could miscarry; and that he was given to himself among others; therefore he cries out as in a rapture, "To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given," &c. *Q. d.* "O my lost brethren, sons of Adam, to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given," &c. Hence observe this

DOCTRINE. Felt concern in the glad tidings of the gospel, fills one with warm affection towards them. It is that same way in other things; where one's own dear interest is concerned, he will be much concerned about that thing; as in the case of partners in trade, where there is a good market.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. Wherein this felt concern lies.

II. What is the warm affection which that felt concern fills with.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. *First*, Wherein does this felt concern lie? It lies in these two:—

1. Felt need of the benefit of the gospel; Prov. xxvii. 7,—“To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” When an indemnity is proclaimed, the man that is not liable to the lash of the law, has no great moving of heart about it; but it makes the condemned man’s heart leap within him for joy; Matth. ix. 12, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” While men are not sensible of their sin and danger, the gospel will be tasteless and unsavoury to them; but no sooner are the sinner’s eyes opened, but it will be sweeter than the indemnity proclaimed to rebels can be.

2. Felt liberty of access to the benefit of it, with others, “To us,” says the prophet. While a man sensible of his need of an indemnity, yet finds himself excepted in it; that it is for others, but not for him; this strikes a damp in him, he cannot rejoice in it. And unbelief prevailing so far as to say, “There is no hope,” will suck the sap out of the gospel-tidings to you.

II. What is the warm affection that felt concern fills with? It is,

1. A warm affection of joy in it. They rejoice in that it is so, that “to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given,” even though that they have not as yet a special saving interest in him; Matth. xiii. 44, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” The sick will joy in the tidings of a physician able and willing to cure them, even before they are actually cured; and sensible sinners believing they may have access to Christ, will joy in that.

2. A warm affection of desire, actually to partake of the benefit. The sinner’s felt need tells him he must go to Christ, as felt liberty of access tells him that he may go. And both inflame his desire.

USE 1. The reason why the gospel is so very tasteless to most of the hearers of it, is, they do not feel their own concern in it. They believe not the doctrine of the law, nor the doctrine of the gospel neither, with application to themselves. They are either under the plague of stupidity and insensibleness of their need, or else under the plague of unbelief and hopeless. The news of a good or ill market affects them, for they see their concern in either; but they are not affected by either the threatenings of the law, or the joyful tidings of salvation in the gospel.

2. Labour to see your interest in the gospel, if ever you would be brought to relish it, and entertain it. You need this Saviour, without him ye are undone; ye may have this Saviour; if ye miss him, it is your own fault. Your great interest for eternity lies in this gospel, however ye entertain it.

CHRIST PRESENTED TO MANKIND-SINNERS.

ISAIAH ix. 6,

Unto us a Child is born.

THIS is the first part of the glad tidings so much affecting the prophet. The world waited long for Christ's coming into it; and here the prophet gives the news, that long-looked for is come at last. The "Child is born." The word rendered *child*, is a name of the sex, "a man-child," and is just a lad, a lad-child; such was our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a name common to the young of the male sex, competent to them whenever they are born, and continuing with them during their younger years, till they be grown men. The word rendered *born*, doth signify more, even to be shewed or presented born. It is a custom so natural, that it has ever been in the world, that when a child is born and dressed, it is presented or shewed to its relations, for their comfort. So Machir's children were presented to Joseph their great grandfather, and on that occasion given him on his knees; Gen. i. 23; and Ruth's son to Naomi; Ruth iv. 17. So says the prophet, This wonderful child is presented, viz. to his relations. And who are these? He has relations in heaven; the Father is his Father, the Holy Ghost his Spirit, the angels his servants; but it is not these who are here meant. It is *to us*, the sons and daughters of Adam; we are his poor relations; and to us as his poor relations on earth, sons of Adam's family, whereof he is the top-branch, this Child is presented born, for our comfort in our low state.

DOCTRINE. Our Lord Jesus Christ is upon his birth presented unto us mankind-sinners, as his relations.

In speaking to this presenting of Christ as a born Child, I will shew,

- I. What is presupposed in it.
- II. To whom he is presented.
- III. How he is presented.
- IV. The import of this being presented to us.