

# AN EXPOSITION,

WITH  
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,  
OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

## EZEKIEL.

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When we entered upon the writings of the Prophets, which speak of the *things that should be hereafter*, we seemed to have the same call that St. John had, (Rev. iv. 1.) *Come up hither*; but when we enter upon the prophecy of this book, it is as if the voice said, *Come up higher*, as we go forward in time; for Ezekiel prophesied in the captivity, as Jeremiah prophesied just before it; so we soar upward in discoveries yet more sublime of the divine glory. These waters of the sanctuary still grow deeper; so far are they from being fordable, that in some places they are scarcely fathomable; yet, deep as they are, out of them flow streams which *make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*. As to this prophecy now before us, we may inquire,

- I. Concerning the penman of it—it was Ezekiel; his name signifies, *The strength of God*; or one *girt or strengthened of God*. He girded up the loins of his mind to the service, and God put strength into him. Whom God calls to any service he will himself enable for it; if he gives commission, he will give power to execute it. Ezekiel's name was answered when God said, (and no doubt did as he said,) *I have made thy face strong against their faces*. The learned Selden, in his book *De Diis Syris*, says that it was the opinion of some of the ancients, that the prophet Ezekiel was the same with that Nazarius Assyrius, whom Pythagoras (as himself relates) had for his tutor for some time, and whose lectures he attended; and it is agreed that they lived much about the same time. We have reason to think that many of the Greek philosophers were acquainted with the sacred writings, and borrowed some of the best of their notions from them. If we may credit the tradition of the Jews, he was put to death by the captives in Babylon, for his faithfulness and boldness in reproving them; it is stated that they dragged him upon the stones till his brains were dashed out. An Arabic historian says that he was put to death, and was buried in the sepulchre of Shem the son of Noah. So Hottinger relates, *Thesaur. Philol. lib. ii. cap. 1*.
- II. Concerning the date of it—the place whence it is dated, and the time when. The scene is laid in Babylon, when it was a *house of bondage* to the *Israel of God*; there the prophecies of this book were preached, there they were written, when the prophet himself, and the people to whom he prophesied, were captives there. Ezekiel and Daniel are the only writing prophets of the Old Testament who lived and prophesied any where but in the land of Israel, except we add Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh to prophesy. Ezekiel prophesied in the beginning of the captivity, Daniel in the latter end of it; it was an indication of God's good will to them, and his gracious designs concerning them in their affliction, that he raised up prophets among them, both to convince them, when, in the beginning of their troubles, they were secure and unhumiliated, which was Ezekiel's business, and to comfort them, when, in the latter end of their troubles, they were dejected and discouraged. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have used such apt and proper means to cure them.
- III. Concerning the matter and scope of it; 1. There is much in it that is very mysterious, dark, and hard to be understood; especially in the beginning and the latter end of it; which therefore the Jewish rabbins forbade the reading of to their young men, till they came to be thirty years of age, lest by the difficulties they met with there they should be prejudiced against the scriptures; but if we read these difficult parts of scripture with humility and reverence, and search them diligently, though we may not be able to untie all the knots we meet with, no more than we can solve all the phenomena in the book of nature, yet we may from them, as from the book of nature, gather a great deal for the confirming of our faith, and the encouraging of our hope, in the God we worship. 2. Though the visions here be intricate, such as an elephant may swim in, yet the sermons are mostly plain, such as a lamb may wade in; and the chief design of them is to *show God's people their transgressions*, that in their captivity they might be repenting, and not repining. It should seem, he was constantly attended, for we read of their *sitting before him as God's people sat to hear his words*; (ch. xxxiii. 31.) and that he was occasionally consulted, for we read of the elders of Israel who came to *inquire of the Lord* by him, (ch. xiv. 1, 3.) And as it was of great use to the oppressed captives themselves to have a prophet with them, so it was a testimony to their holy religion against their oppressors, who ridiculed it and them. 3. Though the reproofs and the threatenings here be very sharp and bold, yet toward the close of the book very comfortable assurances are given of great mercy God had in store for them; and there, at length, we shall meet with something that has reference to gospel-times, and which was to have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, of whom indeed this prophet speaks less than almost any of the prophets. But by opening the *terrors of the Lord* he prepares Christ's way; by the law is the knowledge of sin, and so it becomes our *schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*. The visions, which were

the prophet's credentials, we have, *ch. i.—iii.* the reproofs and threatenings, *ch. iv.—xxiv.* and betwixt the comforts we have in the latter part of the book we have messages sent to the nations that bordered upon the land of Israel, whose destruction is foretold, (*ch. xxv.—xxxv.*) to make way for the restoration of God's Israel, and the re-establishment of their city and temple, which are foretold, *ch. xxxvi.* to the end. Those who would apply the comforts to themselves, must apply the convictions to themselves.

## The Book of the Prophet EZEKIEL.

### CHAP. I.

In this chapter, we have, I. The common circumstances of the prophecy now to be delivered, the time when it was delivered, (*v. 1.*) the place where, (*v. 2.*) and the person by whom, *v. 3.* II. The uncommon introduction to it by a vision of the glory of God; 1. In his attendance and retinue in the upper world, where his throne is surrounded with angels, here called *living creatures*, *v. 4.—14.* 2. In his providences concerning the lower world, represented by the wheels and their motions, *v. 15.—26.* 3. In the face of Jesus Christ sitting upon the throne, *v. 26.—28.* And the more we are acquainted, and the more intimately we converse, with the glory of God in these three branches of it, the more commanding influence will divine revelation have upon us, and the more ready shall we be to submit to it, which is the thing aimed at in prefacing the prophecies of this book with these visions. When such a God of glory speaks, it concerns us to hear with attention and reverence; it is at our peril if we do not.

1. **N**OW it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2. In the fifth day of the month, (which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,) 3. The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans, by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

The circumstances of the vision which Ezekiel saw, and in which he received his commission and instructions, are here very particularly set down, that the narrative may appear to be authentic, and not romantic. It may be of use to keep an account when and where God has been pleased to manifest himself to our souls in a peculiar manner, that the *return of the day*, and our return to the *place of the altar*, (*Gen. xiii. 4.*) may revive the pleasing, grateful remembrance of God's favour to us. "Remember, O my soul, and never forget what communications of divine love thou didst receive at such a time, at such a place; tell others what God did for thee."

1. The time when Ezekiel had this vision, is here recorded. It was in the *thirtieth year*, *v. 1.* Some make it the thirtieth year of the prophet's age; being a priest, he was at that age to enter upon the full execution of the priestly office, but being debarred from that by the iniquity and calamity of the times, now that they had neither temple nor altar, God at that age called him to the dignity of a prophet. Others make it to be the thirtieth year from the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, from which the Chaldeans began a new computation of time, as they had done from Nabonassar one hundred and twenty-three years before. Nabopolassar reigned nineteen years, and this was the eleventh of his son, which makes the thirty. And it was proper enough for Ezekiel, when he was in Babylon, to use the computation they there used; as we in foreign countries date by the new style; and he afterwards uses the

melancholy computation of his own country, observing, (*v. 2.*) that it was the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. But the Chaldee Paraphrase fixes upon another era, and says that this was the thirtieth year after *Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law in the house of the sanctuary, at midnight, after the setting of the moon, in the days of Josiah the king.* And it is true, that this was just thirty years from that time; and that was an event so remarkable, (as it put the Jewish state upon a new trial,) that it was proper enough to date from it; and perhaps therefore the prophet speaks indefinitely of thirty years, as having an eye both to that event, and to the Chaldean computation, which were coincident.

It was in the *fourth month*, answering to our June, and in the *fifth day of the month*, that Ezekiel had this vision, *v. 2.* It is probable that it was on the sabbath-day, because we read (*ch. iii. 16.*) that *at the end of seven days*, which we may well suppose to be the next sabbath, the word of the Lord came to him again. Thus *John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day*, when he saw the *visions of the Almighty*, *Rev. i. 10.* God would hereby put an honour upon his sabbaths, then when the *enemies mocked at them*, *Lam. i. 7.* And he would here thus encourage his people to keep up their attendance on the ministry of his prophets *every sabbath-day*, by the extraordinary manifestations of himself on some sabbath-days.

II. The melancholy circumstances he was in when God honoured him, and thereby favoured his people, with this vision. He was *in the land of the Chaldeans, among the captives, by the river of Chebar, and it was in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity.* Observe,

1. The people of God were now, some of them, *captives in the land of the Chaldeans.* The body of the Jewish nation yet remained in their own land, but these were the first-fruits of the captivity, and they were some of the best: for in Jeremiah's vision these were the *good figs*, whom God had *sent into the land of the Chaldeans for their good*; (*Jer. xxiv. 5.*) and that it might be for their good, God raised up a prophet among them, to *teach them out of the law*, then when he chastened them, *Ps. xciv. 12.* Note, It is a great mercy to have the word of God brought us, and a great duty to attend to it diligently when we are in affliction. The word of instruction and the rod of correction may be of great service to us, in concert and concurrence with each other; the word to explain the rod, and the rod to enforce the word; both together give wisdom. It is happy for a man, when he is sick and in pain, to have a messenger with him, an interpreter, *one among a thousand*, if he have but his *ear open to discipline*, *Job. xxxiii. 23.* One of the quarrels God had with the Jews, when he sent them into captivity, was for *mocking his messengers and misusing his prophets*; and yet when they were suffering for this sin, he favoured them with this forfeited mercy. It were ill with us if God did not sometimes graciously thrust upon us those means of grace and salvation which we have foolishly thrust from us. In their captivity they wanted ordinary helps for their souls, and therefore God raised them up these extraordinary ones; for God's children, if they be

hindered in their education one way, shall have it made up another way. But observe, *It was in the fifth year of the captivity* that Ezekiel was raised up among them, and not before. So long God left them without any prophet, till they began to lament after the Lord, and to complain that they saw not their signs, and there was none to tell them how long; (Ps. lxxiv. 9.) and then they would know how to value a prophet, and God's discoveries of himself to them by him would be the more acceptable and comfortable. The Jews that remained in their own land had Jeremiah with them, those that were gone into captivity had Ezekiel with them; for wherever the children of God are scattered abroad he will find out tutors for them.

2. The prophet was himself among the captives, those of them that were posted by *the river Chebar*; for it was *by the rivers of Babylon* that they sat down, and on the willow-trees by the rivers' side that they *hunged their harps*, Ps. cxxxvii. 2. The planters in America keep also by the sides of the rivers, and perhaps those captives were employed by their masters in improving some parts of the country by the rivers' sides that were uncultivated, the natives being generally employed in war; or they employed them in manufactures, and therefore chose to fix them by the sides of rivers, that the goods they made might the more easily be conveyed by water-carriage. Interpreters agree not what river this of Chebar was, but *among the captives* by that river Ezekiel was, and himself a captive.

Observe here, (1.) The best men, and those that are dearest to God, often share, not only in the common calamities of this life, but in the public and national judgments that are inflicted for sin; they feel the smart who contributed nothing to the guilt; by which it appears that the difference between good and bad arises not from the events that befall them, but from the temper and disposition of their spirits under them. And since not only righteous men, but prophets, share with the worst in present punishments, we may infer thence, with the greatest assurance, that there are rewards reserved for them in the future state. (2.) Words of conviction, counsel, and comfort, come best to those who are in affliction from their fellow-sufferers. *The captives* will be best instructed by one who is a *captive among them*, and experimentally knows their sorrows. (3.) The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel, but some of the brightest of divine revelations were revealed *in the land of the Chaldeans*, which was a happy presage of the carrying of the church, with that divine revelation upon which it is built, into the Gentile world; and as now, so afterward, when the gospel-kingdom was to be set up, the dispersion of the Jews contributed to the spreading of the knowledge of God. (4.) Wherever we are, we may keep up our communion with God. *Undique ad celos tantundem est via—From the remotest corners of the earth we may find a way open heavenward.* (5.) When God's ministers are bound, *the word of the Lord is not bound*, 2 Tim. ii. 9. When St. Paul was a prisoner, the gospel had a free course. When St. John was banished into the Isle of Patmos, Christ visited him there; nay, God's suffering servants have generally been treated as favourites, and their *consolations have much more abounded* than when *affliction has abounded*, 2 Cor. i. 5.

III. The discovery which God was pleased to make of himself to the prophet, when he was in these circumstances, to be by him communicated to his people. He here tells us what he saw what he heard, and what he felt.

1. He saw *visions of God*, v. 1. No man can see God, and live; but many have seen visions of

God, such displays of the divine glory as have both instructed and affected them; and commonly when God first revealed himself to any prophet, he did it by an extraordinary vision, as to Isaiah, (*ch.* 6.) to Jeremiah, (*ch.* 1.) to Abraham; (Acts vii. 2.) to settle a correspondence and a satisfactory way of intercourse, so that there needed not afterward a vision upon every revelation. Ezekiel was employed in turning the hearts of the people to the Lord their God, and therefore he must himself see the visions of God. Note, it concerns those to be well acquainted with God themselves, and much affected with what they know of him, whose business it is to bring others to the knowledge and love of him. That he might see the *visions of God, the heavens were opened*; the darkness and distance which hindered his visions were conquered, and he was let into the light of the glories of the upper world, as near and clear as if heaven had been opened to him.

2. He heard the voice of God; (v. 3.) *The word of the Lord came expressly* to him, and what he saw was designed to prepare him for what he was to hear. The expression is emphatical, *Essendo fuit verbum Dei—The word of the Lord was really as it was to him*; there was no mistake in it; it came to him in the fulness of its light and power, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit; it came close to him, nay, it came into him, took possession of him, and dwelt in him richly: it came *expressly*, or accurately, to him; he did himself clearly understand what he said, and was abundantly satisfied of the truth of it. *The essential Word*, (so we may take it,) *the Word who is, who is what he is, came to Ezekiel*, to send him on his errand.

3. He felt the power of God opening his eyes to see the visions, opening his ear to hear the voice, and opening his heart to receive both; *The hand of the Lord was there upon him*. Note, *The hand of the Lord* goes along with *the word of the Lord*, and so it becomes effectual; those only understand and believe the report, to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed. *The hand of God was upon him*, as upon Moses to cover him, that he should not be overcome by the dazzling light and lustre of the visions he saw, Exod. xxxiii. 22. It was *upon him*, (as upon St. John, Rev. i. 17.) to revive and support him, that he might bear up, and not faint, under these discoveries. That he might neither be lifted up nor cast down with the abundance of the revelations, *God's grace is sufficient for him*, and, in token of that, *his hand is upon him*.

4. And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness, *was about it*, and out of the midst thereof, as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire: 5. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. 6. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. 7. And their feet *were* straight feet, and the sole of their feet *was* like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. 8. And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings, on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. 9. Their wings *were* joined one to another; they turned not

when they went; they went every one straight forward. 10. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. 11. Thus *were* their faces: and their wings *were* stretched upward; two *wings* of every one *were* joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. 12. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. 13. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

The visions of God which Ezekiel here saw, were very glorious, and had more particulars than those which other prophets saw. It is the scope and intention of these visions,

1. To possess the prophet's mind with very great and high and honourable thoughts of that God by whom he was commissioned, and for whom he was employed. It is the *likeness of the glory of the Lord* that he sees, (v. 28.) and from hence he may infer that it is his honour to serve him, for he is one whom angels serve; he may serve him with safety, for he has power sufficient to bear him out in his work; it is at his peril to draw back from his service, for he has power to pursue him, as he did Jonah; so great a God as this must be served *with reverence and godly fear*; and with assurance may Ezekiel foretell what this God will do, for he is able to make his words good.

2. To strike a terror upon the sinners who remained in Zion, and those who were already come to Babylon, who were secure, and bid defiance to the threatenings of Jerusalem's ruin, as we have found in Jeremiah's prophecy, and shall find in this, many did; "Let those who said, *We shall have peace, though we go on*, know that our God is a *consuming Fire*, whom they cannot stand before." That this vision had a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, seems plain from ch. xlv. 3. where he says that it was the *vision which he saw when he came to destroy the city*, to prophesy the destruction of it.

3. To speak comfort to those that feared God, and trembled at his word, and humbled themselves under his mighty hand; "Let them know that though they are captives in Babylon, yet they have God high unto them; though they have not the *place of the sanctuary* to be their glorious high throne, they have the God of the sanctuary." Dr. Lightfoot observes, "Now that the church is to be planted for a long time in another country, the Lord shows a glory in the midst of them, as he had done at their first constituting into a church in the wilderness, and out of a *cloud and fire*, as he had done there, he showed himself, and from between *living creatures*, as from between the cherubims, he gives his oracles." This put an honour upon them, by which they might value themselves when the Chaldeans insulted over them; and this might encourage their hopes of deliverance in due time.

Now, to answer these ends, we have in these verses the first part of the vision, which represents God as attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, who are all his messengers, his ministers, *doing his commandments, and hearkening to the voice of his word*; this denotes his grandeur; as it magnifies an earthly prince to have a splendid retinue, and numerous armies at his command; thus his allies are led to trust in him, and his enemies to fear him.

I. The introduction to this vision of the angels is very magnificent and awakening, v. 4. The prophet, observing the heavens to open, *looked, looked up*, (as it was time,) to see what discoveries God would make to him. Note, When the heavens are opened, it concerns us to have our eyes open. To clear the way, *behold, a whirlwind came out of the north*, which would drive away the interposing mists of this lower region; fair weather *comes out of the north*, and thence *the wind comes that drives away rain*. God can by a whirlwind clear the sky and air, and produce that serenity of mind which is necessary to our communion with Heaven. Yet this whirlwind was attended with a *great cloud*; when we think that the clouds which arise from this earth are dispelled, and we can see beyond them, yet still there is a cloud which heavenly things are wrapt in, a cloud from above, so that *we cannot order our speech concerning them by reason of darkness*. Christ here descended, as he ascended, *in a cloud*. Some by this *whirlwind and cloud* understand the Chaldean army coming *out of the north* against the land of Judah, bearing down all before them as a tempest; and so it agrees with that which was signified by one of the first of Jeremiah's visions, (Jer. i. 14.) *Out of the north an evil shall break forth*; but I take it here as an introduction rather to the vision than to the sermons. This whirlwind came to Ezekiel, as that to Elijah, (1 Kings xix. 11.) *to prepare the way of the Lord*, and to demand attention. *He that has eyes, that has ears*, let him see, let him hear.

II. The vision itself. A *great cloud* was the vehicle of this vision, in which it was conveyed to the prophet; for God's pavilion in which he rests, his chariot in which he rides, is *darkness and thick clouds*; (Ps. xviii. 11.—civ. 3.) thus he *holds back the face of his throne*, lest its dazzling light and lustre should overpower us, by *spreading a cloud upon it*. Now,

1. The cloud is accompanied with a *fire*, as upon mount Sinai, where God resided in a *thick cloud*; but the *sight of his glory was like devouring fire*, (Exod. xxiv. 16, 17.) and his first appearance to Moses was in a *flame of fire in the bush*; for our God is a *consuming Fire*. This was a *fire infolding itself*; a globe, or orb, or wheel, of fire; God being his own Cause, his own Rule, and his own End, if he be as a *fire*, he is as a *fire infolding itself*, or as some read it, *kindled by itself*. The fire of God's glory shines forth, but it quickly infolds itself, for he lets us know but part of his ways; the fire of God's wrath breaks forth, but it also quickly infolds itself, for the divine patience suffers not all his wrath to be stirred up. If it were not a *fire thus infolding itself, O Lord, who shall stand?*

2. The fire is surrounded with a glory; *A brightness was about it*, in which it infolded itself, yet it made some discovery of itself. Though we cannot see into the fire, cannot by searching find out God to perfection, yet we see *the brightness* that is round about it, the reflection of this fire from the thick cloud. Moses might see God's back parts, but not his face; we have some light concerning the nature of God, from the brightness which encompasses it, though we have not an insight into it, by reason of the cloud spread upon it. Nothing is more easy



than to determine that God *is*; nothing more difficult than to describe *what* he is. When God displays his wrath as fire, yet there is a *brightness about it*; for his holiness and justice appear very illustrious in the punishment of sin and sinners: even about the *devouring fire* there is a *brightness*, which glorified saints will for ever admire.

3. Out of this fire there shines *the colour of amber*; we are not told who or what it was that had this colour of amber, and therefore I take it to be the whole frame of the following vision, which came into Ezekiel's view *out of the midst of the fire and brightness*; and the first thing he took notice of before he viewed the particulars, was, that it was *of the colour of amber, or the eye of amber*; it looked as amber does to the eye, of a bright flaming fiery colour, the colour of a *burning coal*; so some think it should be read. The *living creatures* which he saw coming *out of the midst of the fire*, were *seraphims*—burners, for he maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire.

4. That which comes out of the fire, of a fiery amber colour, when it comes to be distinctly viewed, is *the likeness of four living creatures*; not the *living creatures* themselves, (angels are spirits, and cannot be seen,) but *the likeness* of them, such a hieroglyphic, or representation, as God saw fit to make use of for the leading of the prophet, and us with him, into some acquaintance with the world of angels, (a matter purely of divine revelation,) so far as is requisite to possess us with an awful sense of the greatness of that God who has angels for his attendants, and the goodness of that God who has appointed them to be attendants on his people; *The likeness of these living creatures came out of the midst of the fire*; for angels derive their being and power from God, they are in themselves, and to us, what he is pleased to make them; their glory is a ray of his. The prophet himself explains this vision, (ch. x. 20.) *I know that the living creatures were the cherubims*, which is one of the names by which the angels are known in scripture. To Daniel was made known their numbers, *ten thousand times ten thousand*, Dan. vii. 10. But though they are many, yet they are one, and that is made known to Ezekiel here; they are one in nature and operation, as an army, consisting of thousands, is yet called a body of men. We have here an account of,

(1.) Their nature; they are living creatures, they are the creatures of God, the work of his hands, their being is derived, they have not life in and of themselves, but receive it from him who is *the Fountain of life*. As much as the living creatures of this lower world excel the vegetables that are the ornaments of the earth, so much do the angels, the living creatures of the upper world, excel the sun, moon, and stars, the ornaments of the heavens. The sun, say some, is a flame of *fire infolding itself*, but it is not a living creature, as angels, those flames of fire, are. Angels are living creatures, living beings, emphatically so; men on earth are dying creatures, dying daily, (*in the midst of life we are in death*;) but angels in heaven are living creatures, they live indeed, live to good purpose, and when saints come to be *equal unto the angels*, they shall not die any more, Luke xx. 36.

(2.) Their number; they are four, so they appear here, though they are innumerable; not as if these were four particular angels set up above the rest, as some have fondly imagined, Michael and Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel, but for the sake of the four faces they put on, and to intimate their being sent forth toward *the four winds of heaven*; (Matth. xxiv. 31.) Zechariah saw them as four chariots going forth, east, west, north, and south, Zech. vi. 1. God has messengers to send each way; for his kingdom is universal, and reaches to all parts of the world.

(3.) Their qualifications, by which they are fitted for the service of their Maker and Master. These are set forth figuratively and by similitude, as is proper in visions, which are parables to the eye. Their description here is such, and so expressed, that, I think, it is not possible by it to form an exact idea of them in our fancies, or with the pencil, for that would be a temptation to worship them; but the several instances of their fitness for the work they are employed in, are intended in the several parts of this description. Note, It is the greatest honour of God's creatures to be in a capacity of answering the end of their creation; and the more ready we are to every good work, the nearer we approach to the dignity of angels.

These living creatures are described here,

[1.] By their general appearance; *They had the likeness of a man*, they appeared, for the main, in a human shape. *First*, To signify that these living creatures are reasonable creatures, intelligent beings, who have that *spirit of a man*, which is the *candle of the Lord*. *Secondly*, To put an honour upon the nature of man, who is made lower, yet but a little lower than the angels, in the very next rank of beings below them; when the invisible intelligences of the upper world would make themselves visible, it is in the *likeness of man*. *Thirdly*, To intimate that their *delights are with the sons of men*, as their Master's are, (Prov. viii. 31.) that they do service to men, and men may have spiritual communion with them by faith, hope, and holy love. *Fourthly*, The angels of God appear in the *likeness of man*, because in the *fulness of time* the Son of God was not only to appear in that likeness, but to assume that nature; they therefore show this love to it.

[2.] By their faces; *every one had four faces*, looking four several ways. In St. John's vision, which has a near affinity with this, each of the four living creatures has one of these faces here mentioned; (Rev. iv. 7.) here each of them has all four, to intimate that they have all the same qualifications for service; though, perhaps, among the angels of heaven, as among the angels of the churches, some excel in one gift, and others in another, but all for the common service. Let us contemplate their faces till we be in some measure changed into the same image, that we may do the will of God as the angels do it in heaven. *They all four had the face of a man*; (for in that likeness they appeared, v. 5.) but, beside that, they had *the face of a lion, an ox, and an eagle*, each masterly in his kind; the lion among wild beasts, the ox among tame ones, and the eagle among fowls, v. 10. Does God make use of them for the executing of judgments upon his enemies? They are fierce and strong as the lion and the eagle in tracing their prey. Does he make use of them for the good of his people? They are as *oxen, strong for labour* and inclined to serve. And in both they have *the understanding of a man*. The scattered perfections of the living creatures on earth meet in the angels in heaven. They have *the likeness of a man*; but, because there are some things in which man is excelled even by the inferior creatures, they are therefore compared to some of them; they have *the understanding of a man*, and such as far exceeds it; they also resemble man in tenderness and humanity; but, *First*, A lion excels man in strength and boldness, and is much more formidable; therefore the angels, who in this resemble them, put on the *face of a lion*. *Secondly*, An ox excels man in diligence and patience, and painstaking, and an unwearied discharge of the work he has to do; therefore the angels, who are constantly employed in the service of God and the church, put on the *face of an ox*. *Thirdly*, An eagle excels man in quickness and piercingness of sight, and in

soaring high; and therefore the angels, who seek things above, and see far into divine mysteries, put on the face of a flying eagle.

[3.] By their wings; *Every one had four wings, v. 6.* In the vision Isaiah had of them, they appeared with six, now with four; for they appeared above the throne, and had occasion for two to cover their faces with. The angels are fitted with wings, to fly swiftly on God's errands: whatever business God sends them upon, they lose no time. Faith and hope are the soul's wings, upon which it soars upward; pious and devout affections are its wings on which it is carried forward, with vigour and alacrity. The prophet observes here, concerning their wings, *First*, That they were *joined one to another*, (v. 9.) and again, v. 11. They did not make use of their wings for fighting, as some birds do, there is no contest among the angels, God makes *peace*, perfect peace, *in his high places*; but their wings were joined in token of their perfect unity and unanimity, and the universal agreement there is among them. *Secondly*, That they were *stretched upward*, extended and ready for use, not folded up or flagging. Let an angel receive the least intimation of the divine will, and he has nothing to seek, but is upon the wing immediately; while our poor, dull souls are like the ostrich, that with much difficulty lifts up herself on high. *Thirdly*, That two of their wings were made use of in covering their bodies, the spiritual bodies they assumed. The clothes that cover us, are our hinderance in work; angels need no other covering than their own wings, which are their furtherance. They cover their bodies from us, so forbidding us needless inquiries concerning them; ask not after them, for they are *wonderful*, Judg. xiii. 18. They cover them before God, so directing us, when we approach to God, to see to it that we be so clothed with Christ's righteousness, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear.

[4.] By their feet, including their legs and thighs; They were *straight feet*; (v. 7.) they stood straight, and firm, and steady, no burthen of service could make their legs to bend under them. The spouse makes this part of the description of her beloved, that *his legs were as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold*; (Cant. v. 15.) such are the angels' legs. *The sole of their feet was like that of a calf's foot*, which divides the hoof, and is therefore clean; as it were the sole of a round foot, (as the Chaldee words it,) they were ready for motion any way. *Their feet were winged*; (so the Seventy;) they went so swiftly, that it was as if they flew. And their very feet *sparkled like the colour of burnished brass*; not only their faces, but the very feet, of those are beautiful, whom God sends on his errands; (Isa. lii. 7.) every step the angels take is glorious. In the vision John had of Christ, it is said, *His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace*, Rev. i. 15.

[5.] By their hands; (v. 8.) *They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides*; an arm and a hand under every wing. They had not only wings for motion, but hands for action. Many are quick, who are not active; they hurry about a great deal, but do nothing to purpose, bring nothing to pass; they have wings, but no hands; whereas God's servants, the angels, not only go when he sends them, and come when he calls them, but do what he bids them. They are *the hands of a man*, which are wonderfully made, and fitted for service; which are guided by reason and understanding; for what angels do, they do intelligently and with judgment. They have calves' feet; this denotes the swiftness of their motion; (the cedars of Lebanon are said to *skip like a calf*, Ps. xxix. 6.) but they have a man's hand; this denotes the niceness and

exactness of their performances; as the heavens are said to be the work of God's fingers. Their hands were *under their wings*, which concealed them as they did the rest of their bodies. Note, The agency of angels is a secret thing, and their work is carried on in an invisible way. In working for God, though we must not, with the *stuggard*, *hide our hand in our bosom*, yet we must, with the humble, *not let our left hand know what our right hand doeth*. We may observe, that where these wings were, their hands were *under their wings*; wherever their wings carried them, they carried hands along with them, to be still doing something suitable, something that the duty of the place requires.

(4.) Their motions. The living creatures are moving; angels are active beings; it is not their happiness to sit still, and do nothing, but to be always well employed, and we must reckon ourselves then best, when we are doing good; doing it as the angels do it, of whom it is here observed,

[1.] That whatever service they went about, *they went every one straight forward*, (v. 9, 12.) which intimates, *First*, That they sincerely aimed at the glory of God, and had a single eye to that, in all they did; their going *straight forward* supposes that they looked straight forward, and never had any sinister intentions in what they did. And if thus *our eye be single*, *our whole body will be full of light*; the singleness of the eye is the sincerity of the heart. *Secondly*, That they were intent upon the service they were employed in, and did it with a close application of mind; they went forward with their work; for what their hand found to do, they did it *with all their might*, and did not loiter in it. *Thirdly*, That they were unanimous in it; *they went straight forward*, every one about his own work, they did not thwart or jostle one another, did not stand in one another's light, in one another's way. *Fourthly*, That they perfectly understood their business, and were thoroughly apprized of it, so that they needed not to stand still to pause or hesitate, but they pursued their work with readiness, as those that knew what they had to do, and how to do it. *Fifthly*, They were steady and constant in their work; they did not fluctuate, did not tire, did not vary, but were of a piece with themselves; they moved in a direct line, and so went the nearest way to work, in all they did, and lost no time. When we go straight, we go forward, when we serve God with one heart, we rid ground, we rid work.

[2.] *They turned not when they went*, v. 9, 12. *First*, They made no blunders or mistakes, which would give them occasion to turn back to rectify them; their work needed no correction, and therefore needed not to be gone over again. *Secondly*, They minded no diversions; as they turned not back, so they turned not aside, to trifle away with any thing that was foreign to their business.

[3.] *They went whither the Spirit was to go*: (v. 12.) either, *First*, *Whither* their own spirit was disposed to go: thither they went, having no bodies, as we have, to clog or hinder them. It is our infelicity and daily burthen, that, when *the spirit is willing yet the flesh is weak*, and cannot keep pace with it, so that the *good which we would do, we do it not*; but angels and glorified saints labour under no such impotency, whatever they incline or intend to do, they do it, and never come short of it. Or, rather, *Secondly*, *Whithersoever the Spirit of God would have them go thither they went*; though they had so much wisdom of their own, yet in all their motions and actions they subjected themselves to the conduct and government of the divine will; whithersoever the divine providence was to go, they went, to serve its purposes, and to execute its orders. The Spirit of God (says Mr. Greenhill) is the great

Agent that sets angels to work, and it is their honour that they are led, they are easily *led, by the Spirit*. See how tractable and obsequious these noble creatures are! Whithersoever *the Spirit is to go*, they go immediately, with all possible alacrity. Note, Those that *walk after the Spirit*, do the will of God as the angels do it.

[4.] They *ran and returned like a flash of lightning*, v. 14. This intimates, *First*, That they made haste; they were quick in their motions, as quick as lightning: whatever business they went about, they despatched it immediately, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Happy they that have no bodies to retard their motion in holy exercises! And happy shall we be when we come to have spiritual bodies for spiritual work! Satan *falls like lightning* into his own ruin, Luke x. 18. Angels *fly like lightning* in their Master's work; the angel Gabriel flew swiftly. *Secondly*, That they made haste back; they *ran, and returned*; ran to do their work, and execute their orders, and then returned to give an account of what they had done, and receive new instructions, that they might be always doing. They *ran* into the lower world, to do what was to be done there; but when they had done it, they *returned like a flash of lightning* to the upper world again, to the beatific vision of their God, which they could not with any patience be longer from than their service did require. Thus we should be in the affairs of this world as out of our element; though we run into them, we must not repose in them, but our souls must quickly return like lightning to God their Rest and Centre.

*Lastly*, We have an account of the light by which the prophet saw these living creatures, or the looking-glass in which he saw them, v. 13. [1.] He saw them by their own light, for *their appearance was like burning coals of fire*; they are *seraphims*—*burners*; denoting the ardour of their love to God, their fervent zeal in his service, their splendour and brightness, and their terror against God's enemies. When God employs them to fight his battles, they are as *coals of fire*, (Ps. xviii. 12.) to devour the adversaries as lightnings shot out to discern them.

[2.] He saw them by the light of some *lamps*, which *went up and down among* them, the shining whereof *was very bright*. Satan's works are works of darkness, he is the *rule of the darkness of this world*; but the angels of light are in the light, and though they conceal their working, they show their work, for it will bear the light. But we see them and their works only by candle-light, by the dim light of *lamps* that go *up and down among* them; when the *day breaks*, and the *shadows flee away*, we shall see them clearly. Some make the *appearance of these burning coals*, and of the *lightning* that issues out of the *fire*, to signify the wrath of God, and his judgments, that were now to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, in which angels were to be employed: and accordingly we find afterward *coals of fire scattered upon the city* to consume it, which were *fetched from between the cherubims*, ch. x. 2. But by the *appearance of the lamps* then, we may understand the light of comfort which shone forth to the people of God in the darkness of this present trouble. If the ministry of the angels is as a consuming fire to God's enemies, it is as a rejoicing light to his own children. To the one this *fire is bright*, it is very reviving and refreshing: to the other, *out of the fire* comes fresh *lightning* to destroy them. Note, Good angels are our friends, or enemies, according as God is.

15. Now, as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. 16.

The appearance of the wheels and their work *was* like unto the colour of a beryl; and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work *was* as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 17. When they went, they went upon their four sides; *and* they turned not when they went. 18. As for their rings, they were so high, that they were dreadful; and their rings *were* full of eyes round about them four. 19. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. 20. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither *was* their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels. 21. When those went, *these* went; and when those stood, *these* stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels. 22. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature *was* as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. 23. And under the firmament *were* their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies. 24. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of a host: when they stood, they let down their wings. 25. And there was a voice from the firmament that *was* over their heads, when they stood, *and* had let down their wings.

The prophet is very exact in making and recording his observations concerning this vision. And here we have,

I. The notice he took of the *wheels*, v. 15.—21. The glory of God appears not only in the splendour of his retinue in the upper world, but in the steadiness of his government here in this lower world. Having seen how God doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, let us now see how he doeth according to it among the inhabitants of the earth; for there, *on the earth*, the prophet saw the *wheels*, v. 15. *As he beheld the living creatures*, and was contemplating the glory of that vision, and receiving instruction from it, this other vision presented itself to his view. Note, Those who make a good use of the discoveries God has favoured them with, may expect further discoveries; for *to him that hath shall be given*. We are sometimes tempted to think there is nothing glorious but what is in the upper world, whereas, could we with an eye of faith discern the beauty of Providence, and the wisdom, power, and goodness, which shine in the administration of that kingdom, we should see, and say, *Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth*, and acts like himself. There are many things in

this vision which give us some light concerning the Divine Providence.

1. The dispensations of Providence are compared to *wheels*, either the wheels of a chariot, in which the conqueror rides in triumph, or, rather, the wheels of a clock or watch, which all contribute to the regular motion of the machine. We read of the *course* or *wheel of nature*, (James iii. 6.) which is here set before us as under the direction of the God of nature. *Wheels*, though they move not of themselves, as the *living creatures* do, are yet made moveable, and are almost continually kept in action. Providence, represented by these *wheels*, produces changes; sometimes one spoke of the wheel is uppermost, and sometimes another; but the motion of the wheel on its own axle-tree, like that of the orbs above, is very regular and steady. The motion of the wheels is circular; by the revolutions of providence things are brought to the same posture and pass which they were in formerly; for *the thing that is, is that which has been, and there is no new thing under the sun*, Eccl. i. 9, 10.

2. The *wheel* is said to be *by the living creatures*, who attended it to direct its motion; for the angels are employed as the ministers of God's providence, and have a greater hand in directing the motions of second causes to serve the divine purpose than we think they have. Such a close connexion is there between the *living creatures* and the *wheels*, that they moved and rested together. Were angels busily employed? Men were busily employed, as instruments in their hand, whether of mercy or judgment, though they themselves were not aware of it. Or, Are men active to compass their designs? Angels at the same time are acting to control and overrule them. This is much insisted on here; (v. 19.) *When the living creatures went, to bring about any business, the wheels went by them*; when God has work to do by the ministry of angels, second causes are all found, or made, ready to concur in it; and (v. 21.) *when those stood, these stood*; when the angels had done their work, the second causes had done theirs. If the *living creatures* were lifted up from the earth, were elevated to any service above the common course of nature, and out of the ordinary road, as supposed in the working of miracles, the dividing of the water, the standing still of the sun, the *wheels*, contrary to their own natural tendency, which is toward the earth, move in concert with them, and are lifted up over against them; this is thrice mentioned, v. 19.—21. Note, All inferior creatures are, and move, and act, as the Creator, by the ministration of angels, directs and influences them. Visible effects are managed and governed by invisible causes.

The reason given of this, is, because the *spirit of the living creatures* was in the *wheels*; the same wisdom, power, and holiness of God, the same will and counsel of his, that guides and governs the angels, and all their performances, does, by them, order and dispose of all the motions of the creatures in this lower world, and the events and issues of them. God is the Soul of the world, and animates the whole, both that above, and that beneath, so that they move in perfect harmony, as the upper and lower parts of the natural body do; so that *whithersoever the Spirit is to go*, whatever God wills and purposes to be done and brought to pass, *thither their spirit is to go*; the angels, knowingly and designedly, set themselves to bring it about, and *their spirit is in the wheels*, which are therefore lifted up over against them; both the powers of nature and the wills of men, are all made to serve the intention, which they infallibly and irresistibly effect, though perhaps they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa. x. 7. Mic. iv. 11, 12.

Thus, though the will of God's *precept* be not done on earth, as it is done in heaven, yet the will of his *purpose* and *counsel* is, and shall be.

3. The *wheel* is said to have four *faces*, looking four several ways, (v. 15.) denoting that the providence of God exerts itself in all parts of the world, east, west, north, and south, and extends itself to the remotest corners of it. Look which way you will upon the *wheel* of Providence, and it has a *face* toward you, a beautiful one, which you may admire the features and complexion of; it looks upon you as ready to speak to you, if you be but ready to hear the voice of it; like a well-drawn picture, it has an eye upon all that have an eye upon it.

The *wheel* had so four *faces*, that it had in it four *wheels*, which went upon their four sides, v. 17. At first, Ezekiel saw it as one *wheel*, (v. 15.) one sphere; but afterward, he saw it was four, but they four had one likeness; (v. 16.) not only they were like one another, but they were as if they had been one. This intimates, (1.) That one event of providence is like another; what happens to us is that which is common to men, and what we are not to think strange. (2.) That various events have a tendency to the same issue, and concur to answer the same intention.

4. Their *appearance* and *their work* are said to be like the colour of a beryl, (v. 16.) the colour of Tarshish, (so the word is,) that is, of the sea; the beryl is of that colour, sea-green; blue Neptune we call it. The nature of things in this world is like that of the sea, which is in a continual flux, and yet there is a constant coherence and succession of its parts. There is a chain of events which is always drawing one way or other. The sea ebbs and flows, so does providence in its disposals, but always in the stated, appointed times and measures. The sea looks blue, as the air does, because of the shortness and feebleness of our sight, which can see but a little way of either; to that colour therefore are the *appearance* and *work* of Providence fitly compared, because we cannot find out that which God does from the beginning to the end, Eccl. iii. 11. We see but *parts of his ways*, (Job xxvi. 14.) and all beyond looks blue, which gives us to understand no more concerning it, but that in truth we know it not, it is far above out of our sight.

5. Their *appearance* and *their work* are likewise said to be as if *they were a wheel in the middle of a wheel*. Observe here again, Their *appearance* to the prophet is designed to set forth what *their work* really is; men's *appearance* and *their work* often differ, but the *appearance* of God's providence and its *work* agree; if they seem to differ, it is through our ignorance and mistake. Now both *were as a wheel in a wheel*, a lesser wheel moved by a greater; we pretend not to give a mathematical description of it; the meaning is, that the disposals of Providence seems to us intricate, perplexed, and unaccountable, and yet that they will appear in the issue to have been all wisely ordered for the best; so that though *what God does we know not now*, yet *we shall know hereafter*, John xiii. 7.

6. The motion of these *wheels*, like that of the *living creatures*, was steady, regular, and constant; *They returned not when they went*, (v. 17.) because they never went amiss, nor otherwise than they should do. God, in his providence, takes his work before him, and he will have it forward; and it is going on even then when it seems to us to be going backward. *They went as the Spirit directed them*, and therefore *returned not*. We should not have occasion to return back as we have, and to undo that by repentance which we have done amiss, and to do it over again, if we were but *led by the Spirit*, and followed his conduct. *The Spirit of life* (so some

read it) *was in the wheels*, which carried them on with ease and evenness, and then *they returned not when they went*.

7. The *rings*, or *rims*, of the *wheels* were so high, that they were dreadful, v. 18. They were of a vast circumference, so that when they were reared, and put in motion, the prophet was even afraid to look upon them. Note, The vast compass of God's thought, and the vast reach of his design, are really astonishing; when we go about to describe the circle of Providence, we are struck with amazement, and are even swallowed up. O the height and depth of God's counsels! The consideration of them should strike an awe upon us.

8. They were *full of eyes round about*. This circumstance of the vision is most surprising of all, and yet most significant, plainly denoting that the motions of Providence are all directed by infinite wisdom. The issues of things are not determined by a blind fortune, but by those *eyes of the Lord*, which *run to and fro through the earth*, and are *in every place, beholding the evil and the good*. Note, It is a great satisfaction to us, and ought to be so, that, though we cannot account for the springs and tendencies of events, yet they are all under the cognizance and conduct of an all-wise, all-seeing God.

11. The notice he took of the *firmament* above, *over the heads of the living creatures*. When he saw the *living creatures* moving, and the *wheels* by them, he looked up, as it is proper for us to do when we observe the various motions of providence in this lower world; looking up, he saw the *firmament stretched forth over the heads of the living creatures*, v. 22. What is done on earth is done under the heaven, (as the scripture often speaks,) under its inspection and influence.

Observe, 1. What he saw; *The firmament was as the colour of the terrible crystal*, truly glorious, but terribly so; the vastness and brightness of it put the prophet into an amazement, and struck him with an awful reverence. *The terrible ice*, or *frost*; (so it may be read;) the colour of snow congealed, or as mountains of ice in the northern seas, which are very frightful. Daring sinners ask, *Can God judge through the dark cloud?* Job xxii. 13. But that which we take to be a dark cloud, is to him transparent as *crystal*, through which, *from the place of his habitation, he looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth*, Ps. xxxiii. 14. Under the *firmament* he saw the *wings of the living creatures* erect; (v. 23.) when they pleased, they used them either for flight or for covering, or two for flight, and two for covering. God is on high, *above the firmament*, the angels are *under the firmament*, which denotes their subjection to God's dominion, and their readiness to fly on his errands *in the open firmament of heaven*, and to serve him unanimously.

2. What he heard.

(1.) He heard the *noise of the angels' wings*, v. 24. Bees and other insects make a great noise with the vibration of their wings; here the angels do so, to awaken the attention of the prophet to that which God was about to say to him from the *firmament*, v. 25. Angels, by the providences they are employed in, sound God's alarms to the children of men, and stir them up to *hear his voice*; for that is it that *cries in the city*, and is heard and understood by the *men of wisdom*. *The noise of their wings* was loud and terrible as the *noise of great waters*, like the rout or roaring of the sea; and as the *noise of a host*, the noise of war; but it was articulate and intelligible, and did not give an uncertain sound; for it was the *voice of speech*; nay it was as the *voice of the Almighty*; for God, by his providences, *speaks once, yea twice*; if we could but *perceive it*; (Job xxxiii. 14.) the *Lord's voice cries*, Mic. vi. 9.

(2.) He heard a *voice from the firmament*, from him that sits upon the throne there, v. 25. When the angels moved, they *made a noise with their wings*; but when with that they had roused a careless world, they stood still, and *let down their wings*, that there might be a profound silence, and so God's voice might be the better heard. The voice of Providence is designed to open men's ears to the voice of the word, to do the office of the crier, who with a loud voice charges silence while the judge passes sentence. *He that has ears to hear, let him hear*. Note, Noises on earth should awaken our attention to the *voice from the firmament*; for *how shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven?*

26. And above the *firmament* that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire-stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. 27. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it; from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw it as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. 28. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

All the other parts of this vision were but a preface and introduction to this. God in them had made himself known as Lord of angels, and supreme Director of all his affairs of this lower world, whence it is easy to infer that whatever God by his prophets either promises or threatens to do, he is able to effect it; angels are his servants, men are his tools. But now that a divine revelation is to be given to a prophet, and by him to the church, we must look higher than the living creatures of the wheels, and must expect that from the eternal Word, of whom we have an account in these verses. Ezekiel, hearing a voice from the firmament, looked up, as John did, to *see the voice that spake with him*, and he *saw one like unto the Son of man*, Rev. i. 12, 13. The second Person sometimes tried the *fashion of a man*, occasionally, before he clothed himself with it for good and all; and the spirit of prophecy is called the *Spirit of Christ*, (1 Pet. i. 11.) and the *Testimony of Jesus*, Rev. xix. 10.

1. This glory of Christ that the prophet saw, *was above the firmament* that was *over the heads* of the living creatures, v. 26. Note, The heads of angels themselves are under the feet of the Lord Jesus; for the firmament that is over their heads, is under his feet; *angels, principalities, and powers, are made subject to him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. This dignity and dominion of the Redeemer before his incarnation magnify his condescension in his incarnation, when he was *made a little lower than the angels*, Heb. ii. 9.

2. The first thing he observed, was a *throne*; for divine revelations come backed and supported with a royal authority: we must have an eye of faith to God and Christ as upon a *throne*. The first thing that John discovered in his visions was a *throne set in heaven*, (Rev. iv. 2.) which commands reverence

and subjection. It is a throne of glory, a throne of grace, a throne of triumph, a throne of government, a throne of judgment. *The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens*, has prepared it for his Son, whom he has set *King on his holy hill of Zion*.

3. On the throne he saw the *appearance of a man*. This is good news to the children of men, that the *throne above the firmament* is filled with one that is not ashamed to appear, even there, in the likeness of man. Daniel, in vision, saw the kingdom and dominion given to one *like the Son of man*, who therefore has authority given him to execute judgment, because he is the *Son of man*, (John v. 27.) so appearing in these visions.

4. The prophet sees him as a Prince and Judge upon this throne; though he appear *in fashion as a man*, yet he appears in more than human glory, v. 27. (1.) Is God a *shining Light*? So is he: when the prophet saw him, he saw *as the colour of amber*, that is, a brightness round about; for God dwells in light, and *covers himself with light as with a garment*. How low did the Redeemer stoop for us, when, to bring about our salvation, he suffered his glory to be eclipsed by the veil of his humanity! (2.) Is God a *consuming Fire*? So is he: from his loins, both upward and downward there was the *appearance of fire*. The fire above the loins was round about *within the amber*, it was inward and involved; that below the loins was more outward and open, and yet that also had *brightness round about*. Some make the former to signify Christ's divine nature, the glory and virtue of which are hidden within the *colour of amber*; it is what no man has seen, or can see; the latter they suppose to be his human nature, the glory of which there were those who saw; the glory as of the *Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*, John i. 14. He had rays coming out of his hand, and yet there was the *hiding of his power*, Hab. iii. 4. The fire in which the Son of man appeared here, might be intended to signify the judgments that were ready to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem, coming from that *fiery indignation* of the Almighty, which devours the adversaries. Nothing is more dreadful to the most daring sinners than the *wrath of him that sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. The day is coming, when the *Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire*, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. It concerns us therefore *to kiss the Son, lest he be angry*.

5. The throne is surrounded with a rainbow; (v. 28.) it is so in St. John's vision; (Rev. iv. 3.) the brightness about it was of divers colours, *as the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain*; which, as it is a display of majesty, and looks very great, so it is a pledge of mercy, and looks very kind; for it is a confirmation of the gracious promise God has made, that he will not drown the world again; and he has said, *I will look upon the bow, and remember the covenant*, Gen. ix. 16. This intimates that he who sits upon the throne, is the *Mediator of the covenant*; that his dominion is for our protection, not our destruction; that he interposes between us and the judgments our sins have deserved; and that all the promises of God are in him *yea and amen*. Now that the fire of God's wrath was breaking out against Jerusalem, bounds should be set to it, and he would not make an utter destruction of it, for he would *look upon the bow, and remember the covenant*, as he promised in such a case, Lev. xxvi. 42.

Lastly, We have the conclusion of this vision:

(1.) What notion the prophet himself had of it; *This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*. Here, as all along, he is careful to guard against all gross, corporeal thoughts of God, which might derogate from the transcendent purity of his nature. He does not say, *This was the Lord*,

(for he is invisible,) but, *This was the glory of the Lord*, in which he was pleased to manifest himself a glorious Being; yet it is not *the glory of the Lord*, but the likeness of that glory, some faint resemblance of it; nor is it any adequate likeness of that glory, but only the appearance of that likeness, a shadow of it, and not the very *image of the thing*, Heb. x. 1.

(2.) What impressions it made upon him; *When I saw it, I fell upon my face*. [1.] He was overpowered by it, the dazzling lustre of it conquered him, and threw him upon his face; for *who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* Or, rather, [2.] He prostrated himself, in an humble sense of his own unworthiness of the honour now done him, and of the infinite distance which he now, more than ever, perceived to be between him and God; he fell upon his face, in token of that holy awe and reverence of God which his mind was possessed and filled with. Note, The more God is pleased to make known of himself to us, the more low we should be before him. He *fell upon his face*, to adore the majesty of God, to implore his mercy, and to deprecate the wrath he saw ready to break out against the children of his people.

(3.) What instructions he had from it; all he saw was only to prepare him for that which he was to hear, for *faith comes by hearing*; he therefore *heard a voice of one that spake*; for we are taught by words, not merely by hieroglyphics. When he *fell on his face*, ready to receive the word, then he *heard the voice of one that spake*; for God delights to teach the humble.

## CHAP. II.

What our Lord Jesus said to St. Paul, (*Acts xxvi. 16.*) may fitly be applied to the prophet Ezekiel, to whom the same Jesus is here speaking, *Rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister*. We have here Ezekiel's ordination to his office which the vision was designed to fit him for; not to entertain his curiosity with uncommon speculations, but to put him into business. Now here, I. He is commissioned to go as a prophet to the house of Israel, now captives in Babylon, and to deliver God's messages to them from time to time, v. 1. .5. II. He is cautioned not to be afraid of them, v. 6. III. He is instructed what to say to them, and has words put into his mouth, signified by the vision of a roll, which he was ordered to eat, (v. 7. .10.) and which, in the next chapter, we find he did eat.

1. **A**ND he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. 2. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. 4. For they are impudent children, and stiff-hearted: I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. 5. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

The title here given to Ezekiel, as often afterwards, is very observable; God, when he speaks to him, calls him, *Son of man*, (v. 1, 3.) *Son of Adam*, *Son of the earth*. Daniel is once called so, (Dan. viii. 17.) and but once; the compellation is used to



no other of the prophets, but to Ezekiel all along. We may take it, 1. As an humble, diminishing title; lest Ezekiel should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, he is put in mind of this, that still he is a *son of man*, a mean, weak, mortal creature. Among other things made known to him, it was necessary he should be made to know this, that he was a *son of man*, and therefore that it was wonderful condescension in God, that he was pleased thus to manifest himself to him. Now he is among the living creatures, the angels; yet he must remember that he is himself a man, a dying creature.

*What is man, or the son of man*, that he should be thus visited, thus dignified? Though God had here a splendid retinue of holy angels about his throne, who were ready to go on his errands, yet he passes them all by, and pitches on Ezekiel, a *son of man*, to be his messenger to the *house of Israel*, for we have *this treasure in earthen vessels*, and God's messages sent us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us. Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood was brought low, and the honour of it laid in the dust: it therefore became him, and all of his order, to humble themselves, and to lie low, as sons of men, common men. He was now to be employed as a prophet, God's ambassador, and a ruler over the kingdoms, (Jer. i. 10.) a post of great honour, but he must remember that he is a *son of man*, and whatever good he did, it was not by any might of his own, for he was a *son of man*, but in the strength of divine grace, which must therefore have all the glory. Or, 2. We may take it as an honourable, dignifying title; for it is one of the titles of the Messiah in the Old Testament; (Dan. vii. 13.) *I saw one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven*, from whence Christ borrows the title he often calls himself by, *The Son of man*. The prophets were types of him, as they had near access to God, and great authority among men; and therefore as David the king is called the *Lord's anointed*, or *Christ*, so Ezekiel the prophet is called *son of man*.

I. Ezekiel is here set up, and made to stand, that he might receive his commission, v. 1, 2. He is set up,

1. By a divine command; *Son of man, stand upon thy feet*. His lying prostrate was a posture of great reverence, but his standing up would be a posture of greater readiness and fitness for business. Our adorings of God must not hinder, but rather quicken and excite, our actings for God. He *fell on his face* in a holy fear and awe of God, but he was quickly raised up again; for they that *humble themselves shall be exalted*. God delights not in the dejections of his servants, but the same that brings them low, will raise them up; the same that is a Spirit of bondage will be a Spirit of adoption. *Stand, and I will speak to thee*. Note, We may then expect that God will speak to us, when we stand ready to do what he commands us.

2. By a divine power going along with that command, v. 2. God bid him *stand up*, but because he had not strength of his own to recover his feet, nor courage to face the vision, *the Spirit entered into him and set him upon his feet*. Note, God is graciously pleased to work that in us which he requires of us, and raises those whom he bids rise. We must stir up ourselves, and then God will put strength into us; we must *work out our salvation*, and then God will *work in us*. He observed that the Spirit entered into him then when Christ spake to him; for Christ conveys his Spirit by his word as the ordinary means, and makes the word effectual by the Spirit. *The Spirit set the prophet upon his feet*, to raise him up from his dejections, for *he is the Comforter*. Thus, in the like case, Daniel was

strengthened by a divine touch, (Dan. x. 18.) and John was raised by the right hand of Christ laid upon him, Rev. i. 17. *The Spirit set him upon his feet*, made him willing and forward to do as he was bidden, and then he *heard him that spake* to him. He heard the voice before, (ch. i. 28.) but now he heard it more distinctly and clearly, heard it, and submitted to it. *The Spirit sets us upon our feet*, by inclining our will to our duty, and thereby disposes the understanding to receive the knowledge of it.

II. Ezekiel is here sent, and made to go, with a message to the children of Israel; (v. 3.) *I send thee to the children of Israel*. God had for many ages been sending to them his servants the prophets, rising up betimes, and sending them, but to little purpose, they were now sent into captivity for abusing God's messengers; and yet even there God sends this prophet among them, to try if their ears were open to discipline, now that they were held in the cords of affliction. As the supports of life, so the means of grace, are continued to us after they have been a thousand times forfeited. Now observe,

1. The rebellion of the people to whom this ambassador is sent; he is sent to reduce them to their allegiance, to bring back the children of Israel to the Lord their God; let the prophet know that there is occasion for his going on this errand, for they are a *rebellious nation*, (v. 3.) a *rebellious house*, v. 5. They are called *children of Israel*: they retain the name of their pious ancestors, but they are wretchedly degenerated, they are become *Gom—Nations*, the word commonly used for the Gentiles; the *children of Israel* are become as the *children of the Ethiopian*, (Amos ix. 7.) for they are *rebellious*; and rebels at home are much more provoking to a prince than enemies abroad. Their idolatries and false worship were the sins which, more than any other, denominated them a *rebellious nation*; for thereby they set up another prince in opposition to their rightful Sovereign, and did homage and paid tribute to the usurper, which is the highest degree of rebellion that can be.

(1.) They had been all along a rebellious generation, and had persisted in their rebellion; *They and their fathers have transgressed against me*. Note, Those are not always in the right, that have antiquity and the fathers on their side; for there are errors and corruptions of long standing: and it is so far from being an excuse for walking in a bad way, that our fathers walked in it, that it is really an aggravation, for it is justifying the sin of these that have gone before us. They have continued in their rebellion *even unto this very day*; notwithstanding the various means and methods that have been made use of to reclaim them, *to this day*, when they are under divine rebukes for their rebellion, they continue *rebellious*; many among them, like Ahaz, even in their distress, *trespass yet more*; they are not the better for all the changes that have befallen them, but still remain unchanged.

(2.) They were now hardened in their rebellion. They are *impudent children*, brazen-faced, and cannot blush; they are stiff-hearted, self-willed, and cannot bend, cannot stoop; neither ashamed nor afraid to sin; they will not be wrought upon by the sense either of honour or duty. We are willing to hope this was not the character of all, but of many, and those perhaps the leading men. Observe, [1.] God knew this concerning them, how inflexible, how incorrigible, they were. Note, God is perfectly acquainted with every man's true character, whatever his pretensions and professions may be. [2.] He told the prophet this, that he might know the better how to deal with them, and what handle to take them by. He must rebuke such men as those



sharply, cuttingly; must deal plainly with them, though they call it *dealing roughly*. God tells him this, that it might be no surprise or stumbling-block to him, if he found that his preaching should not make that impression upon them, which he had reason to think it would.

2. The dominion of the Prince by whom this ambassador is sent. (1.) He has authority to command him whom he sends; "*I do send thee unto them, and therefore thou shalt say thus and thus unto them,*" 7. 4. Note, It is the prerogative of Christ to send prophets and ministers, and to enjoin them their work. St. Paul thanked Christ Jesus who put him into the ministry; (1 Tim. i. 12.) for as he was sent of the Father, ministers are sent by him; and as he received the Spirit without measure, he gives the Spirit by measure, saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. They are *impudent and rebellious*, and yet *I send thee unto them*. Note, Christ gives the means of grace to many who he knows will not make a good use of those means; puts many a price into the hand of fools who have not only no heart to it, but have their hearts turned against it. Thus he will magnify his own grace, justify his own judgment, leave them inexcusable, and make their condemnation more intolerable. (2.) He has authority by him to command those to whom he sends him; *Thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God*. All he said to them must be spoken in God's name, enforced by his authority, and delivered as from him. Christ delivered his doctrines as a *Son*; *Verily, verily, I say unto you*; the prophets, as *servants*. *Thus saith the Lord God*, our Master and yours. Note, The writings of the prophets are the word of God, and so are to be regarded by every one of us. (3.) He has authority to call those to an account, to whom he sends his ambassadors. *Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*, whether they will attend to the word, or turn their backs upon it, *they shall know that there has been a prophet among them*, shall know by experience. [1.] If they hear and obey, they will know by comfortable experience, that the word which did them good was brought them by one that had a commission from God, and a divine power going along with him in the execution of it. Thus they who were converted by St. Paul's preaching, are said to be *seals of his apostleship*, 1 Cor. ix. 2. When men's hearts are made to burn under the word, and their wills to how to it, then they know and hear the witness in themselves, that it is not the *word of men, but of God*. [2.] If they forbear, if they turn a deaf ear to the word, (as it is to be feared they will, *for they are a rebellious house*;) yet they shall be made to know that he whom they slighted was indeed a prophet, by the reproaches of their own consciences, and the just judgments of God upon them for refusing him; they shall know it to their cost, know it to their confusion, know it by sad experience, what a pernicious, dangerous thing it is to despise God's messengers. They shall know by the accomplishment of the threatenings, that the prophet who denounced them was sent of God; thus the word will *take hold of men*, Zech. i. 6. Note, *First*, Those to whom the word of God is sent, are upon their trial, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*, and accordingly their doom will be. *Secondly*, Whether they be edified by the word or no, it is certain that God will be glorified, and his word magnified and made honourable. Whether it be a *savour of life unto life*, or of *death unto death*, either way it will appear to be of divine original.

6. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and

thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. 7. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. 8. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. 9. And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; 10. And he spread it before me: and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and wo.

The prophet, having received his commission, here receives a charge with it. It is a post of honour to which he is advanced, but withal it is a post of service and work, and it is here required of him,

I. That he be bold. He must act in the discharge of this trust with an undaunted courage and resolution, and not be either driven off from his work, or made to drive on heavily, by the difficulties and oppositions that he would be likely to meet with in it; *Son of man, be not afraid of them*, v. 6. Note, Those that will do any thing to purpose in the service of God, must not be afraid of the face of man; for the fear of men will bring a snare, which will be very entangling to us in the work of God. 1. God tells the prophet what was the character of those to whom he sent him, as before, v. 3, 4. They are *briers and thorns*, scratching, and tearing, and vexing a man, which way soever he turns. They are continually teasing God's prophets, and entangling them in their talk; (Matth. xxii. 15.) they are *pricking briers and grieving thorns*. The best of them is as a brier, and the most upright sharper than a thorn-hedge, Mic. vii. 4. Thorns and briers are the fruit of sin and the curse, and of equal date with the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Note, Wicked men, especially the persecutors of God's prophets and people, are as briers and thorns, which are hurtful to the ground, choke the good seed, hinder God's husbandry, are vexatious to his husbandmen; but they are *nigh unto cursing*, and *their end is to be burned*: yet God makes use of them sometimes for the correction and instruction of his people, as *Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns and briers*, Judg. viii. 16. Yet this is not the worst of their character, they are *scorpions*, venomous and malignant; the sting of a scorpion is a thousand times more hurtful than the scratch of a brier. Persecutors are a *generation of vipers*, are of the serpent's seed, and the *poison of asps is under their tongue*; and they are *more subtle than any beast of the field*. And, which makes the prophet's case the more grievous, he dwells among these scorpions; they are continually about him, so that he cannot be safe or quiet in his own house; these bad men are his bad neighbours, who thereby have many opportunities, and will let slip none to do him a mischief. God takes notice of this to the prophet, as Christ to the angel of one of the churches; (Rev. ii. 13.) *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is*. Ezekiel had been, in vision, conversing with angels, but when he comes down from this mount, he finds he *dwells with scorpions*. 2. He tells him what would be their conduct towards him, that they would do what they could to frighten him with *their looks and their words*; they

would hector him and threaten him, would look scornfully and spitefully at him, and do their utmost to face him down, and put him out of countenance, that they might drive him off from being a prophet, or at least from telling them of their faults, and threatening them with the judgments of God; or, if they could not prevail in this, that they might vex and perplex him, and disturb the repose of his mind. They were now themselves in subjection, divested of all power, so that they had no other way of persecuting the prophet than with *their looks and their words*; and so they did persecute him. *Behold, thou hast spoken, and done evil things as thou couldest*, Jer. iii. 5. If they had had more power they would have done more mischief. They were now in captivity, smarting for their rebellion, and particularly their misusing of God's prophets; and yet they are as bad as ever. *Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him*; no providences will of themselves humble and reform men, unless the grace of God work with them. But, how malicious soever they were, Ezekiel must not be *afraid of them*, nor *dismayed*, he must not be deterred from his work, or any part of it, nor be disheartened or dispirited in it by all their menaces, but go on in it with resolution and cheerfulness, assuring himself of safety under the divine protection.

II. It is required that he be faithful, v. 7. 1. He must be faithful to Christ who sent him; *Thou shalt speak my words unto them*. Note, As it is the honour of prophets, that they are intrusted to speak God's words, so it is their duty to cleave closely to them, and to speak nothing but what is agreeable to the words of God; ministers must always speak according to that rule. 2. He must be faithful to the souls of those to whom he was sent; *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*, he must deliver his message to them as he received it. He must bring them to comply with the word, and not study to accommodate the word to their humours. "It is true, they are *most rebellious*, they are rebellion itself; but, however, *speak my words* to them, whether they are pleasing or displeasing." Note, The untractableness and unprofitableness of people under the word, are no good reasons why ministers should leave off preaching to them; nor must we decline an opportunity by which good may be done, though we have a great deal of reason to think no good will be done.

III. It is required that he be observant of his instructions.

1. Here is a general intimation what the instructions were, that were given him, in the contents of the book which was *spread before him*, v. 10. (1.) His instructions were large, for the roll was *written within and without*, on the inside and on the outside of the roll; it was as a sheet of paper written on all the four sides. One side contained their sins, the other side contained the judgments of God coming upon them for those sins. Note, God has a great deal to say to his people when they are degenerated and become rebellious. (2.) His instructions were melancholy, he was sent on a sad errand; the matter contained in the book was, *lamentations, and mourning, and wo*. The idea of his message is taken from the impression it would make upon the minds of those that carefully attended to it; it would set them a weeping and crying out, *Wo, and, Alas!* Both the discoveries of sin and the denunciations of wrath would be matter of lamentations. What could be more lamentable, more mournful, more woful, than to see a holy, happy people sunk into such a state of sin and misery, as it appears by the prophecy of this book the Jews were at this time? Ezekiel echoes to Jeremiah's lamentations. Note, Though God is rich in mercy, yet impenitent sinners will

find there are even among his words *lamentations and wo*.

2. Here is an express charge given the prophet to observe his instructions, both in receiving his message and delivering it. He is now to receive it, and is here commanded,

(1.) To attend diligently to it; *Son of man, hear what I say unto thee*, v. 8. Note, Those that speak from God to others, must be sure to hear from God themselves, and be obedient to his voice; "*Be not thou rebellious*; do not refuse to go on this errand, or to deliver it; do not fly off, as Jonah did, for fear of disobliging thy countrymen. They are a *rebellious house* among whom thou livest; but be not thou like them, do not comply with them in any thing that is evil. If ministers, who are reprovers by office, connive at sin, and indulge sinners, either show them not their wickedness, or show them not the fatal consequences of it, for fear of displeasing them, and getting their ill-will, they hereby make themselves partakers of their guilt, and are rebellious like them. If people will not do their duty in reforming, yet let ministers do theirs in reproving, and they will have the comfort of it in the reflection, whatever the success be, as that prophet had; (Isa. l. 5.) *The Lord God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious*. Even the best men, when their lot is cast in bad times and places, have need to be cautioned against the worst crimes.

(2.) To digest it in his own mind by an experience of the favour and power of it; "*Do not only hear what I say unto thee, but often thy mouth, and eat that I give thee*. Prepare to eat it, and eat it willingly, and with an appetite." All God's children are content to be at their heavenly Father's finding, and to eat whatever he gives them. That which God's hand reached out to Ezekiel, was, *a roll of a book, or the volume of a book*; a book, or scroll of paper or parchment full written, and rolled up. Divine revelation comes to us from the hand of Christ, he gave it the prophets, Rev. i. 1. When we look at the *roll of the book*, we must have an eye to the hand by which it is sent to us. He that brought it to the prophet, *spread it before him*, that he might not swallow it with an implicit faith, but might fully understand the contents of it, and then receive it, and make it his own. *Be not rebellious*, says Christ, but *eat what I give thee*. If we receive not what Christ in his ordinances and providences allots for us, if we submit not to his word and rod, and reconcile not ourselves to both, we shall be accounted rebellious.

## CHAP. III.

In this chapter we have the further preparation of the prophet for the work to which God called him. I. His eating of the roll that was presented to him in the close of the foregoing chapter, v. 1. 3. II. Further instructions and encouragements given him to the same purport with those in the foregoing chapter, v. 4. 11. III. The mighty impulse he was under, with which he was carried to those that were to be his hearers, v. 12. 15. IV. A further explication of his office and business as a prophet, under the similitude of a watchman, v. 16. 21. V. The restraining and restoring of the prophet's liberty of speech, as God pleased, v. 22. 27.

1. **M**OREOVER, he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest: eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. 2. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. 4. And

he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5. For thou *art* not sent to a people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, *but* to the house of Israel: 6. Not to many people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand: surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. 7. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hard-hearted. 8. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. 9. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house. 10. Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears. 11. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. 12. Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place. 13. *I heard* also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. 14. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. 15. Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

These verses are fitly joined by some translators to the foregoing chapter, as being of a piece with it, and a continuation of the same vision. The prophets received the words from God, that they might deliver them to the people of God; furnished themselves, that they might furnish them, with the knowledge of the mind and will of God. Now here the prophet is taught,

I. How he must receive divine revelation himself, *v. 1.* Christ (whom he saw *upon the throne, ch. i. 26.*) said to him, "*Son of man, eat this roll*"; admit this revelation into thine understanding, take it, take the meaning of it, understand it aright, admit it into thy heart, apply it, and be affected with it; imprint it in thy mind, ruminate and chew the cud upon it; take it as it is entire, and make no difficulty of it, nay, take a pleasure in it as thou dost in thy meat, and let thy soul be nourished and strengthened by it; let it be meat and drink to thee, and as thy necessary food; be full of it, as thou art of the meat thou hast eaten." Thus ministers should in their studies and meditations take in that word of God,

which they are to preach to others; *Thy words were found, and I did eat them*, Jer. xv. 16. They must be both well acquainted and much affected with the things of God, that they may speak of them both clearly and warmly, with a great deal of divine light and heat. Now observe,

1. How this command is inculcated upon the prophet. In the chapter before, *Eat what I give thee*; and here, (*v. 1.*) "*Eat that thou findest*, that which is presented to thee by the hand of Christ." Note, Whatever we find to be the word of God, whatever is brought to us by him who is the Word of God, we must receive without disputing. What we find set before us in the scripture, that we must eat. And again, (*v. 3.*) "*Cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll*"; do not eat it and bring it up again, as that which is nauseous, but eat it, and retain it, as that which is nourishing and grateful to the stomach. Feast upon this vision till thou be *full of matter*, (as Elihu was, Job xxxii. 18.) Let the word have a place in thee, the innermost place." We must take pains with our own hearts, that we may cause them duly to receive and entertain the word of God, that every faculty may do its office, in order to the due digesting of the word of God; that it may be turned in *succum et sanguinem*—into blood and spirits. We must empty ourselves of worldly things, that we may *fill our bowels with this roll*.

2. How this command is explained; (*v. 10.*) *All my words that I shall speak unto thee*, to be spoken unto the people, *thou must receive in thine heart*, as well as *hear with thine ears*, receive them in the love of them." *Let these sayings sink down into your ears*, Luke ix. 44. Christ demands the prophet's attention not only to what he now says, but to all that he shall at any time hereafter speak; *Receive it all in thine heart, meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them*, 1 Tim. iv. 15.

3. How this command was obeyed in vision. He *opened his mouth*, and Christ caused him to eat the roll, *v. 2.* If we be truly willing to receive the word into our hearts, Christ will by his Spirit bring it into them, and cause it to *dwell in us richly*. If he that *opens the roll*, and by his Spirit, as a *Spirit of revelation*, spreads it before us, did not also *open our understanding*, and by his Spirit, as a *Spirit of wisdom*, give us the knowledge of it, and *cause us to eat it*, we should be for ever strangers to it. The prophet had reason to fear that the roll would be an unpleasant morsel and a sorry dish to make a meal of, but it proved to be in his *mouth as honey for sweetness*. Note, If we readily obey even the most difficult commands, we shall find that comfort in the reflection, which will make us abundant amends for all the hardships we met with in the way of our duty. Though the roll was filled with lamentations, and mourning, and *wo*, yet it was to the prophet *as honey for sweetness*. Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight, which speak most terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into some part of the revelation by such a sign as this, Rev. x. 9, 10. He *took the book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up, and it was*, as this here, *in his mouth sweet as honey*; but it was *bitter in the belly*; and we shall find that this here was so too, for (*v. 14.*) the prophet *went in bitterness*.

II. How he must deliver that divine revelation to others, which he himself had received; (*v. 1.*) *Eat this roll, and then go, speak to the house of Israel*. 1. He must not undertake to preach the things of God to others, till he did himself fully understand them; let him not go without his errand, or take it by the halves. 2. When he does himself fully understand them, he must be both busy and bold to preach them for the good of others. We must not

conceal the words of the Holy One, (Job vi. 10.) for that is burying a talent which was given us to trade with. He must go, and speak to the house of Israel, for it is their privilege to have God's statutes and judgments made known to them; as the giving of the law, (the lively oracles,) so prophecy, (the living oracle,) pertains to them. He is not sent to the Chaldeans to reprove them for their sins, but to the house of Israel to reprove them for theirs; for the father corrects his own child if he do amiss, not the child of a stranger.

The instructions given him in speaking to them are much the same with those in the foregoing chapter.

(1.) He must speak to them all that, and that only, which God spake to him. He had said before, (ch. ii. 7.) *Thou shalt speak my words to them*; here he says, (v. 4.) *Thou shalt speak with my words unto them*; or, *in my words*. He must not only say that which for substance is the same that God had said to him, but as near as may be in the same language and expressions. Blessed Paul, though a man of a very happy invention, yet speaks of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, 1 Cor. ii. 13. Scripture-truths look best in scripture-language, their native dress; and how can we better speak God's mind than with his words?

(2.) He must remember that they are the house of Israel, whom he is sent to speak to; God's house, and his own; and therefore such as he ought to have a particular concern for, and to deal faithfully and tenderly with; they were such as he had an intimate acquaintance with, being not only their countrymen, but their *companion in tribulation*; they and he were fellow-sufferers, and had lately been fellow-travellers, in very melancholy circumstances, from Judea to Babylon, and had often mingled their tears, which could not but knit their affections to each other. It was well for the people that they had a prophet who knew experimentally how to sympathize with them, and could not but be touched with the feeling of their infirmities; it was well for the prophet that he had to do with those of his own nation, not with a people of strange speech and a hard language; deep of lip, so that thou canst not fathom their meaning, and heavy of tongue, whom it is intolerable and impossible to converse with. Every strange language seems to us to be deep and heavy. "Thou art not sent to many such people, whom thou couldest neither speak to nor hear from, neither understand nor be understood among, but by an interpreter." The apostles indeed were sent to many people of a strange speech, but they could not have done any good among them if they had not had the gift of tongues; but Ezekiel was sent only to one people, those but a few, and his own, whom having acquaintance with, he might hope to find acceptance with.

(3.) He must remember what God had already told him of the bad character of those to whom he was sent, that if he met with discouragement and disappointment in them, he might not be offended. They are *impudent and hard-hearted*; (v. 7.) no convictions of sin would make them blush, no denunciations of wrath would make them tremble. Two things aggravated their obstinacy; [1.] That they were more obstinate than their neighbours would have been, if the prophet had been sent to them. Had God sent him to any other people, though of a strange speech, surely they would have hearkened to him, they would at least have given him a patient hearing, and showed him that respect which he could not obtain of his own countrymen. The Ninevites were wrought upon by Jonah's preaching, when the house of Israel, that was compassed about with so great a cloud of prophets, was

unhumbled and unreformed. But what shall we say to these things? The means of grace are given to those that will not improve them, and withheld from those that would have improved them. We must resolve this into the divine sovereignty, and say, Lord, *thy judgments are a great deep*. [2.] That they were obstinate against God himself; *They will not hearken unto thee*, and no marvel, *for they will not hearken unto me*; they will not regard the word of the prophet, for they will not regard the rod of God, by which the Lord's voice cries in the city. If they believe not God speaking to them by a minister, neither would they believe though he should speak to them by a voice from heaven: nay, therefore they reject what the prophet says, because it comes from God, whom the carnal mind is enmity to. They are prejudiced against the law of God, and for that reason turn a deaf ear to his prophets, whose business it is to enforce his law.

(4.) He must resolve to put on courage, and Christ promises to steel him with it, v. 8, 9. He is sent to such as are *impudent and hard-hearted*, who will receive no impressions, nor be wrought upon either by fair means or foul, who will take a pride in affronting God's messenger, and confronting the message. It will be a hard task to know how to deal with them; but [1.] God will enable him to put a good face on it; *"I have made thy face strong against their faces"*, endued thee with all the firmness and boldness that the case calls for." Perhaps Ezekiel was naturally bashful and timorous, but if God did not find him fit, yet by his grace he made him fit, to encounter the greatest difficulties. Note, The more impudent wicked people are in their opposition to religion, the more openly and resolutely should God's people appear in the practice and defence of it. Let the innocent stir up himself against the hypocrite, Job xvii. 8. When vice is daring, let not virtue be sneaking. And when God has work to do, he will spirit men for it, and give them strength according to the day. If there be occasion, God can and will by his grace make the foreheads of faithful ministers as an adamant, so that the most threatening powers shall not dash them out of countenance. The Lord God will help me, therefore have I set my face like a flint, Isa. i. 7. [2.] He is therefore commanded to have a good heart on it, and to go on in his work with a holy security, not valuing either the censures or the threats of his enemies; *"Fear not, neither be dismayed at their looks"*; let not the menaces of their impotent malice cast either a damp upon thee, or a stumbling-block before thee." Bold sinners must have bold reprovers; evil beasts must be rebuked cuttingly, (Tit. i. 12, 13.) must be saved with fear, Jude 23. Those that keep close to the service of God, may be sure of the favour of God, and then they need not be dismayed at the proud looks of men. Let not the angry countenance that drives away a backbiting tongue, give any check to a reproving tongue.

(5.) He must continue instant with them in his preaching, whatever the success was, v. 11. He must go to them of the captivity, who, being in affliction, it was to be hoped would receive instruction; he must look upon them as the children of his people, to whom he was nearly allied, and for whom he therefore ought to have a very tender concern, as Paul for his kinsmen, Rom. ix. 3. And he must tell them not only what the Lord said, but that the Lord said it; let him speak in God's name, and back what he said with his authority; *Thus saith the Lord God*; tell them so, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Not that it may be indifferent to us what success our ministry has, but, whatever it be, we must go on with our work, and leave the issue to God. We must not say, "Here

are some so good, that we do not need to speak to them;" or, "Here are others so bad, that it is to no purpose to speak to them;" but, however it be, deliver thy message faithfully; *tell them, the Lord God saith so* and so, let them reject it at their peril.

Full instructions being thus given to the prophet, pursuant to his commission, we are here told,

[1.] With what satisfaction this mission of his was applauded by the holy angels, who were very well pleased to see one, of a nature inferior to their own, thus honourably employed and intrusted. *He heard a voice of a great rushing, (v. 12.)* as if the angels thronged and crowded to see the inauguration of a prophet; for to them is *known by the church*, that is, by reflection from the church, *the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10. They seemed to strive who should get nearest to this great sight. *He heard the noise of their wings that touched, or, as the word is, kissed, one another;* denoting the mutual affections and assistances of the angels. He heard also *the noise of the wheels of Providence moving over against the angels, and in concert with them.* All this was to engage his attention, and to convince him that the God who sent him, having such a glorious train of attendants, no doubt had power sufficient to bear him out in his work. But all this noise ended in the voice of praise; he heard them saying, *Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place; First, From heaven, his place above, whence his glory was now in vision descending, or whither perhaps it was now returning.* Let the innumerable company of angels above join with those employed in this vision, in saying, *Blessed be the glory of the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise him, all ye angels*, Ps. cxlviii. 1, 2. *Secondly, From the temple, his place on earth, whence his glory was now departing.* They lament the departure of the glory, but adore the righteousness of God in it: however it be, yet God is blessed and glorious, and ever will be so. The prophet Isaiah heard God thus praised when he received his commission; (Isa. vi. 3.) and a comfort it is to all the faithful servants of God, when they see how much God is dishonoured in this lower world, to think how much he is admired and glorified in the upper world. *The glory of the Lord has many slights from our place, but many praises from his place.*

[2.] With what reluctance of his own spirit, and yet with what a mighty efficacy of the Spirit of God, the prophet was himself brought to the execution of his office. *The grace given to him was not in vain;* for,

*First, The Spirit led him with a strong hand.* God bid him go, but he stirred not till the Spirit took him up. *The Spirit of the living creatures that was in the wheels, now was in the prophet too, and took him up;* first to hear more distinctly the acclamations of the angels, (v. 12.) but afterward, (v. 14.) *lifted him up, and took him away* to his work, which he was backward to, being very loath either to bring trouble upon himself, or foretell it to his people. He would gladly have been excused, but must own, as another prophet does, (Jer. xx. 7.) *Thou wast stronger than I, and hast prevailed.* Ezekiel would willingly have kept all he heard and saw to himself, that it might go no further, but *the hand of the Lord was strong upon him, and overpowered him;* he was carried on contrary to his own inclinations by the prophetic impulse, so that he could not but *speak the things which he had heard and seen*, as the apostles, Acts iv. 20. Note, Those whom God calls to the ministry, as he furnishes their heads for it, so he bows their hearts to it.

*Secondly, He followed with a sad heart; The Spirit took me away, says he, and then I went, but*

*it was in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit.* He had perhaps seen what a hard task Jeremiah had at Jerusalem when he appeared as a prophet, what pains he took, what opposition he met with, how he was abused by hand and tongue, and what ill treatment he met with, and all to no purpose; "And" (thinks Ezekiel) "must I be set up for a mark like him?" The life of a captive was bad enough; but what would the life of a prophet in captivity be? Therefore he went in this fret, and under this discomposure. Note, There may in some cases be a great reluctance of corruption even there where there is a manifest predominance of grace. *I went, not disobedient to the heavenly vision, or shrinking from the work, as Jonah, but I went in bitterness, not at all pleased with it.* When he received the divine revelation himself, it was to him *sweet as honey*, (v. 3.) he could with abundance of pleasure have spent all his days in meditating upon it; but when he is to preach it to others, who, he foresees, will be hardened and exasperated by it, and have their condemnation aggravated, then he goes in *bitterness*. Note, It is a great grief to faithful ministers, and makes them go on in their work with a heavy heart, when they find people untractable, and hating to be reformed. *He went in the heat of his spirit*, because of the discouragements he foresaw he should meet with; but *the hand of the Lord was strong upon him*, not only to compel him to his work, but to fit him for it, to carry him through it, and animate him against the difficulties he would meet with; (so we may understand it;) and when he found it so, he was better reconciled to his business, and applied himself to it; *Then he came to them of the captivity, (v. 15.)* to some place where there were many of them together, *and sat where they sat*, either working, or reading, or talking, and continued among them seven days, to hear what they said, and observe what they did; and all that time he was waiting for the word of the Lord to come to him. Note, Those that would speak suitably and profitably to people about their souls, must acquaint themselves with them, and with their case; must do as Ezekiel did here, must sit where they sit, and speak familiarly to them of the things of God, and put themselves into their condition, yea, though they sit by the rivers of Babylon. But observe, He was there astonished, overwhelmed with grief for the sins and miseries of his people, and overpowered by the pomp of the vision he had seen: he was there desolate; (so some read it;) God showed him no visions, men made him no visits; thus was he left to digest his grief, and come to a better temper, before the word of the Lord should come to him. Note, These whom God designs to exalt and enlarge, he first humbles and straitens for a time.

16. And it came to pass, at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 17. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thy hand.

19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity: but

thou hast delivered thy soul. 20. Again, when a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 21. Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned: also thou hast delivered thy soul.

These further instructions God gave to the prophet *at the end of seven days*, that is, on the seventh day after the vision he had; and it is very probable, that both that and this were on the sabbath-day, which *the house of Israel*, even in their captivity, observed as well as they could in those circumstances: we do not find that their conquerors and oppressors tied them to any constant service, as their Egyptian taskmasters had formerly done, but that they might observe the sabbath-rest, for a sign to distinguish between them and their neighbours; but for the sabbath-work, they had not the convenience of temple or synagogue, only it should seem they had a *place by the river side, where prayer was wont to be made*; (as Acts xvi. 13.) there they met on the sabbath-day, there their enemies upbraided them with the *songs of Zion*; (Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 3.) there Ezekiel met them, and the *word of the Lord* then and there *came to him*. He that had been musing and meditating on the things of God all the week, was fit to speak to the people in God's name on the sabbath-day, and disposed to hear God speak to him.

This sabbath-day Ezekiel was not so honoured with visions of the glory of God as he had been the sabbath before; but is plainly, and by a very common similitude, told his duty, which he is to communicate to the people. Note, Raptures and transports of joy are not the daily bread of God's children, however they may upon special occasions be feasted with them. We must not deny that we have truly communion with God, (1 John i. 3.) though we have it not always so sensibly as at some times. And though the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven may sometimes be looked into, yet ordinarily, it is plain preaching that is most for edification.

God here tells the prophet what his office was, and what the duty of that office; and this (we may suppose) he was to tell the people, that they might attend to what he said, and improve it accordingly. Note, It is good for people to know and consider what a charge their ministers have of them, and what an account they must shortly give of that charge. Observe,

I. What the office is to which the prophet is called; *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel*, v. 17. The vision he saw astonished him, he knew not what to make of that, and therefore God used this plain comparison, which served better to lead him to the understanding of his work, and so to reconcile him to it. He sat among the captives, and said little, but God comes to him, and tells him that will not do, he is a *watchman*, and has something to say to them; he is appointed to be as a *watchman* in the city, to guard against fire, robbers, and disturbers of the peace; as a *watchman* over the flock, to guard against thieves and beasts of prey; but especially as a *watchman* in the camp, in an invaded country or a besieged

town, that is to watch the motions of the enemy, and to sound an alarm upon the approach, nay, upon the first appearance, of danger. This supposes the *house of Israel* to be in a military state, and exposed to enemies, who are subtle and restless in their attempts upon it; yea, and each of the particular members of that house to be in danger, and concerned to stand upon their guard. Note, Ministers are *watchmen on the church's walls*, (Isa. lxii. 6.) *watchmen that go about the city*, Cant. iii. 3. It is a toilsome office; watchmen must keep awake, be they ever so sleepy, and keep abroad, be they ever so cold; they must stand all weathers *upon the watch-tower*, Isa. xxi. 8. Gen. xxxi. 40. It is a dangerous office; sometimes they cannot keep their post, but are in peril of death from the enemy, who gain their point if they kill the sentinel; and yet they dare not quit their post upon pain of death from their general; such a dilemma are the church's watchmen in; men will curse them if they be faithful, and God will curse them if they be false. But it is a needful office; *the house of Israel* cannot be safe without watchmen, and yet, *except the Lord keep it, the watchman waketh but in vain*, Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2.

II. What is the duty of this office. The work of a watchman is to *take notice*, and to *give notice*.

1. The prophet, as a *watchman*, must *take notice* of what God said concerning this people, not only concerning the body of the people, to which the prophecies of Jeremiah and other prophets had most commonly reference, and concerning particular persons, according as their character was; he must not, as other watchmen, look round to spy danger, and gain intelligence, but he must look up to God, and further he need not look; *Hear the word at my mouth*, v. 17. Note, Those that are to preach, must first hear; for how can they *teach* others, who have not first learned themselves?

2. He must *give notice* of what he heard; as a *watchman* must have *eyes* in his head, so he must have a *tongue* in his head; if he be dumb, it is as bad as if he were blind, Isa. lvi. 10. Thou shalt *give them warning from me*, sound an alarm in the *holy mountain*; not in his own name, or as from himself, but in God's name, and from him. Ministers are God's mouth to the children of men. The scriptures are written for our admonition; *By them is thy servant warned*, Ps. xix. 11. But because that which is delivered *viva voce*—by the living voice, commonly makes the deepest impression, God is pleased, by men like ourselves, who are equally concerned, to enforce upon us the warnings of the written word.

Now the prophet, in his preaching, must distinguish between the wicked and the righteous, the precious and the vile, and in his applications must suit his alarms to each, giving every one his portion; if he did this, he should have the comfort of it, whatever the success was, but if not, he was accountable.

(1.) Some of those he had to do with, were *wicked*, and he must *warn* them not to go on in their *wickedness*, but to *turn from it*, v. 18, 19. We may observe here,

[1.] That the God of heaven has said, and does say, to every *wicked man*, that if he go on still in his trespasses, he *shall surely die*; his iniquity shall undoubtedly be his ruin, it tends to ruin, and will end in ruin. *Dying thou shalt die, thou shalt die so great a death, shalt die eternally*, be ever dying, but never dead. *The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, shall die under the guilt of it, die under the dominion of it*.

[2.] That if a *wicked man turn from his wickedness*, and from his *wicked way*, he *shall live*, and the ruin he is threatened with shall be prevented; and that he may do so, he is warned of the danger



he is in. *The wicked man shall die* if he go on, but *shall live* if he repent. Observe, He is to turn *from his wickedness, and from his wicked way*. It is not enough for a man to turn *from his wicked way* by an outward reformation, which may be the effect of his sins leaving him, rather than of his leaving his sins, but he must turn *from his wickedness*, from the love of it, and the inclination to it, by an inward regeneration; if he do not so much as turn *from his wicked way*, there is little hope that he will turn *from his wickedness*.

[3.] That it is the duty of ministers both to warn sinners of the danger of sin, and to assure them of the benefit of repentance; to set before them how miserable they are if they go on in sin, and how happy they may be if they will but repent and reform. Note, The ministry of the word is concerning matters of *life and death*, for those are the things it sets before us, *the blessing and the curse*, that we may escape the curse, and inherit the blessing.

[4.] That though ministers do not warn wicked people as they ought of their misery and danger, yet that shall not be admitted as an excuse for those that go on still in their trespasses; for though the watchman did not *give them warning*, yet they *shall die in their iniquity*; for they had sufficient warning given them by the providence of God and their own consciences; if they would have taken it, they might have *saved their lives*.

[5.] That if ministers be not faithful to their trust, if they do not warn sinners of the fatal consequences of sin, but suffer them to go on unreprieved, *the blood of those that perish through their carelessness, will be required at their hand*; it shall be charged upon them in the day of account, that it was owing to their unfaithfulness that such and such precious souls perished in sin; for who knows but if they had had fair warning given them, they might have fled in time *from the wrath to come*? And if it contract so heinous a guilt as it does to be accessory to the murder of a dying body, what is it to be accessory to the ruin of an immortal soul?

[6.] That if ministers do their duty in giving warning to sinners, though the warning be not taken, yet they may have this satisfaction, that they are *clear from their blood*, and have *delivered their own souls*, though they cannot prevail to deliver theirs. Those that are faithful, shall have their reward, though they be not successful.

(2.) Some of those he had to deal with were *righteous*, at least he had reason to think, in a judgment of clarity, that they were so; and he must warn them not to apostatize and *turn away from their righteousness*, v. 20, 21. We may observe here,

[1.] That the best men in the world have need to be warned against apostacy, and to be told of the danger they are in of it, and the danger they are in by it. God's servants must be warned, (Ps. xix. 11.) that they do not neglect his work, and quit his service. One good means to keep us from falling is, to keep up a holy fear of falling, Heb. iv. 1. *Let us therefore fear*; and (Rom. xi. 20.) even those that *stand by faith*, must not be *high-minded, but fear*, and must therefore be warned.

[2.] There is a *righteousness* which a man may *turn from*, a seeming *righteousness*; from which if men turn, thereby it appears that it was never sincere, how passable, nay how plausible soever, it was; for *if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*, 1 John ii. 19. There are many that *begin in the spirit*, but *end in the flesh*; that set their faces heavenward, but look back; that had a first love, but have lost it, and *turned from the holy commandment*.

[3.] When men *turn from their righteousness*, they soon learn to commit iniquity. When they

grow careless and remiss in the duties of God's worship, neglect them, or are negligent in them, they become an easy prey to the tempter. Omissions make way for commissions.

[4.] *When men turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity*, it is just with God to lay *stumbling-blocks before them*, that they may grow worse and worse, till they are ripened for destruction. When Pharaoh hardened his heart, God hardened it. When sinners turn their back upon God, desert his service, and so cast a reproach upon it, he does, in a way of righteous judgment, not only withdraw his restraining grace, and give them up to their own hearts' lust, but order them by his providence into such circumstances, as occasion their sin and hasten their ruin. There are those to whom Christ himself is a *Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence*, 1 Pet. ii. 8.

[5.] The righteousness which men relinquish, shall never be remembered to their honour and comfort; it will stand them in no stead in this world or the other. Apostates lose all that they have wrought, their services and sufferings are all in vain, and shall never be brought to an account, because not continued in. It is a rule in the law, *Factum non dicitur, quod non perseverat—We do that, and that only, which we do perseveringly*, Gal. iii. 3, 4.

[6.] If ministers do not give fair warning, as they ought, of the weakness of the best, their aptness to stumble and fall, the particular temptations they are in, and the fatal consequences of apostacy, the ruin of those that do apostatize will be laid at their door, and they shall answer for it. Not but that there are those who are warned against it, and yet *turn from their righteousness*; but that case is not put here, as was concerning the wicked man; but, on the contrary, that a *righteous man*, being warned, takes the warning, and *does not sin*, (v. 21.) for if you *give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser*. We must not only not flatter the wicked, but not even flatter the righteous, as if they were perfectly safe any where on this side heaven.

[7.] If ministers give warning, and people take it, it is well for both; nothing is more beautiful than a *wise reproof upon an obedient ear*; the one shall *live because he is warned*, and the other *has delivered his soul*. What can a good minister desire more than to *save himself, and those that hear him*? 1 Tim. iv. 16.

22. And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. 23. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain; and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face. 24. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thy house. 25. But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: 26. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reproof; for they are a rebellious house. 27. But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, He that heareth, let him hear;



and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

After all this large and magnificent discovery which God had made of himself to the prophet, and the full instructions he had given him how to deal with those to whom he sent him with an ample commission, we should have expected presently to see him preaching the word of God to a great congregation of Israel; but here we find it quite otherwise. His work here, at first, seems not at all proportionable to the pomp of his call.

I. We have him here retired for further learning. By his unwillingness to go, it should seem as if he were not so thoroughly convinced as he might have been of the ability of him that sent him to bear him out; and therefore, to hearten him against the difficulties he foresaw, God will favour him with another vision of his glory, which (if any thing) would put life into him, and animate him for his work. In order to this, God calls him out to the plain, (v. 22.) and there he will have some talk with him. See and admire the condescension of a God in conversing thus familiarly with a man, a son of man, a poor captive, nay, with a sinful man, who, when God sent him, went in bitterness of spirit, and was at this time out of humour with his work! And let us own ourselves for ever indebted to the mediation of Christ for this blessed intercourse and communion between God and man, between heaven and earth. See here the benefit of solitude, and how much it befriends contemplation! It is very comfortable to be alone with God, withdrawn from the world for converse with him; to hear from him, to speak to him; and a good man will say, I am never less alone, than when thus alone.

Ezekiel went forth into the plain more willingly than he went among them of the captivity; (v. 15.) for they that know what it is to have communion with God, cannot but prefer that before any converse with this world, especially such as is commonly met with. He went out into the plain, and there he saw the same vision that he had seen by the river of Chebar; for God is not tied to places. Note, Those who follow God shall meet with his consolations, wherever they go. God called him out to talk with him, but did more than that, he showed him his glory, v. 23. We are not now to expect such visions, but we must own that we have a favour done us no way inferior, if we so by faith behold the glory of the Lord, as to be changed into the same image, by the Spirit of the Lord; and this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

II. We have him here restrained from further teaching for the present. When he saw the glory of the Lord, he fell on his face, being struck with an awe of God's majesty, and a dread of his displeasure; but the Spirit entered into him to raise him up, and then he recovered himself, and got upon his feet, and heard what the Spirit whispered to him, which is very surprising. One would have expected now that God should send him directly to the chief place of concourse, should give him favour in the eyes of his brethren, and make him and his message acceptable to them; that he should have a wider door of opportunity opened to him, and that God should give him a door of utterance to open his mouth boldly; but what is here said to him is the reverse of all this.

I. Instead of sending him to a public assembly, he orders him to confine himself to his own lodgings; Go, shut thyself within thy house, v. 24. He was not willing to appear in public, and when he did, the people did not regard him, nor show him the respect he deserved, and, as a just rebuke both to him and them, to him for his shyness of them, and

to them for their coldness toward him, God forbids him to appear in public. Note, Our choice is often made our punishment; and it is a righteous thing with God to remove teachers into corners, when they, or their people, or both, grow indifferent to solemn assemblies. Ezekiel must shut up himself, some think, to give a sign of the besieging of Jerusalem, in which the people should be closely shut up as he was in his house, and which he speaks of in the next chapter. He must shut himself within his house, that he might receive further discoveries of the mind of God, and might abundantly furnish himself with something to say to the people when he went abroad. We find that the elders of Judah visited him, and sat before him, sometimes in his house, (ch. viii. 1.) to be witnesses of his ecstasies; but it was not till ch. xi. 25, that he shake to them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had showed him. Note, Those that are called to preach must find time to study, and a great deal of time too; must often shut themselves up in their houses, that they may give attendance to reading and meditation, and so their profiting may appear to all.

2. Instead of securing him an interest in the esteem and affections of those to whom he sent him, he tells him that they shall put bands upon him, and bind him, (v. 25.) either, (1.) As a criminal; they shall bind him in order to the further punishing of him as a disturber of the peace; though they were themselves sent into bondage in Babylon for persecuting the prophets, yet there they continue to persecute them; or, rather, (2.) As a distracted man; they would go about to bind him as one beside himself; for to that they imputed his violent motions in his raptures. The captains asked Jehu, Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee? Festus said to Paul, Thou art beside thyself; and so they said of our Lord Jesus, Mark iii. 21. Perhaps this was the reason why he must keep within doors, because otherwise they would bind him, under pretence of his being mad, and therefore he must not go out among them. Justly are prophets forbidden to go to those that will abuse them.

3. Instead of opening his lips, that his mouth might show forth God's praise, God silenced him, made his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, so that he was dumb for a considerable time, v. 26. The pious captives in Babylon used this imprecation upon themselves, that if they should forget Jerusalem, their tongue might cleave to the roof of their mouth, Ps. cxxxvii. 6. Ezekiel remembers Jerusalem more than any of them, and yet his tongue cleaves to the roof his mouth; and he that can speak best is forbidden to speak at all; and the reason given is, because they are a rebellious house to whom he is sent, and they are not worthy to have him for a reprover. He shall not give them instructions and admonitions, for they are lost and thrown away upon them. He is before commanded to speak boldly to them, because they are most rebellious; (ch. ii. 7.) but since that proves to no purpose, he is now for that reason enjoined silence, and shall not speak at all to them. Note, Those whose hearts are hardened against conviction, are justly deprived of the means of conviction. Why should not the reprovers be dumb, if, after long trials, it be found that the reprov'd resolve to be deaf? If Ephraim be joined to idols, let him alone. Thou shalt be dumb, and not be a reprover; implying, that unless he were dumb, he would be reproving; if he could speak at all, he would witness against the wickedness of the wicked.

But when God speaks with him, and designs to speak by him, he will open his mouth, v. 27. Note, Though God's prophets may be silenced awhile, there will come a time when God will give them the opening of the mouth again. And when God

speaks to his ministers, he not only opens their ears to hear what he says, but opens their mouth to return an answer. Moses, who had a veil on his face when he went down to the people, took it off when he went up again to God, Exod. xxxiv. 34.

4. Instead of giving him assurance of success when he should at any time speak to the people, he here leaves the matter very doubtful, and Ezekiel must not perplex and disquiet himself about it, but let it be as it will; *He that hears, let him hear*, and he is welcome to the comfort of it; *let him hear, and his soul shall live*; but *he that forbears, let him forbear* at his peril, and take what comes; *if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*, neither God nor his prophet shall be any losers by it; but the prophet shall be rewarded for his faithfulness in reproving the sinner, and God will have the glory of his justice in condemning him for not taking the reproof.

#### CHAP. IV.

Ezekiel was now among the captives in Babylon, but they there had Jerusalem still upon their hearts; the pious captives looked toward it with an eye of faith, (as Daniel, ch. vi. 10.) the presumptuous ones looked towards it with an eye of pride, and flattered themselves with a conceit that they should shortly return thither again; they that remained corresponded with the captives, and, it is likely, buoyed them up with hopes that all would be well yet, as long as Jerusalem was standing in its strength; and perhaps upbraided those with their folly who had surrendered at first; therefore, to take down this presumption, God gives the prophet, in this chapter, a very clear and affecting foresight of the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, and the calamities which would attend that siege. Two things are here represented to him in vision, I. The fortifications that should be raised against the city; this is signified by the prophet's laying siege to the portraiture of Jerusalem, (v. 1.-3.) and lying first on one side, and then on the other side, before it, v. 4.-8. II. The famine that should rage within the city; this is signified by his eating very coarse fare, and confining himself to a little of it, so long as this typical representation lasted, v. 9.-17.

1. **T**HOU also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, *even* Jerusalem: 2. And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set *battering-rams* against it round about. 3. Moreover, take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it *for* a wall of iron between thee and the city, and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. *This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.* 4. Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: *according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity.* 5. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. 6. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. 7. Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm *shall be uncovered*, and thou shalt prophesy against it

8. And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.

The prophet is here ordered to represent to himself and others, by signs which would be proper and powerful to strike the fancy and to affect the mind, *the siege of Jerusalem*; and this amounted to a prediction.

I. He was ordered to engrave a draft of Jerusalem upon a tile, v. 1. It was Jerusalem's honour, that while she kept her integrity, God had *graven her upon the palms of his hands*, (Isa. xlix. 16.) and the names of the tribes were engraven in precious stones on the breast-plate of the High Priest; but now *the faithful city is become a harlot*, a worthless, brittle tile or brick is thought good enough to *pourtray it upon*. This the prophet must lay before him, that the eye may affect the heart.

II. He was ordered to build little forts against this portraiture of the city, resembling the batteries raised by the besiegers, v. 2. Between the city that was besieged and himself that was the besieger he was to set up an *iron pan*, as an *iron wall*, v. 3. This represented the inflexible resolution of both sides; the Chaldeans resolved, whatever it cost them, that they would make themselves masters of the city, and would never quit it till they had conquered it; on the other side, the Jews resolved never to capitulate, but to hold out to the last extremity.

III. He was ordered to lie upon his side before it, as it were to surround it, representing the Chaldean army lying before it to block it up, to keep the meat from going in, and the mouths from going out. He was to lie on his left side three hundred and ninety *days*, (v. 5.) about thirteen months; the siege of Jerusalem is computed to last eighteen months, (Jer. lii. 4.-6.) but if we deduct from that five months' interval, when the besiegers withdrew upon the approach of Pharaoh's army, (Jer. xxxvii. 5.-8.) the number of the days of the close siege will be three hundred and ninety. Yet that also had another signification; three hundred and ninety days, according to the prophetic dialect, signified three hundred and ninety years; and when the prophet lies so many days on his side, he bears the guilt of that iniquity which *the house of Israel*, the ten tribes, had borne three hundred and ninety years, reckoning from their first apostasy under Jeroboam to the destruction of Jerusalem, which completed the ruin of those small remains of them that had incorporated with Judah. He is then to lie forty days *upon his right side*, and so long to bear *the iniquity of the house of Judah*, the kingdom of the two tribes, because the measure-filling sins of that people were those which they were guilty of during the last forty years before their captivity, since the thirtieth year of Josiah, when Jeremiah began to prophesy, Jer. i. 1, 2. Or, as some reckon it, since the eighteenth, when the book of the law was found, and the people renewed their covenant with God; when they persisted in their impieties and idolatries, notwithstanding they had such a prophet, and such a prince, and were brought into the bond of such a covenant, what could be expected but ruin without remedy? Judah, that had such helps and advantages for reformation, fills the measure of its iniquity in less time than Israel does. Now we are not to think that the prophet lay constantly night and day upon his side; but every day, for so many days together, at a certain time of the day, when he received visits, and company came in, he was found lying three hundred and ninety *days on his left side*, and forty *days on his right side*, before his portraiture of Jerusalem, which all that saw might easily un-

derstand to mean the close besieging of that city, and people would be flocking in daily, some for curiosity, and some for conscience, at the hour appointed, to see it, and to make their different remarks upon it.

His being found constantly on the same side, as if *bands were laid upon him*, (as indeed they were by the divine command,) so that he could not *turn him from one side to another till he had ended the days of the siege*, did plainly represent the close and constant continuance of the besiegers about the city during that number of days, till they had gained their point.

IV. He was ordered to prescote the siege with vigour; (*v. 7.*) *Thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem*, as wholly intent upon it, and resolved to carry it; so the Chaldeans would be, and neither bribed nor forced to withdraw from it. Nebuchadnezzar's resentments of Zedekiah's treachery in breaking his league with him, made him very furious in pushing on this siege, that he might chastise the insolence of that faithless prince and people; and this army promised themselves a rich booty of that pompous city, so that both set their faces against it, for they were very resolute. Nor were they less active and industrious, exerting themselves to the utmost in all the operations of the siege, which the prophet was to represent by the *uncovering of his arm*, or, as some read it, the *stretching out of his arm*, as it were to deal blows about without mercy. When God is about to do some great work, he is said to *make bare his arm*, Isa. lii. 10. In short, the Chaldeans will go about their business, and go on in it, as men in earnest, who resolve to go through with it.

Now, 1. This is intended to be a *sign to the house of Israel*, (*v. 3.*) both to them in Babylon, who were eye-witnesses of what the prophet did, and to them also who remained in their own land, who would hear the report of it. The prophet was *dumb*, and *could not speak*; (*ch. iii. 26.*) but as his silence had a voice, and upbraided the people with their deafness, so even God then *left not himself without witness*, but ordered him to make signs, as dumb men used to do, and as Zacharias did when he was dumb, and by them to *make known his mind*, that is, the mind of God, to the people. And thus likewise the people were upbraided with their stupidity and dullness, that they were not capable of being taught as men of sense are, by words, but must be taught as children are, by pictures, or as deaf men are, by signs. Or, perhaps, they are hereby upbraided with their malice against the prophet: had he spoken in words at length what was signified by these figures, they would have entangled him in his talk, would have indicted him for treasonable expressions, for they knew how to *make a man an offender for a word*; (Isa. xxix. 21.) to avoid which he is ordered to make use of signs. Or, the prophet made use of signs for the same reason that Christ made use of parables, that *hearing they might hear, and not understand, and seeing they might see, and not perceive*, Matth. xiii. 14, 15. They would not understand what was plain, and therefore shall be taught by that which is difficult; and herein the Lord was righteous.

2. Thus the prophet *prophesies against Jerusalem*; (*v. 7.*) and there were those who not only understood it so, but were the more affected with it by its being so represented; for images to the eye commonly make deeper impressions upon the mind than words can; and for this reason sacraments are instituted to represent divine things, that we might see and believe, might see and be affected with those things; and we may expect this benefit by them, and a blessing to go along with them, while (as the prophet here) we make use only of such signs as God

himself has expressly appointed, which, we must conclude, are the fittest. Note, The power of imagination, if it be rightly used, and kept under the direction and correction of reason and faith, may be of good use to kindle and excite pious and devout affections, as it was here to Ezekiel and his attendants. *Methinks I see* so and so, myself dying, time expiring, the world on fire, the dead rising, the great tribunal set, and the like, may have an exceedingly good influence upon us: for fancy is like fire, a *good servant, but a bad master*.

3. This whole transaction has that in it which the prophet might, with a good colour of reason, have hesitated at, and excepted against, and yet, in obedience to God's command, and in execution of his office, he did it according to order. (1.) It seemed childish and ludicrous, and beneath his gravity, and there were those that would ridicule him for it; but he knew the divine appointment put honour enough upon that which otherwise seemed mean, to save his reputation in the doing of it. (2.) It was toilsome and tiresome to do as he did; but our ease and credit must be sacrificed to our duty, and we must never call God's service in any instance of it a hard service. (3.) It could not but be very much against the grain with him to appear thus against Jerusalem, the city of God, the holy city, to act as an enemy against a place to which he was so good a friend; but he is a prophet, and must follow his instructions, not his affections, and must plainly preach the ruin of a sinful place, though its welfare is what he passionately desires, and earnestly prays for.

4. All this that the prophet sets before the children of his people concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, is designed to bring them to repentance, by showing them sin, the provoking cause of this destruction, sin, the ruin of that once flourishing city, than which surely nothing could be more effectual to make them hate sin, and turn from it; while he thus in lively colours describes the calamity with a great deal of pain and uneasiness to himself, he is *bearing the iniquity of Israel and Judah*; "Look here," (says he,) "and see what work sin makes, what an *evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God*; this comes of sin, your sin and the sin of your fathers; let that therefore be the daily matter of your sorrow and shame now in your captivity, that you may make your peace with God, and he may return in mercy to you." But observe, It is a day of punishment for a year of sin; *I have appointed thee each day for a year*. The siege is a calamity of three hundred and ninety days, in which God reckons for the iniquity of three hundred and ninety years; justly therefore do they acknowledge that God had *punished them less than their iniquity deserved*, Ezra ix. 13. But let impenitent sinners know that though now God is long-suffering toward them, in the other world there is an everlasting punishment. When God *laid bands upon the prophet*, it was to show them how they were *bound with the cords of their own transgression*, (Lam. i. 14.) and therefore they were now *holden in the cords of affliction*. But we may well think of the prophet's case with compassion, when God laid upon him the bands of duty, as he does on all his ministers, 1 Cor. ix. 16. *Necessity is laid upon me, and woe unto me if I preach not the gospel*; and yet men laid upon him bonds of restraint; (*ch. iii. 25.*) but under both it is satisfaction enough that they are serving the interests of God's kingdom among men.

9. Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof *according to the*

number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side; three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. 10. And thy meat which thou shalt eat *shall be* by weight, twenty shekels a-day: from time to time shalt thou eat it. 11. Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of a hin: from time to time shalt thou drink. 12. And thou shalt eat it *as* barley-cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. 13. And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. 14. Then said I, Ah Lord God! behold, my soul hath not been polluted; for from my youth up, even till now, have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. 15. Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith. 16. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: 17. That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.

The best exposition of this part of Ezekiel's prediction of Jerusalem's desolation is Jeremiah's Lamentation of it, Lam. iv. 3, 4, &c. and *ch.* v. 10. where he pathetically describes the terrible famine that was in Jerusalem during the siege, and the sad effects of it. The prophet here, to affect the people with the foresight of it, must confine himself for 390 days to coarse fare and short commons, and that ill-dressed, for they should want both food and fuel.

I. His meat, for the quality of it, was to be of the worst bread, made of but little wheat and barley, and the rest of beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, such as we feed horses or fatten hogs with, and this is mixed, as mill-corn, or as that in the beggar's bag, that has a dish full of one sort of corn at one house, and of another at another's house; of such corn as this must the prophet's bread be made, while he underwent the fatigue of lying on his side, and needed something better to support him, *v.* 9. Note, It is our wisdom not to be too fond of dainties and pleasant bread, because we know not what hard meat we may be tied to, nay, and may be glad of, before we die. The meanest sort of food is better than we deserve, and therefore must not be despised or wasted, nor must those that use it be looked upon with disdain, because we know not what may be our own lot.

II. For the quantity of it, it was to be of the least that a man could be kept alive with; to signify that the besieged should be reduced to short allowance, and should hold out till all the bread in the city was spent, Jer. xxxvii. 21. The prophet must eat but *twenty shekels* weight of bread a day, (*v.* 10.) that was about ten ounces; and he must drink but the *sixth part of a hin of water*, that was half a pint, about eight ounces, *v.* 11. The stint of the Lessian diet is fourteen ounces of meat, and sixteen of drink. The prophet in Babylon had bread enough and to

spare, and was by the river-side, where there was plenty of water; and yet, that he might confirm his own prediction, and be a sign to the children of Israel, God obliges him to live thus sparingly, and he submits to it. Note, God's servants must learn to endure hardness, and to deny themselves the use of lawful delights, when they may thereby serve the glory of God, evidence the sincerity of their faith, and express their sympathy with their brethren in affliction. The body must be *kept under, and brought into subjection*; nature is content with a little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. It is good to stint ourselves of choice, that we may the better bear it if ever we should come to be stinted by necessity. And in times of public distress and calamity, it ill becomes us to make much of ourselves, as those that *drank wine in bowls*, and *were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*, Amos vi. 4.—6.

III. For the dressing of it, he must *bake it with man's dung*, (*v.* 12.) that must be dried, and serve for fuel to heat his oven with; the thought of it would almost turn one's stomach; yet the coarse bread, thus baked, he must *eat as barley-cakes*, as freely as if it were the same bread he had been used to. This nauseous piece of cockery he must exercise publicly in *their sight*, that they might be the more affected with the calamity approaching, which was signified by it; that in the extremity of the famine they should not only have nothing that was dainty, but nothing that was cleanly, about them; they must take up with what they could get. *To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*

This circumstance of the sign, the baking of his bread with man's dung, the prophet with submission humbly desired might be dispensed with; (*v.* 14.) it seemed to have in it something of a ceremonial pollution, for there was a law that man's dung should be covered with earth, that God might see no unclean thing in their camp, Deut. xxiii. 13, 14. And must he go gather a thing so offensive, and use it in the dressing of his meat in the sight of the people? "*Ah Lord God,*" says he, "*behold, my soul hath not been polluted, and I am afraid lest by this it be polluted.*" Note, The pollution of the soul by sin is what good people dread more than any thing; and yet sometimes tender consciences fear it without cause, and perplex themselves with scruples about lawful things, as the prophet here, who had not yet learned that it is not that which *goes into the mouth that defiles the man*, Matth. xv. 11. But observe, He does not plead, "*Lord, from my youth I have been brought up delicately, and never used to any thing but what was clean and nice;*" (and there were those who were so brought up, who in the siege of Jerusalem did *embrace dunghills*, Lam. iv. 5.) but that he had been brought up conscientiously, and had never eaten any thing that was forbidden by the law, that *died of itself, or was torn in pieces*; "*And therefore, Lord, do not put this upon me now.*" Thus Peter pleaded, (Acts x. 14.) *Lord, I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.* Note, It will be comfortable to us, when we are reduced to hardships, if our hearts can witness for us that we have always been careful to abstain from sin, even from little sins, and the *appearances of evil*. Whatever God commands us, we may be sure is good; but if we be put upon any thing that we apprehend to be evil, we should argue against it, from this consideration, that hitherto we have preserved our purity—and shall we lose it now? Now, because Ezekiel with a manifest tenderness of conscience made this scruple, God dispensed with him in this manner. Note, Those who have power in their hands, should not be rigorous in pressing their commands upon those that are dissatisfied concerning them, yea, though their dissatisfactions be

groundless, or arising from education and long usage, but should recede from them rather than grieve or offend the weak, or put a stumbling-block before them; in conformity to the example of God's condescension to Ezekiel, though we are sure his authority is incontestable, and all his commands wise and good. God allowed Ezekiel to use *cow's dung* instead of *man's dung*, v. 15. This is an implicit reflection upon man, as intimating that, he being polluted with sin, his filthiness is more nauseous and odious than that of any other creature. *How much more abominable and filthy is man!* Job xv. 16.

Now this sign is particularly explained here; it signified,

1. That those who remained in Jerusalem should be brought to extreme misery for want of necessary food; all supplies being cut off by the besiegers, the city would soon find a want of the country, for *the king himself is served of the field*; and thus the *stuff of bread* would be *broken in Jerusalem*, v. 16. God would not only take away from the bread its power to nourish, so that *they shall eat, and not be satisfied*, (Lev. xxvi. 26.) but would take away the bread itself, Isa. iii. 1. So that what little remained should be *eaten by weight*, so much a-day, so much a-head, that they might have an equal share, and might make it last as long as possible. But to what purpose when they could not make it last always; and the besieged must be tired out before the besiegers? They shall eat and drink *with care*, to make it go as far as might be, and with *astonishment*, when they saw it almost spent, and knew not which way to look for a recruit. They shall be *astonished one with another*; whereas it used to be some alleviation of a calamity to have others share with us in it, (*Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*.) and some ease to the spirit to complain of the burthen, it should be an aggravation of the misery, that it was universal, and their complaining to one another should but make them all the more uneasy, and increase the *astonishment*; and the event shall be as bad as their fears; they cannot make it worse than it is, for *they shall consume away for their iniquity*; multitudes of them shall die of famine, a lingering death, worse than that by *the sword*; (Lam. iv. 9.) they shall die so as to *feel themselves die*; and it is so that brings all this misery upon them; *They shall consume away in their iniquity*; so it may be read. They shall continue hardened and impenitent, and shall die in their sins, which is more miserable than to die on a dunghill.

Now, (1.) Let us see here what woful work sin makes with a people, and acknowledge the righteousness of God herein. Time was when *Jerusalem was filled with the finest of the wheat*; (Ps. cxlvii. 14.) but now it would be glad of the coarsest, and cannot have it. *Fulness of bread*, as it was one of Jerusalem's mercies, so it was become one of her sins, Ezek. xvi. 49. The plenty was abused to luxury and excess, which was therefore thus justly punished with famine. It is a righteous thing with God to deprive us of those enjoyments which we have made the food and fuel of our lusts.

(2.) Let us see what reason we have to bless God for plenty; not only for the fruits of the earth, but for the freedom of commerce, that the husbandman can have money for his bread, and the tradesman bread for his money; that there is abundance not only in the field, but in the market, that those who live in cities and great towns, though they *sow not*, neither do they *reap*, are yet fed from day to day with food convenient.

2. It signified, that those who were carried into captivity should be forced to *eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles*, (v. 13.) to eat meat made up by Gentile hands, otherwise than according to the law of the Jewish church, which they were always

taught to call *defiled*, and which they would have as great an aversion to as a man would have to bread prepared with dung, that is, (as perhaps it may be understood,) kneaded and moulded with dung. Daniel and his fellows confined themselves to *pulse and water*, rather than they would *eat the portion of the king's meat* assigned them, because they apprehended it would defile them; (Dan. i. 8.) or, they should be forced to eat putrid meat, such as their oppressors would allow them in their slavery, and such as formerly they would have scorned to touch. Because they *served not God* with cheerfulness in the *abundance of all things*, God will make them *serve their enemies in the want of all things*.

## CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have a further, and no less terrible, denunciation of the judgments of God, which were coming with all speed and force upon the Jewish nation, which would utterly ruin it; for when God judges he will overcome. This destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here, I. Represented by a sign, the cutting, and burning, and scattering of hair, v. 1-4. II. That sign is expounded, and applied to Jerusalem. 1. Sin is charged upon Jerusalem as the cause of this desolation—contempt of God's law, (v. 5-7.) and profanation of his sanctuary, v. 11. 2. Wrath is threatened, great wrath, (v. 8, 10.) a variety of miseries, (v. 12, 16, 17.) such as should be their reproach and ruin, v. 13, 15.

1. **A**ND thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thy head, and upon thy beard; then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. 2. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled; and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife; and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind: and I will draw out a sword after them. 3. Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. 4. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

We have here the sign by which the utter destruction of Jerusalem is set forth; and here, as before, the prophet is himself the sign, that the people might see how much he affected himself with, and interested himself in, the case of Jerusalem, and how near it lay to his heart, even then when he foretold the desolations of it; he was so much concerned about it as to take what was done to it as done to himself, so far was he from desiring the woful day.

1. He must *shave off the hair of his head and beard*, (v. 1.) which signified God's utter rejecting and abandoning of that people, as a useless, worthless generation, such as could well be spared, nay, such as it would be his honour to part with; his judgments, and all the instruments he made use of in cutting them off were, this *sharp knife* and this *razor*, that were proper to be made use of, and would do execution. Jerusalem had been the head, but, being degenerated, was become as the *hair*, which, when it grows thick and long, is but a burthen which a man wishes to get clear of, as God of the sinners in Zion; *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*, Isa. i. 24. Ezekiel must not cut off that hair only which was superfluous, but *cut it all off*, denoting the full end that God would make of Jerusalem. The hair that would not be trimmed and kept neat and clean by the admonitions of the pro-

phets, must be all shaved off by an utter destruction. Those will be ruined that will not be reformed.

2. He must *weigh the hair, and divide it into three parts*. This intimates the very exact directing of God's judgments according to equity, (by him men and their actions are *weighed* in the unerring balance of truth and righteousness,) and the proportion which divine justice observes in punishing some by one judgment and others by another; one way or other, they shall all be met with. Some make the shaving of the hair to denote the loss of their liberty and of their honour: it was looked upon as a mark of ignominy, as in the disgrace Hanun put on David's ambassadors; it denotes also the loss of their joy, for they shaved their heads upon occasion of great mourning; I may add the loss of their Nazareneship, for the shaving of the head was a period to that vow, (Numb. vi. 18.) and Jerusalem was now no longer looked upon as a *holy city*.

3. He must dispose of the hair so that it might all be destroyed or dispersed, v. 2. (1.) One *third part must be burnt in the midst of the city*, denoting the multitudes that should perish by famine and pestilence, and perhaps many in the conflagration of the city, *when the days of the siege were fulfilled*; or the laying of that glorious city in ashes might well be looked upon as a third part of the destruction threatened. (2.) Another third part was to be *cut in pieces with a knife*, representing the many who, during the siege, were slain by the sword, in their sallies out upon the besiegers, and especially when the city was taken by storm, the Chaldeans being then most furious, and the Jews most feeble. (3.) Another third part was to be *scattered in the wind*, denoting the carrying away of some into the land of the conqueror, and the flight of others into the neighbouring countries for shelter; so that they were hurried some one way and some another, like loose hairs in the wind. But lest they should think that this dispersion would be their escape, God adds, *I will draw out a sword after them*; so that, wherever they go, evil shall pursue them. Note, God has variety of judgments wherewith to accomplish the destruction of a sinful people, and to make an end when he begins.

4. He must preserve a small quantity of the third sort that were to be *scattered in the wind, and bind them in his skirts*, as one would bind that which he is very mindful and careful of, v. 3. This signified perhaps that little handful of people which were left under the government of Gedaliah, who, it was hoped, would keep possession of the land when the body of the people was carried into captivity. Thus God would have done well for them if they would have done well for themselves. But these few that were reserved, must be taken, and *cast into the fire*, v. 4. When Gedaliah and his friends were slain, the people that put themselves under his protection were scattered, some gone into Egypt, others carried off by the Chaldeans, and in short the land totally cleared of them, then this was fulfilled, for out of those combustions *a fire came forth into all the house of Israel*, who, as fuel upon the fire, kindled and consumed one another. Note, It is ill with a people when those are taken away in wrath that seemed to be marked for monuments of mercy, for then there is no remnant or escaping, none shut up or left.

5. Thus saith the Lord God, *This is Jerusalem*: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries *that are round about her*. 6. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the coun-

tries that *are round about her*; for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye multiplied more than the nations that *are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes*, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that *are round about you*; 8. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, *am* against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee, in the sight of the nations. 9. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like; because of all thine abominations. 10. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds. 11. Wherefore, *as I live*, saith the Lord God, Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish *thee*; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity. 12. A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds; and I will draw out a sword after them. 13. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it* in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them. 14. Moreover, I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that *are round about thee*, in the sight of all that pass by. 15. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment, unto the nations that *are round about thee*, when I shall execute judgments in thee, in anger and in fury, and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken *it*. 16. When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for *their destruction, and* which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread. 17. So will I send upon you famine, and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it.

We have here the explanation of the foregoing similitude: *This is Jerusalem*. Thus it is usual in



scripture-language to give the name of the thing signified to the sign; as when Christ said, *This is my body*. The prophet's head, which was to be shaved, signified Jerusalem, which by the judgments of God was now to be stripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be set *naked and bare*, to be shaved with a razor that is *hired*, Isa. vii. 20. The head of one that was a priest, a prophet, a holy person, was fittest to represent Jerusalem the holy city. Now the contents of these verses are much the same with what we have often met with, and still shall, in the writings of the prophets. Here we have,

1. The privileges Jerusalem was honoured with; (v. 5.) *I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her*, and those, famous nations, and very considerable. Jerusalem was not situated in a remote, obscure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midst of kingdoms that were populous, polite, and civilized, famed for learning, arts, and sciences, and which then made the greatest figure in the world. But there seems to be more in it than this. 1. Jerusalem was dignified and preferred among the neighbouring nations, and their cities; it was *set in the midst of them* as excelling them all; *this holy mountain, was exalted above all the hills*, 1st. ii. 2. *Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in*, Ps. lxxviii. 16. Jerusalem was a city upon a hill, conspicuous and illustrious, and which all the neighbouring nations had an eye upon, some for good-will, some for ill-will. 2. Jerusalem was designed to have a good influence upon the *nations and countries round about*, was set in the midst of them as a candle upon a candlestick, to spread the light of divine revelation, which she was blessed with, to all the dark corners of the neighbouring nations, that from them it might diffuse itself further, even to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem was set in the *midst of the nations*, to be as the heart in the body, to invigorate this dead world with a divine life, as well as to enlighten this dark world with a divine light, to be an example of every thing that was good. The nations that observed what excellent *statutes and judgments* they had, concluded them to be a *wise and understanding people*, (Deut. iv. 6.) fit to be consulted as an oracle, as they were in Solomon's time, 1 Kings iv. 34. And had they preserved this reputation, and made a right use of it, what a blessing had Jerusalem been to all the nations about! But, failing to be so, the accomplishment of this intention was reserved for its latter days, *when out of Zion went forth the gospel-law, and the word of the Lord Jesus from Jerusalem*, and there *repentance and remission* began to be preached, and thence the preachers of them *went forth into all nations*. And when that was done, Jerusalem was levelled with the ground. Note, When places and persons are made great, it is with design that they may do good, and that those about them may be the better for them; that their *light may shine before men*.

II. The provocations Jerusalem was guilty of. A very high charge is here drawn up against that city, and proved beyond contradiction sufficient to justify God in seizing its privileges, and putting it under military execution.

1. She had *not walked in God's statutes*, nor *kept his judgments*; (v. 7.) nay, they had *refused his judgments and his statutes*, (v. 6.) they did not do their duty, nay, they *would not*, they *said* that they would not: those *statutes and judgments* which their neighbours admired, they despised; which they should have set before their face, they cast behind their back. Note, A contempt of the word and law of God opens a door to all manner of iniquity. God's statutes are the terms on which he

deals with men; they that refuse his terms, cannot expect his favours.

2. She had *changed God's judgments unto wickedness*, (v. 6.) a very high expression of their profaneness, that they had not only broken God's laws, but had so perverted and abused them, that they had made them the excuse and colour of their wickedness; they introduced the abominable customs and usages of the heathen, instead of God's institutions; this was changing the *truth of God into a lie*, (Rom. i. 25.) and the *glory of God into shame*, Ps. iv. 2. Note, Those that have been well educated, if they live ill, put the highest affront imaginable upon God, as if he were the Patron of sin, and his judgments were turned into wickedness.

3. She had been worse than the neighbouring nations, to whom she should have set a good example; *She has changed my judgments*, by idolatries and false worship, *more than the nations*, (v. 6.) and she has *multiplied idols and altars*, gods and temples, multiplied those things the unity of which was their praise, *more than the nations that were round about*. Israel's God is one, and his name one, his altar one; but they, not content with this one God, multiplied their gods to that degree, that *according to the number of their cities so were their gods*, and their altars *as heaps in the furrows of the field*; so that they exceeded all their neighbours in having *gods many and lords many*. They corrupted revealed religion more than the Gentiles had corrupted natural religion. Note, If those who have made a profession of religion, and have had a pious education, apostatize from it, they are commonly more profane and vicious than those who never made any profession; they have *seven other spirits more wicked*.

4. She had *not done according to the judgments of the nations*; (v. 7.) they had not acted toward their God, though he is the only true God, as the nations had acted toward their gods, though they were false gods; they had not been so observant of him, nor so constant to him. Has a nation *changed their gods*, or slighted them, so as they have? Jer. ii. 11. Or, it may refer to their morals; instead of reforming their neighbours, they came short of them; and many who were of the *uncircumcision kept the righteousness of the law* better than those who were of the *circumcision*, Rom. ii. 26, 27. Those who had the light of scripture did not *according to the judgments* of many who had only the light of nature. Note, There are those who are called *Christians*, who will in the great day be condemned by the better tempers and better lives of sober heathens.

5. The particular crime charged upon Jerusalem is, profaning the holy things, which she had been both intrusted and honoured with; (v. 11.) *Thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things*, with thine idols and idolatries. The images of their pretended deities, and the groves erected in honour of them, were brought into the temple; and the ceremonies used by idolaters were brought into the worship of God; thus every thing that is sacred was polluted. Note, Idols are detestable things any where, but more especially so in the sanctuary.

III. The punishments that Jerusalem should fall under for these provocations; *Shall not God visit for these things?* No doubt he shall. The matter of the sentence here passed upon Jerusalem is very dreadful, and the manner of expression makes it yet more so; the judgments are various, and the threatenings of them varied, reiterated, inculcated: that one may well say, *Who is able to stand in God's sight when once he is angry?*

1. God will take this work of punishing Jerusalem into his own hands; and *who knows the power*



of his anger, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Observe what a strong emphasis is laid upon it, (v. 8.) *I, even I, am against thee.* God had been for Jerusalem, to defend and save it; but miserable is its case when he is turned to be its Enemy, and fights against it. If God be against us, the whole creation is at war with us, and nothing can be for us so as to stand us in any stead; "You think it is only the Chaldean army that is against you, but they are God's hand, or rather the staff in his hand; it is *I, even I, that am against thee*; not only to speak against thee by prophets, but to act against thee by providence. *I will execute judgments in thee, (v. 10.) in the midst of thee, (v. 8.)* not only in the suburbs, but in the heart of the city; not only in the borders, but in the bowels of the country." Note, Those who will not observe the judgments of God's mouth, shall not escape the judgments of his hand; and God's judgments, when they come with commission, will penetrate into the midst of a people, will enter into the soul, *into the bowels like water, and like oil into the bones; I will execute judgments.* Note, God himself undertakes to execute his own judgments, according to the true and full intent of them; whatever are the instruments, he is the principal Agent.

2. These punishments shall come from his displeasure. As to the body of the people, it shall not be a correction in love, but he will *execute judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious rebukes*; (v. 15.) strange expressions to come from a God, who has said, *Fury is not in me*; and who has declared himself *gracious, and merciful, and slow to anger.* But they are designed to show the malignity of sin, and the offence it gives to the just and holy God. That must needs be a very evil thing which provokes him to such resentments, and against his own people too, that had been so high in his favour, and expressed with so much satisfaction; (v. 13.) "*Mine anger, which has long been withheld, shall now be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them*; it shall not only light upon them, but lie upon them, and fill them as vessels of wrath fitted by their own wickedness to destruction; and, justice being hereby glorified, *I will be comforted*, I will be entirely satisfied in what I have done." As when God is dishonoured by the sins of men, he is said to be *grieved*, (Ps. xc. 10.) so when he is honoured by their destruction, he is said to be *comforted*. The struggle between mercy and judgment is over, and in this case judgment triumphs, triumphs indeed: for mercy that has been so long abused, is now silent, and gives up the cause, has not a word more to say on the behalf of such an ungrateful, incorrigible people; *Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have any pity, v. 11.* Divine compassion defers the punishment, or mitigates it, or supports under it, or shortens it, but here is *judgment without mercy*, wrath without any mixture or alloy of pity. These expressions are thus sharpened and heightened, perhaps with design to look further, to the vengeance of eternal fire, which some of the destructions we read of in the Old Testament were typical of, and particularly that of Jerusalem; for surely it is no where on this side hell that this word has its full accomplishment, *Mine eye shall not spare, but I will cause my fury to rest.* Note, Those who live and die impenitent, will perish for ever unpitied; there is a day coming when *the Lord will not spare.*

3. Punishments shall be public and open; *I will execute these judgments in the sight of the nations*; (v. 8.) the judgments themselves shall be so remarkable, that all the nations far and near shall take notice of them; they shall be all the talk of that part of the world, and more for the conspicuousness of the place and people on which they are inflicted.

Note, Public sins, as they call for public reproofs, (*Them that sin rebuke before all,*) so, if those prevail not, they call for public judgments. *He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others,* (Joh xxxiv. 26.) that he may maintain and vindicate the honour of his government, for (as Grotius descends upon it here) *why should he suffer it to be said, See what wicked lives they lead, who profess to be the worshippers of the only true God!* And as the publicity of the judgments will redound to the honour of God, so it will serve, (1.) To aggravate the punishment, and to make it lie the more heavy. Jerusalem, being made waste, becomes a *reproach among the nations, in the sight of all that pass by, v. 14.* The more conspicuous and the more peculiar any have been in the day of their prosperity, the greater disgrace attends their fall; and that was Jerusalem's case. The more Jerusalem had been *a praise in the earth*, the more it is now *a reproach and a taunt, v. 15.* This she was warned of as much as any thing when her glory commenced, (1 Kings ix. 8.) and this was lamented as much as any thing when it was laid in the dust, Lam. ii. 15. (2.) To teach the nations to fear before the God of Israel, when they saw what a jealous God he is, and how severely he punishes sin, even in those that are nearest to him. *It shall be an instruction to the nations, v. 15.* Jerusalem should have taught her neighbours the fear of God by her piety and virtue, but she not doing that, God will teach it them by her ruin; for they have reason to say, *If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* If judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? If they be thus punished, who only had some idolaters among them, what will become of us who are all idolaters? Note, The destruction of some is designed for the instruction of others. Malfactors are publicly punished, *in terrorem—that others may take warning.*

4. These punishments, in the kind of them, shall be very severe and grievous. (1.) They shall be such as have no precedent or parallel. Their sins being more provoking than those of others, the judgments executed upon them should be uncommon. (v. 9.) "*I will do in thee that which I have not done in thee before, though thou hast long since deserved it*; nay, that which I have not done in any other city." This punishment of Jerusalem is said to be *greater than that of Sodom*, (Lam. iv. 6.) which was the sorest of all that went before it; nay, it is such as *I will not do any more the like*, all the circumstances taken in, to any other city, till the like come to be done again to this city, in its final overthrow by the Romans. This is a rhetorical expression of the most grievous judgments, like that character of Hezekiah, that there was *none like him, before or after him.* (2.) They shall be such as will force them to break the strongest bonds of natural affection to one another, which will be a just punishment of them for their wilful breaking of the bonds of their duty to God; (v. 10.) *The fathers shall eat the sons, and the sons shall eat the fathers*, through the extremity of the famine, or compelled to do it by their barbarous conquerors. (3.) There shall be a complication of judgments, any one of them terrible enough, and desolating; but what then would they be when they came all together, and in perfection? Some shall be taken away by the plague; (v. 12.) *the pestilence shall pass through thee*, (v. 17.) sweeping all before it, as the destroying angel; others shall be consumed with famine, shall gradually waste away as men in a consumption; (v. 12.) this is again insisted on; (v. 16.) *I will send upon them the evil arrows of famine*; hunger shall make them pine, and shall pierce them to the heart, as if arrows, *evil arrows*, poisoned darts were shot into them; God has many arrows, *evil arrows*, in

his quiver; when some are discharged, he has still more in reserve. *I will increase the famine upon you*; a famine in a bereaved country may decrease, as fruits spring forth; but a famine in a besieged city will increase of course: yet God speaks of it as his act; "*I will increase it, and will break your staff of bread*; will take away the necessary supports of life, will disappoint you of all that which you depend upon, so that there is no remedy, but you must fall to the ground." Life is frail, is weak, is burdened, so that, if it have not daily bread for its staff to lean upon, it cannot but sink, and is soon gone if that staff be broken. *Others shall fall by the sword round about Jerusalem*, when they sally out upon the besiegers; it is a sword, which God will bring, v. 17. The sword of the Lord, that used to be drawn for Jerusalem's defence, is now drawn for its destruction. Others are devoured by evil beasts, which will make a prey of those that fly for shelter to the deserts and mountains; they shall meet their ruin where they expected refuge, for there is no escaping the judgments of God, v. 17. And lastly, those who escape shall be scattered into all parts of the world, *into all the winds*, (so it is expressed, v. 10, 12.) intimating that they should not only be dispersed, but hurried, and tossed, and driven to and fro, as chaff before the wind. Nay, and Cain's curse (to be fugitives and vagabonds) is not the worst of it neither, their restless life shall be cut off by a bloody death; *I will draw out a sword after them*, which shall follow them wherever they go. *Evil pursues sinners*; and the curse shall come upon them, and overtake them.

5. These punishments will prove their ruin by degrees; they shall be diminished, (v. 11.) their strength and glory shall grow less and less; they shall be bereaved, (v. 17.) emptied of all that which was their joy and confidence. God sends these judgments on purpose to destroy them, v. 16. The arrows are not sent (as those which Jonathan shot) for their direction, but for their destruction: for God will accomplish his fury upon them, (v. 13.) the day of God's patience is over, and the rain is remediless. Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment now quickly, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, yet the executioners not being named here, but the criminal only, (*This is Jerusalem*;) we may well suppose that it looks further, to the final destruction of that great city by the Romans, when God made a full end of the Jewish nation, and caused his fury to rest upon them.

6. All this is ratified by the divine authority and veracity; *I the Lord have spoken it*, (v. 15.) and again, v. 17. The sentence is passed by him that is Judge of heaven and earth, whose judgment is according to truth, and the judgments of his hand according to the judgments of his mouth. He has spoken it, who can do it, for with him nothing is impossible. He has spoken it, who will do it, for he is not a man that he should lie. He has spoken it, whom we are bound to hear and heed; whose *ipse dixit*—word commands the most serious attention and submissive assent; *And they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it*, v. 13. There were those who thought it was only the prophet that spake it in his delirium; but God will make them know, by the accomplishment of it, that he has spoken it in his zeal. Note, Sooner or later, God's word will prove itself.

## CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, we have, I. A threatening of the destruction of Israel for their idolatry, and the destruction of their idols with them, v. 1. 7. II. A promise of the gracious return of a remnant of them to God, by true repentance and reformation v. 8 10 III. Directions

given to the prophet and others, the Lord's servants, to lament both the iniquities and the calamities of Israel, v. 11. 14.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, 3 And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Behold, I, even I will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places; 4. And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken; and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. 5. And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. 6. In all your dwelling-places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. 7. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Here, 1. The prophecy is directed to the mountains of Israel, (v. 1, 2.) the prophet must set his face toward them; if he could see so far off as the land of Israel, the mountains of that land would be first and furthest seen; toward them therefore he must look, and look boldly and stedfastly, as the judge looks at the prisoner, and directs his speech to him, when he passes sentence upon him. Though the mountains of Israel be ever so high and ever so strong, he must set his face against them, as having judgments to denounce, that should shake their foundation. The mountains of Israel had been holy mountains, but now that they had polluted them with their high places, God sets his face against them, and therefore the prophet must. Israel is here put, not, as sometimes, for the ten tribes, but for the whole land. The mountains are called upon to hear the word of the Lord, to shame the inhabitants that would not hear. The prophets might as soon gain attention from the mountains as from that rebellious and gainsaying people, to whom they all day long stretched out their hands in vain. Hear, O mountains, the Lord's controversy; (Mich. vi. 1, 2.) for God's cause will have a hearing, whether we hear it or no. But from the mountains the word of the Lord echoes to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; for to them also the Lord God speaks; intimating that the whole land is concerned in what is now to be delivered, and shall be witnesses against this people, that they had fair warning given them of the judgments coming, but they would not take it; nay, they contradicted the message, and persecuted the messengers, so that God's prophets might more safely and comfortably speak to the hills and mountains than to them.

2. That which is threatened in this prophecy, is the utter destruction of the idols and the idolaters, and both by the sword of war. God himself is commander in chief of this expedition against the mountains of Israel; it is he that says, Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you; (v. 3.) the sword of the

Chaldeans is at God's command, goes where he sends it, comes where he brings it, and lights as he directs it. In the desolations of that war,

(1.) The idols and all their appurtenances should be destroyed. The *high places*, which were on the tops of mountains, (v. 3.) these shall be levelled, and made desolate, (v. 6.) they shall not be beautified, shall not be frequented as they had been; the altars, on which they offered sacrifice and burnt incense to strange gods, shall be broken to pieces and laid waste; the images and idols shall be defaced, shall be broken and cease, and be cut down, and all the fine costly works about them shall be abolished, v. 4, 6. Observe here, [1.] That war makes woful desolations, which those persons, places, and things, that were esteemed most sacred, cannot escape; for *the sword devours one as well as another*. [2.] That God sometimes ruins idolatries, even by the hands of idolaters, for such the Chaldeans themselves were; but, as if the deity were a local thing, the greatest admirers of the gods of their own country were the greatest despisers of the gods of other countries. [3.] It is just with God to make that a desolation, which we make an idol of; for he is a jealous God, and will not bear a rival. [4.] If men do not, as they ought, destroy idolatry, God will, first or last find out a way to do it. When Josiah had destroyed the high places, altars, and images, with the sword of justice, they set them up again; but God will now destroy them with the sword of war, and let us see who dares re-establish them.

(2.) The worshippers of idols and all their adherents should be destroyed likewise; as *all their high places shall be laid waste, so shall all their dwelling-places too, even all their cities*, v. 6. They that profane God's dwelling-place as they had done, can expect no other than that he should abandon theirs, ch. v. 11. *If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy*, 1 Cor. iii. 17. It is here threatened, that *their slain shall fall in the midst of them*; (v. 7.) there shall be abundance slain, even in those places which were thought most safe; but it is added as a remarkable circumstance, that they shall fall *before their idols*, (v. 4.) that their *dead carcasses* should be laid, and their *bones scattered, about their altars*, v. 5. [1.] Thus their idols should be polluted, and those places profaned by the dead bodies, which they had had in veneration. If they will not *defile the covering of their graven images*, God will, Isa. xxx. 22. The throwing of the carcasses among them, as upon the dung-hill, intimates that they were but dung-hill deities. [2.] Thus it was intimated that they were but dead things, unfit to be rivals with the *living God*; for the carcasses of dead men, that, like them, *have eyes and see not, ears and hear not*, were the fittest company for them. [3.] Thus the idols were upbraided with their inability to help their worshippers, and idolaters upbraided with the folly of trusting in them; for, it should seem, they fell by the sword of the enemy then when they were actually before their idols, imploring their aid, and putting themselves under their protection. Sennacherib was slain by his sons then when he was *worshipping in the house of his god*. [4.] The sin might be read in this circumstance of the punishment; the *slain men are cast before the idols*, to show that *therefore* they are slain, because they worshipped those idols: see Jer. viii. 2. Let the survivors observe it, and take warning not to worship images: let them see it, and know that *God is the Lord*, that the Lord he is God, and he alone.

8. Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. 9. And they

that escape of you shall remember me among the nations, whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. 10. And they shall know that I am the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

Judgment had hitherto triumphed, but in these verses mercy rejoices against judgment: a sad end is made of this provoking people, but not a full end; the ruin seems to be universal, and yet *will I leave a remnant*, a little remnant, distinguished from the body of the people, a few of many; such as are left when the rest perish; and it is God that leaves them. This intimates that they deserved to have been cut off with the rest, and had been cut off if God had not left them. See Isa. i. 9. And it is God who by his grace works that in them which he has an eye to in sparing them. Now,

I. It is a preserved remnant, saved from the ruin which the body of the nation is involved in; (v. 8.) *that ye may have some who shall escape the sword*. God said, (ch. v. 12.) that he would draw a sword after them who were scattered, that destruction should pursue them in their dispersions; but here is *mercy remembered in the midst of that wrath*, and a promise that some of the Jews of the dispersion, as they were afterward called, should escape the sword. None of those who were to fall by the sword about Jerusalem, shall escape, for they trust to Jerusalem's walls for security, and shall be made ashamed of that vain confidence; but some of them shall escape the sword among the nations, where, being deprived of all other stays, they stay themselves upon God only. They are said to have those who shall escape; for they shall be the seed of another generation, out of which Jerusalem shall flourish again.

II. It is a penitent remnant; (v. 9.) *They who escape of you, shall remember me*. Note, To those whom God designs for life, he will give *repentance unto life*: they are reprieved, and escape the sword, that they may have time to return to God. Note, God's patience both leaves room for repentance, and is an encouragement to sinners to repent. Where God designs grace to repent, he allows space to repent; yet many who have the space want the grace; many who escape the sword, do not forsake the sin, as it is promised that these shall do. This remnant, here marked for salvation, is a type of the remnant reserved out of the body of mankind to be monuments of mercy, which are made safe in the same way that these were, by being brought to repentance. Now observe here,

1. The occasion of their repentance, and that is a mixture of judgment and mercy; judgment, that they were *carried captives*; but mercy, that they escaped the sword in the land of their captivity; they were driven out of their own land, but not out of the land of the living; *not chased out of the world*, as others were, and they deserved to be. Note, The consideration of the just rebukes of Providence we are under, and yet of the mercy mixed with them, should engage us to repent, that we may answer God's end in both. And true repentance shall be accepted of God, though we are brought to it by our troubles; nay, sanctified afflictions often prove means of conversion, as to Manassah.

2. The root and principle of their repentance: *They shall remember me among the nations*. They

who *forgot God* in the land of their peace and prosperity, *waxed fat and kicked*, were brought to remember him in the land of their captivity. The prodigal son never bethought himself of his father's house till he was ready to *perish for hunger in the far country*. Their remembering of God was the first step they took in returning to him. Note, Then there begins to be some hopes of sinners, when they begin to think of him whom they have sinned against, and to inquire, *Where is God my Maker?* Sin takes rise in forgetting God, Jer. iii. 21. Repentance takes rise from the remembrance of him, and of our obligations to him. God says, *They shall remember me*, that is, "I will give them grace to do so;" for otherwise they would forever forget him. That grace shall find them out wherever they are, and by bringing God to their mind shall bring them to their right mind. The prodigal, when he remembered his father, remembered how he had *sinned against heaven, and before him*; so do these penitents.

(1.) They remember the base affront they had put upon God by their idolatries, and this is that which an ingenious repentance fastens upon, and most sadly laments. They had departed from God to idols, and given that honour to pretended deities, the creatures of men's fancies, and the work of men's hands, which they should have given to the God of Israel. They *departed from God*, from his word, which they should have made their rule; from his work, which they should have made their business; *their hearts departed from him*. The heart, which he requires and insists upon, and without which *bodily exercise profits nothing*; the heart, which should be set upon him, and carried out toward him, when that *departs from him*, is as the treacherous elopement of a wife from her husband, or the rebellious revolt of a subject from his sovereign. *Their eyes also go after their idols*; they doted on them, and had great expectations from them. Their hearts followed their eyes in the choice of their gods; they must have gods that they could see, and then their eyes followed their hearts in the adoration of them. Now the malignity of this sin is, that it is spiritual whoredom; it is a *whorish heart that departs from God*; and they are *eyes that go a whoring after their idols*. Note, Idolatry is spiritual whoredom; it is the breach of a marriage covenant with God; it is the setting of the affections upon that which is a rival with him, and the indulgence of a base lust, which deceives and defiles the soul, and is a great wrong to God in his honour.

(2.) They remember what a grief this was to him, and how he resented it. They shall remember that *I am broken with their whorish heart, and their eyes* that are full of this spiritual adultery; not only angry at it, but grieved, as a husband is at the lewdness of a wife whom he dearly loved, grieved to that degree, that he is broken with it; it breaks his heart to think that he should be so disingenuously dealt with; he is broken as an aged father is with the undutiful behaviour of a rebellious and disobedient son, which sinks his spirits, and makes him to stoop. *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation*, Ps. xc. 10. *God's measures were broken*; so some; a stop was put to the current of his favours toward them, and he was even compelled to punish them. This they shall remember in the day of their repentance, and it shall affect and humble them more than any thing; not so much that their peace was broken, and their country broken, as that *God was broken by their sin*. Thus *they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn*, Zech. xii. 10. Note, Nothing grieves a true penitent so much as to think that his sin has been a grief to God, and to the Spirit of his grace.

3. The product and evidence of their repentance; *They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations*. Thus God will give them grace to qualify them for pardon and deliverance. Though he had been *broken by their whorish heart*, yet he would not quite cast them off. See Isa. lvii. 17, 18. Hcs. ii. 13, 14. His goodness takes occasion from their badness to appear the more illustrious. Note, (1.) True penitents see sin to be an abominable thing, that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*, and which makes sinners, and even their services, odious to him, Jer. xlv. 4. Isa. i. 11. It defiles the sinner's own conscience, and makes him, unless he be past feeling, an abomination to himself. An idol is particularly called *an abomination*, Isa. xlv. 19. Those gratifications which the hearts of sinners were set upon as delectable things, the hearts of penitents are turned against as detestable things. (2.) There are many evils committed in these abominations, many included in them, attendant on them, and flowing from them; many transgressions in one sin, Lev. xvi. 21. In their idolatries they were sometimes guilty of whoredom, as in the worship of Peor; sometimes of murder, as in the worship of Moloch; these were evils committed in their abominations. Or, it denotes the great malignity there is in sin; it is an abomination that has abundance of evil in it. (3.) Those that truly loathe sin, cannot but loathe themselves because of sin; self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance. Penitents quarrel with themselves, and can never be reconciled to themselves till they have some ground to hope that God is reconciled to them; nay, then they shall lie down in their shame, when he is pacified toward them, Ezek. xvi. 1.

4. The glory that will redound to God by their repentance; (v. 10.) "*They shall know that I am the Lord*; they shall be convinced of it by experience, and shall be ready to own it, and that *I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them*, finding that what I have said is made good, and made to work for good, and to answer a good intention, and that it was not without just provocation that they were thus threatened and thus punished." Note, (1.) One way or other, God will make sinners to know and own that he is *the Lord*, either by their repentance or by their ruin. (2.) All true penitents are brought to acknowledge both the equity and the efficacy of the word of God, particularly the threatenings of the word, and to justify God in them, and in the accomplishment of them.

11. Thus saith the Lord God, Smite with thy hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. 12. He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them. 13. Then shall ye know that *I am the Lord*, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols. 14. So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than

the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

The same threatenings which we had before in the foregoing chapter, and in the former part of this are here repeated, with a direction to the prophet to lament them, that those he prophesied to might be the more affected with the foresight of them.

I. He must by his gestures in preaching express the deep sense he had both of the iniquities and of the calamities of the house of Israel; (v. 11.) *Smite with thy hand, and stamp with thy foot.* Thus he must make it to appear that he was in earnest in what he said to them, that he firmly believed it, and laid it to heart; thus he must signify the just displeasure he had conceived at their sins, and the just dread he was under of the judgments coming upon them. Some would reject this use of these gestures, and call them *antic* and *ridiculous*; but God bids him use them because they might help to enforce the word upon some, and give it the setting on; and those that know the worth of souls, will be content to be laughed at by the wits, so they may but edify the weak. Two things the prophet must thus lament; (1.) National sins. *Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel!* Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of God's faithful servants, especially the *evil abominations of the house of Israel*, whose sins are more abominable, and have more evil in them, than the sins of others. *Alas! What will be in the end hereof?* (2.) National judgments. To punish them for these abominations, *they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.* Note, It is our duty to be affected not only with our own sins and sufferings, but with the sins and sufferings of others; and to look with compassion upon the miseries that wicked people bring upon themselves; as Christ beheld Jerusalem, and *wept over it.*

2. He must inculcate what he had said before concerning the destruction that was coming upon them.

(1.) They shall be run down and ruined by a variety of judgments which shall find them out, and follow them wherever they are; (v. 12.) *He that is far off, and thinks himself out of danger, because out of the reach of the Chaldeans' arrows, shall find himself not out of the reach of God's arrows, which fly day and night; (Ps. xci. 5.) he shall die of the pestilence; he that is near a place of strength, which he hopes will be to him a place of safety, shall fall by the sword, before he can retreat; he that is so cautious as not to venture out, but remains in the city, there he shall die by the famine, the saddest death of all. Thus will God accomplish his fury; do all that against them which he had purposed to do.*

(2.) They shall read their sin in their punishment; *for their slain men shall be among their idols, round about their altars*, as was threatened before, v. 5.—7. There, where they had prostrated themselves in honour of their idols, God will lay them dead, to their own reproach, and the reproach of their idols. They lived among them and shall die among them. They had offered sweet odours to their idols, but there shall their dead carcases send forth an offensive smell, as it were to atone for that misplaced incense.

(3.) The country shall be all laid waste, as before the cities; (v. 6.) *I will make the land desolate.* That fruitful, pleasant, populous country, that has been as the garden of the Lord, the glory of all lands, shall be *desolate, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath*, v. 14. It is called Dib-

lathaim, (Numb. xxxiii. 46.—xlvi. 22.) that *great and terrible wilderness*, which is described, Deut. viii. 15. wherein were *fiery serpents and scorpions.* The land of Canaan is at this day one of the most barren, desolate countries in the world. City and country are thus depopulated, *that the altars may be laid waste, and made desolate*, v. 6. Rather than their idolatrous altars shall be left standing, both town and country shall be laid in ruins. Sin is a desolating thing; therefore *stand in awe, and sin not.*

## CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, the approaching ruin of the land of Israel is most particularly foretold in affecting expressions often repeated, that if possible they might be awakened by repentance to prevent it. The prophet must tell them, I. That it will be a final ruin, a complete, utter destruction, which would make an end of them, a miserable end, v. 1.—6. II. That it is an approaching ruin, just at the door, v. 7.—10. III. That it is an unavoidable ruin, because they had by sin brought it upon themselves, v. 10.—15. IV. That their strength and wealth should be no fence against it, v. 16.—19. V. That the temple, which they trusted in, should itself be ruined, v. 20.—22. VI. That it should be a universal ruin, the sin that brought it having been universal, v. 23.—27.

1. **M**OREOVER, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. 3. Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations. 4. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 5. Thus saith the Lord God, An evil, an only evil, behold, is come. 6. An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come. 7. The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains. 8. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee; and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. 9. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways, and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord that smiteth. 10. Behold the day, behold, it is come; the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed; pride hath budded. 11. Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs; neither shall there be wailing for them. 12. The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. 13. For the seller shall not return to that which

is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, *which* shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life.

14. They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. 15. The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

We have here fair warning given of the destruction of the land of Israel, which was now hastening on apace. God, by the prophet, not only sends notice of it, but will have it inculcated in the same expressions, to show that the thing is certain, that it is near, that the prophet is himself affected with it, and desires they should be so too, but finds them deaf, and stupid, and unaffected. When the town is on fire, men do not seek for fine words and quaint expressions, in which to give an account of it, but cry about the streets, with a loud and lamentable voice, "Fire, fire." So the prophet here proclaims, *An end, an end, it is come, it is come, behold, it is come.* He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

1. *An end is come, the end is come,* (v. 2.) and again, (v. 3, 6.) *Now is the end come upon thee; the end* which all their wickedness had a tendency to, and which God had often told them it would come to at last, when by his prophets he had asked them, *What will ye do in the end thereof?* The end, which all the foregoing judgments had been working toward, as means to bring it about; their ruin shall now be completed; or, the end, that is, the period of their state, the final destruction of their nation, as the deluge was the end of all flesh, Gen. vi. 13. They had flattered themselves with hopes that they should shortly see an end of their troubles; "Yea," says God, "*An end is come, but a miserable one, not the expected end,*" (which is promised to the pious remnant among them, Jer. xxix. 11.) "*it is the end, that end* which you have been so often warned of; *that last end,* which Moses wished you to consider, (Deut. xxxii. 29.) and which because Jerusalem remembered not, therefore she came down wonderfully," Lam. i. 9. This end was long in coming, but now it is come. Though the ruin of sinners comes slowly, it comes surely. "*It is come, it watches for thee, ready to receive thee.*" This perhaps looks further, to the last destruction of that nation by the Romans, which that by the Chaldeans was an earnest of; and still further, to the final destruction of the world of the ungodly. *The end of all things is at hand;* and Jerusalem's last end was a type of the end of the world, Matth. xxiv. 3. O that we could all see that end of time and days very near, and the end of our own time and days much nearer, that we may secure a happy lot in the end of the days! Dan. xii. 13. *This end comes upon the four corners of the land;* the ruin, as it shall be final, so it shall be total; no part of the land shall escape; no, not that which lies most remote; such will the destruction of the world be; all these things shall be dissolved; such will the destruction of sinners be; none can avoid it. *O that the wickedness of the wicked might come to an end,* before it bring them to an end.

2. *An evil, an only evil, behold, is come,* v. 5. Sin is an evil, an only evil, an evil that has no good in it; it is the worst of evils; but this is spoken of the evil of trouble; it is an evil, one evil; and that one shall suffice to effect and complete the ruin of

the nation, there needs no more to do its business; this one shall make an utter end, affliction needs not rise up a second time, Nah. i. 9. It is an evil without precedent or parallel, an evil that stands alone, you cannot produce such another instance. It is to the impenitent an evil, an only evil, it hardens their hearts, and irritates their corruptions; whereas there were those to whom it was sanctified by the grace of God, and made a means of much good; they were sent into Babylon for their good, Jer. xxiv. 5.

The wicked have the dregs of that cup to drink, which to the righteous is full of mixtures of mercy, Ps. lxxv. 8. The same affliction is to us either a half evil, or an only evil, according as we conduct ourselves under it, and make use of it. But when an end, the end, is come upon the wicked world, then an evil, an only evil, comes upon it, and not till then. The sorest of temporal judgments have their allays, but the torments of the damned are an evil, an only evil.

3. *The time is come,* the set time, for the inflicting of this only evil, and the making of this full end; for to all God's purposes there is a time, a proper time, and that prefixed, in which the purpose shall have its accomplishment; particularly the time of reckoning with wicked people, and rendering to them according to their deserts, is fixed; *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God;* and he sees, whether we see it or no, that his day is coming. This they are here told of again and again; (v. 10.) *Behold, the day,* that has lingered so long, *is come* at last, *behold, it is come.* *The time is come, the day draws near, the day of trouble is near,* v. 7, 12. Though threatened judgments may be long deferred, yet they shall not be dropped; the time for executing them will come. Though God's patience may put them off, nothing but man's sincere repentance and reformation will put them by. *The morning is come unto thee,* (v. 7.) and again, (v. 10.) *The morning is gone forth;* the day of trouble dawns, the day of destruction is already begun. *The morning* discovers that which was hidden; they thought their secret sins would never come to light, but now they will be brought to light. They used to try and execute malefactors in the morning, and such a morning of judgment and execution is now coming upon them, *a day of trouble to sinners, the year of their visitation.* See how stupid these people were, that, though the day of their destruction was already begun, yet they were not aware of it, but must be thus told of it again and again! *The day of trouble, real trouble, is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains,* not a mere echo or report of troubles, as they were willing to think it was, nothing but a groundless surmise; as if the men that came against them were but the shadow of the mountains, (as Zebul suggested to Gaal, Judg. ix. 36.) and the intelligence they received were but an empty sound, reverberated from the mountains. No, the trouble is not a fancy, and so you will soon find.

4. All this comes from God's wrath, not allayed, as sometimes it has been, with mixtures of mercy. This is the fountain from which all these calamities flow; and this is the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery, which makes it bitter indeed; (v. 9.) *I will send mine anger upon thee.* Observe, God is Lord of his anger; it does not break out but when he pleases, nor fasten upon any but as he directs it, and gives it commission. The expression rises higher, (v. 8.) *Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee* in full vials, and accomplish mine anger, all the purposes and all the products of it, upon thee. This wrath does not single out here and there one to be made examples, but it is upon all the multitude thereof; (v. 12, 14.) the



the body of the nation is become a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction. God does sometimes in wrath remember mercy, but now he says, *My eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity*, (v. 4.) and again, (v. 9.) *They shall have judgment without mercy*, who made light of mercy when it was offered them.

6. All this is the just punishment of their sins, and it is what they have by their own folly brought upon themselves. This is much insisted on here, that they might be brought to justify God in all he had brought upon them. God never sends his anger but in wisdom and justice; and therefore it follows, *"I will judge thee according to thy ways*, v. 3. I will examine what thy ways have been, compare them with the law and then deal with thee according to the merit of them, and recompense them to thee," v. 4. Note, In the nearest judgments God inflicts upon sinners, he does but *recompense their own ways upon them*; they are beaten with their own rod. And when God comes to reckon with a sinful people, he will bring every provocation to account; *"I will recompense upon thee all thine abominations*; (v. 3.) and now *thine iniquity shall be found to be hateful*, (Ps. xxxvi. 2.) and *thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee*; (v. 4.) the secret wickedness shall now be brought to light, and that shall appear to have been in the midst of thee, which before was not suspected; and thy sin shall now become an *abomination to thyself*." So the *abomination of iniquity* will be, when it comes to be an *abomination of desolation*, Matt. xxiv. 15. Or, *Thine abominations*, the punishments of them, *shall be in the midst of thee*, they shall reach to thy heart, See Jer. iv. 18. Or, Therefore God will not spare, nor have pity, because even then when he is recompensing their ways upon them, yet in their distress they trespass yet more; their abominations are still in the midst of them, indulged and harboured in their hearts. It is repeated again, (v. 8, 9.) *I will judge thee, I will recompense thee*.

Two sins are particularly specified as provoking God to bring these judgments upon them; pride, and oppression. (1.) God will humble them by his judgments, for they have magnified themselves. *The rod of affliction has blossomed*, but it was pride that budded, v. 10. What buds in sin, will blossom in some judgment or other. The pride of Judah and Jerusalem appeared among all orders and degrees of men, as buds upon the tree in spring. (2.) Their enemies shall deal hardly with them, for they have dealt hardly with one another; (v. 11.) *Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness*; their injuriousness to one another is protected and patronized by the power of the magistrate. The rod of government was become a *rod of wickedness*; to such a degree of impudence was *violence risen up*. I saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, Eccl. iii. 16. Isa. v. 7. Whatever are the fruits of God's judgments, it is certain that our sin is the root of them.

6. There is no escape from these judgments, nor fence against them, for they shall be universal, and shall bear down all before them, without remedy.

(1.) Death in its various shapes shall ride triumphantly, both in town and in country, both within the city and without it, v. 15. Men shall be safe no where, for *he that is in the field shall die by the sword*, every field shall be to them a field of battle; and *he that is in the city*, though it be a holy city, yet it shall not be his protection, but *famine and pestilence shall devour him*. Sin had abounded both in city and country, *Iliacos intra muros peccatur et extra—Trojans and Greeks offend alike*; and therefore among both desolations are made.

(2.) None of those that are marked for death shall escape; there shall none of them remain; none of those proud oppressors that did violence to their poor neighbours with the rod of wickedness, none of them shall be left, but they shall be all swept away by the desolation that is coming; (v. 11.) *None of their multitude*, of the rabble, whom they set on to do mischief, and to countenance them in doing it; to cry, "Crucify, crucify," when they were resolved on the destruction of any; *none of them shall remain, nor any of theirs*; their families shall all be destroyed, and neither root nor branch left them; this multitude, this mob, divine vengeance will in a particular manner fasten upon; for *wrath is upon all the multitude thereof*, (v. 12, 14.) and the vision was touching the whole multitude thereof, (v. 13.) the bulk of the common people. The judgments coming shall carry them away by wholesale, and they shall neither secure themselves nor their masters, whose creatures and tools they were. God's judgments, when they come with commission, cannot be overpowered by multitudes. *Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished*.

(3.) Those that fall shall not be lamented; (v. 11.) *There shall be no wailing for them*, for there shall be none left to bewail them, but such as are hastening apace after them. And the times shall be so bad, that men shall rather congratulate than lament the death of their friends, as reckoning those happy that are taken away from seeing these desolations, and sharing in them, Jer. xvi. 4, 5.

(4.) They shall not be able to make any resistance. The decree is gone forth, and the vision concerning them shall not return, v. 13. God will not recall it, and they cannot defeat it; and therefore it shall not return re infected—without having accomplished any thing, but shall accomplish that for which he sends it. God's word will take place, and then, [1.] Particular persons cannot make their part good against God; no man shall strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life; it will be to no purpose for sinners to set God and his judgments at defiance as they used to do; *none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered*. Those that strengthen themselves in their wickedness, will be found not only to weaken but to ruin themselves, Ps. lii. 7. [2.] The multitude cannot resist the torrent of these judgments, nor make head against them; (v. 14.) *They have blown the trumpet*, to call their soldiers together, and to animate and encourage those whom they have got together, and thus they think to make all ready; but all in vain, none enlist themselves, and those that do have not courage to face the enemy. Note, If God be against us, none can be for us, to do us any service.

(5.) They shall have no hope of the return of their prosperity, with which to support themselves in their adversity; they shall have given up all for gone; and therefore, *"Let not the buyer rejoice that he is increasing his estate, and is become a purchaser; nor let the seller mourn that he is lessening his estate, and is become a bankrupt,"* v. 12. See the vanity of the things of this world, and how worthless they are—that in a time of trouble, when we have most need of them, we may perhaps make the least account of them. They that have sold are the more easy, having the less to lose; and they that have bought have but increased their own cares and fears. Because the fashion of this world passes away, let those that buy be as though they possessed not, because they know not how soon they may be dispossessed, 1 Cor. vii. 29. It is added, (v. 13.) *"The seller shall not return, at the year of jubilee, to that which is sold*, according to the law, though he should escape the sword and pesti-



lence, and live till that year comes; for no inheritances shall be enjoyed here, till the seventy years be accomplished, and then men shall return to their possessions, shall claim and have their own again." In the belief of which, Jeremiah about this time, *bought his uncle's field*, yet, according to the charge, the buyer did not rejoice, but complain, Jer. xxxii. 25.

Lastly, God will be glorified in all; "*Ye shall know that I am the Lord*, (v. 4.) *that I am the Lord that smiteth*, v. 9. You look at second causes, and think it is Nebuchadnezzar that smites you, but you shall be made to know he is but the staff, it is the hand of the Lord that smiteth you; and who knows the weight of his hand?" Those who would not know it was the *Lord that did them good*, shall be made to know it is the *Lord that smiteth* them; for, one way or other, he will be owned.

16. But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. 17. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water. 18. They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads. 19. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels; because it is the stumbling-block of their iniquity. 20. As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty; but they made the images of their abominations, and of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them. 21. And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it. 22. My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

We have attended the fate of those that are cut off, and are now to attend the flight of those that have an opportunity of escaping the danger; some of them *shall escape*, (v. 16.) but what the better? As good die once, as, in a miserable life, die a thousand deaths, and escape only like Cain, to be *fugitives and vagabonds*, and afraid of being slain by every one they meet; so shall these be.

I. They shall have no comfort or satisfaction in their own minds, but be in a continual anguish and terror; for, wherever they go, they carry about with them guilty consciences, which make them a burthen to themselves.

1. They shall be always solitary, and under prevailing melancholy; they shall not be in the cities, or places of concourse, but all alone *upon the mountains*, not caring for society, but shy of it, as being ashamed of the low circumstances to which they are reduced.

2. They shall be always sorrowful. Those have reason to be so that are under the token of God's displeasure; and God can make those so, that have been most jovial, and have set sorrow at defiance. They that once thought themselves as the lions of

the mountains, so daring were they now become as the *doves of the valleys*, so timid are they, and so dispirited, ready to *flee when none pursues*, and to tremble at the shaking of a leaf. They are all of them mourning, not with a *godly sorrow*, but with the *sorrow of the world*, which *works death*, every one for his iniquity, for those calamities which they now see their iniquity has brought upon them; not only the iniquity of the land, but their own: they shall then be brought to acknowledge what they have each of them contributed to the national guilt. Note, Sooner or later sin will have sorrow of one kind or other; and those that will not repent of their iniquity may justly be left to pine away in it; those that will not mourn for it as it is an offence to God, shall be made to mourn for it as it is a shame and ruin to themselves; to *mourn at the last, when the flesh and the body are consumed*, and to say, *How have I hated instruction!* Prov. v. 11.

3. They shall be deprived of all their strength of body and mind; (v. 17.) *All hands shall be feeble*, so that they shall not be able to fight, or defend themselves, and *all knees shall be weak as water*, so that they shall not be able to flee, or to stand their ground: they shall feel a universal colliquation; their knees shall *flow as water*, so that they must fall of course. Note, It is folly for the *strong man to glory in his strength*, for God can soon weaken it.

4. They shall be deprived of all their hopes, and shall abandon themselves to despair, (v. 18.) they shall have nothing to hold up their spirits with, their aspects shall show what are their prospects, all dreadful, for they shall *gird themselves with sackcloth*, as having no expectation ever to wear better clothing; *horror shall cover them*, and *shame*, and *baldness*, all the expressions of a desperate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11. Note, Those that will not be kept from sin by fear and shame, shall by fear and shame be punished for it; such is the confusion that sin will end in.

II. They shall have no benefit from their wealth and riches, but shall be perfectly sick of them, v. 19. They that were reduced to this distress, were such as had had abundance of *silver and gold*, money, and plate, and jewels, and other valuable goods; from which they promised themselves a great deal of advantage in times of public trouble; they thought it would be *their strong city*, that with it they could bribe enemies and buy friends, that it would be the ransom of their lives, and that they could never want bread as long as they had money, and that *money would answer all things*; but see how it proved; 1. It had been a great temptation to them in the *day of their prosperity*; they set their affections upon it, and put their confidence in it; by their eager pursuit of it they were drawn into sin, and by their plentiful enjoyment of it they were hardened in sin; and thus it was the stumbling-block of their iniquity, it occasioned their falling into sin, and obstructed their return to God. Note, There are many whose wealth is their snare and ruin: the gaining of the world is the losing of their souls, it makes them proud, secure, covetous, oppressive, voluptuous; and that which, if well used, might have been the servant of their piety, being abused, becomes the *stumbling-block of their iniquity*. 2. It was no relief to them now in the day of their adversity; for, (1.) Their *gold and silver* could not protect them from the judgments of God; they *shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord*, they shall not serve to atone his justice, or turn away his wrath, or to screen them from the judgments he is bringing upon them. Note, *Riches profit not in the day of wrath*; (Prov. xi. 4.) they neither set them so high, that God's judgments cannot reach them, nor make them so

strong, that they cannot conquer them. There is a day of wrath coming, when it will appear that men's wealth is utterly unable to deliver them, or do them any service. What the better was the rich man for his *full barns*, when *his soul was required of him*; or that other rich man for his *purple, and scarlet, and sumptuous fare*, when in hell he could not procure a drop of water to *cool his tongue*? Money is no defence against the arrests of death, nor any alleviation to the miseries of the damned. (2.) Their *gold and silver* could not give them any content under their calamities. [1.] They could not fill their bowels; when there was no bread left in the city, none to be had for love or money, their silver and gold could not satisfy their hunger, nor serve to make one meal's meat for them. Note, We could better be without mines of gold than fields of corn; the products of the earth, which may easily be gathered from the surface of it, are much greater blessings to mankind than its treasures, which are with so much difficulty and hazard digged out of its bowels. If God give us *daily bread*, we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain, though *silver and gold* we have none. [2.] Much less could they satisfy their souls, or yield them any inward comfort. Note, The wealth of this world has not that in it which will answer the desires of the soul, or be any satisfaction to it in a day of distress. *He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver*, much less he that loses it. (3.) Their *gold and silver shall be thrown into the streets*, either by the hands of the enemy, who shall have more spoil than they care for, or can carry away; silver shall be nothing accounted of, they shall *cast that in the streets*; but the *gold*, which is more valuable, shall be removed, and brought to Babylon; or, they themselves shall *throw away their silver and gold*, either because it would be an encumbrance to them, and retard their flight, or because it would expose them, and be a temptation to the enemy to cut their throats for their money; or in indignation at it, because they found that after all the care and pains they had taken to scrape it together and hoard it up, they found it would stand them in no stead, but do them a mischief rather. Note, *The world passes away, and the lust thereof*, 1 John ii. 17. The time may come when worldly men will be as weary of their wealth as now they are wedded to it, when those fare best that have least.

III. God's temple shall stand them in no stead, v. 20.—22. This they had prided themselves in, and promised themselves security from; (Jer. vii. 4. Mic. iii. 11.) but this confidence of theirs shall fail them. Observe, 1. The great honour God had done to that people in setting up his sanctuary among them; (v. 20.) *As for the beauty of his ornament, that holy and beautiful house, where they and their fathers praised God*, (Isa. lxiv. 11.) which was therefore beautiful because holy. It was called the *beauty of holiness*, and that is the beauty of its ornament; it was also adorned with gold and gifts; as for this, *he set it in majesty*, every thing was contrived to make it magnificent, that it might help to make the people of Israel the more illustrious among their neighbours. *He built his sanctuary like high palaces*, (Ps. lxxviii. 69.) it was a *glorious high throne from the beginning*, Jer. xvii. 12. But, 2. Here is the great dishonour they had done to God in profaning his sanctuary; they *made the images of their counterfeit deities*, which they set up in rivalry with God, and which are here called *their abominations, and their detestable things*, (for so they were to God, and so they should have been to them,) and these *they set up* in God's temple, than which a greater affront could not be put upon him. And therefore, 3. It is here threatened

that they shall be deprived of the temple; and it shall be no succour to them, *Therefore have I set it far from them*, sent them far from it, so that it is out of the reach of their services, and they out of the reach of its influences. Note, God's ordinances, and the privileges of a profession of religion, will justly be taken away from those that despise and profane them. Nay, they shall not only be kept at a distance from the temple, but the temple itself shall be involved in the common desolation; (v. 21.) the Chaldeans, who are *strangers*, and therefore have no veneration for it, who are *the wicked of the earth*, and therefore have an antipathy to it, shall *have it for a prey and for a spoil*; all the ornaments and treasures of it shall fall into their hands, who will make no difference between that and other plunder. This was a grief to the saints in Zion, who complained of nothing so much as of that which *the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary*; (Ps. lxxiv. 3.) but it was the punishment of the sinners in Zion, who by profaning the temple with *strange gods*, provoked God to suffer it to be profaned by *strange nations*, and to *turn his face from them that did it*, as if he had not seen them and their crimes; and from them that deprecated it, as not regarding them and their prayers. Let the soldiers do as they will, let them *enter into the secret place*, into the holy of holies, as robbers, let them strip it, let them pollute it, its defence is departed, and then farewell all its glory. Note, Those are unworthy to be honoured with the form of godliness, who will not be governed by the power of godliness.

23. Make a chain; for the land is full of bloody crimes, the city is full of violence. 24. Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease, and their holy places shall be defiled. 25. Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and *there shall be none*. 26. Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet: but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. 27. The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I *am the Lord*.

Here is,

I. The prisoner arraigned; *Make a chain*, in which to drag the criminal to the bar, and set him before the tribunal of Divine Justice; let him stand in fetters, (as a notorious malefactor,) stand pinioned to receive his doom. Note, Those that break the bands of God's law *asunder*, and *cast away these cords from them*, will find themselves bound and held by the chains of his judgments, which they cannot break or cast from them. The chain signified the siege of Jerusalem, or the slavery of those that were carried into captivity, or that they were all bound over to the righteous judgment of God, *reserved in chains*.

II. The indictment drawn up against the prisoner; *The land is full of bloody crimes*, (full of the judgments of blood, so the word is,) of the guilt of blood which they had shed, under the colour of justice and by forms of law, with the solemnity of a judgment. The innocent blood which Manassah

shed, probably thus shed, by the *judgment of the blood*, was the measure-filling sin of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. Or, It is full of such crimes as by the law were to be punished with death, *the judgment of blood*; idolatry, blasphemy, witchcraft, sodomy, and the like, were *bloody crimes*, for which particular sinners were to die; and therefore when they were become national, there was no remedy but the nation must be cut off. Note, *Bloody crimes* will be punished with *bloody judgments*. The city, the city of David, the holy city, that should have been the pattern of righteousness, the protector of it, and the punisher of wrong, is now *full of violence*; the rulers of that city, having greater power and reputation, are greater oppressors than any others. This was sadly to be lamented. *How is the faithful city become a harlot!*

III. Judgment given upon this indictment. God will reckon with them not only for the profaning of his sanctuary, but for the perverting of justice between man and man; for as *holiness becomes his house*, so the *righteous Lord loves righteousness*, and is the Avenger of unrighteousness. Now the judgment given is,

1. That since they had walked in the way of the heathen, and done worse than they, God would *bring the worst of the heathen upon them* to destroy them and lay them waste, the most barbarous and outrageous, that have the least compassion to mankind, and the greatest antipathy to the Jews. Note, Of the heathen some are worse than other, and God sometimes picks out the worst to be a scourge to his own people, because he intends them for the first when the work is done.

2. That since they had filled their houses with goods unjustly gotten, and used their pomp and power for the crushing and oppressing of the weak, God would give their houses to be possessed, and all the furniture of them to be enjoyed, by strangers, and *make the pomp of the strong to cease*, so that their great men should not dazzle the eyes of the weak-sighted with their pomp, nor with their *might* at any time prevail against *right*, as they had done.

3. That since they had *defiled the holy places* with their idolatries, God would defile them with his judgments; since they had set up the images of other gods in the temple, God would remove thence the tokens of the presence of their own God. When the holy places are deserted by their God, they will soon be defiled by their enemies.

4. Since they had followed one sin with another, God would pursue them with one judgment upon another; *Destruction comes, utter destruction*, (v. 25.) for there shall come *mischief upon mischief* to ruin you, and *rumour upon rumour* to frighten you; like the waves in a storm, one upon the neck of another. Note, Sinners that are marked for ruin shall be prosecuted to it, for God will overcome when he judges.

5. Since they had disappointed God's expectations from them, he would disappoint their expectations from him. For, (1.) They shall not have the *deliverance out of their troubles* that they expect. They shall *seek peace*; they shall desire it, and pray for it, they shall endeavour it, and expect it, but *there shall be none*; their attempts both to court their enemies, and to conquer them, shall be in vain, and their troubles shall grow worse and worse. (2.) They shall not have the direction in the trouble that they expect; (v. 26.) *They shall seek a vision of the prophet*, shall desire, for their support under their troubles, to be assured of a happy issue out of them; they did not desire a vision to reprove them for sin, or to warn them of danger, but to promise them deliverance; such messages they longed to hear; but *the law shall perish from the priest*, he shall have no words either of counsel or comfort to

say to them: they would not hear what God had to say to them by way of conviction, and therefore he has nothing to say to them by way of encouragement. *Counsel shall perish from the ancients*; the elders of the people that should advise them what to do in this difficult juncture, shall be infatuated and at their wits' end. It is bad with a people when those that should be their counsellors, know not how to consider within themselves, consult with one another, or counsel them.

6. Since they had animated and encouraged one another to sin, God would dispirit and dishearten them all, so that they should not be able to make head against the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. All orders and degrees of men shall lie down by consent under the load; (v. 27.) *The king*, that should inspire life into them, and *the prince*, that should lead them on to attack the enemy, *they shall mourn*, and be *clothed with desolation*, their heads and hearts shall fail, their politics and their courage; and then no wonder if *the hands of the people of the land*, that should fight for them, be *troubled*; none of the men of might shall *find their hands*. What can men contrive or do for themselves when God is departed from them, and appears against them? All must needs be in *tears*, all in *trouble*, when God comes to *judge them according to their deserts*, and so make them know, to their cost, that he is the Lord, the *God to whom vengeance belongs*.

## CHAP. VIII.

God, having given the prophet a clear foresight of the people's miseries that were hastening on, here gives him a clear insight into the people's wickedness, by which God was provoked to bring those miseries upon them; that he might justify God in all his judgments, might the more particularly reprove the sins of the people, and with the more satisfaction foretell their ruin. Here God, in vision, brings him to Jerusalem, to show him the sins that were committed there, though God had begun to contend with them; (v. 1. 4.) and there he sees, 1. The image of jealousy set up at the gate of the altar, v. 5, 6. II. The elders of Israel worshipping all manner of images in a secret chamber, v. 7. 12. III. The women weeping for Tammuz, v. 13, 14. IV. The men worshipping the sun, v. 15, 16. And then appeals to him whether such a provoking people should have any pity showed them, v. 17, 18.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. 2. Then I beheld, and, lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins, even downward, fire; and from his loins, even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. 3. And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by the lock of my head, and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. 4. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. 5. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes

the way toward the north, and behold, northward at the gate of the altar, this image of jealousy in the entry. 6. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? *even* the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? But turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations.

Ezekiel was now in Babylon; but the messages of wrath he had delivered in the foregoing chapters were concerning Jerusalem, for in the peace or trouble thereof the captives looked upon themselves to have peace or trouble; and therefore here he has a vision of what was done at Jerusalem, and this vision is continued to the close of the 11th chapter.

I. Here is the date of this vision. The first vision he had was in the *fifth year of the captivity, in the fourth month, and the fifth day of the month, ch. i. 1, 2.* This was just fourteen months after. Perhaps it was after he had lain 390 days on his left side, to bear the iniquity of Israel, and before he began the forty days on his right side, to bear the iniquity of Judah, for now he was sitting in the house, not lying. Note, God keeps a particular account of the messages he sends to us, because he will shortly call us to account about them.

II. The opportunity is taken notice of, as well as the time.

1. The prophet was himself *sitting in his house*, in a sedate, composed frame; deep perhaps in contemplation. Note, The more we retreat from the world, and retire into our own hearts, the better frame we are in for communion with God: they that *sit down* to consider what they have learned shall be taught more. Or, He *sat in his house*, ready to preach to the company that resorted to him, but waiting for instructions what to say. God will communicate more knowledge to those who are communicative of what they do know.

2. The *elders of Judah*, that were now in captivity with him, *sat before him*. It is probable that it was on the sabbath-day, and that it was usual for them to attend on the prophet every sabbath-day, both to hear the word from him, and to join with him in prayer and praise: and how could they spend the sabbath better, now that they had neither temple nor synagogue, priest nor altar? It was a great mercy that they had opportunity to spend it so well, as the good people in Elisha's time, 2 Kings iv. 23. But some think it was on some extraordinary occasion that they attended him, to inquire of the Lord, and *sat down* at his feet to *hear his word*. Observe here, (1.) When the law was *perished from the priests* at Jerusalem, whose *lips should keep knowledge*, (ch. vii. 26.) they in Babylon had a prophet to consult. God is not tied to places or persons. (2.) Now that the elders of Judah were in captivity, they paid more respect to God's prophets, and his word in their mouth, than they did when they lived in peace in their own land. When God brings men into the *cords of affliction*, then he *opens their ears to discipline*, Job xxxvi. 8, 10. Ps. cxli. 6. Those that despised vision in the *valley of vision*, prized it now that the word of the Lord was precious, and there was *no open vision*. (3.) When our teachers are driven into corners, and are forced to preach in private houses, we must diligently attend them there. A minister's house should be a church for all his neighbours. St. Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, and God owned him there; and *no man forbade him*.

III. The divine influence and impression that the prophet was now under; *The hand of the Lord fell*

*there upon me*. God's hand took hold of him, and arrested him, as it were, to employ him in this vision, but at the same time supported him to bear it.

IV. The vision that the prophet saw; (v. 2.) he *beheld a likeness* of a man, we may suppose; for that was the likeness he saw before, but it was all *brightness* above the girdle, and all *fire* below; fire and flame. This agrees with the description we had before of the apparition he saw; (ch. i. 27.) it is probable that it was the same Person, the Man Christ Jesus. It is probable that the elders that *sat with him*, (as the men that journeyed with Paul,) saw a light, and were afraid, and this happy sight they gained by attending the prophet in a private meeting, but they had no distinct view of him that spake to him, Acts xxii. 9.

V. The prophet's remove, in vision, to Jerusalem. The apparition he saw, *put forth the form of a hand, which took him by a lock of his head*, and the Spirit was that hand which was *put forth*, for the Spirit of God is called *the Finger of God*. Or, The spirit within him *lifted him up*, so that he was borne up and carried on by an internal principle, not an external violence. A faithful servant of God will be *drawn by a hair*, by the least intimation of the divine will, to his duty, for he has that within him which inclines him to a compliance with it, Ps. xxvii. 8. He was miraculously *lifted up between heaven and earth*, as if he were to fly away upon eagles' wings. This, it is probable, (so Grotius thinks,) the elders that sat with him saw; they were witnesses of the hand taking him by the lock of hair, and *lifting him up*, and then perhaps laying him down again in a trance or ecstasy, while he had the following visions, *whether in the body or out of the body*, we may suppose, he could not tell, any more than Paul in a like case, much less can we. Note, Those are best prepared for communion with God and the communications of divine light, that by divine grace are raised up above the earth and the things of it, to be out of their attractive force.

But being lifted up toward heaven, he was carried in vision to Jerusalem, and to God's sanctuary there; for those that would go to heaven, must take that in their way. The Spirit represented to his mind the city and temple as plainly as if he had been there in person. O that by faith we could thus enter into the Jerusalem, the holy city above, and see the things that are invisible!

VI. The discoveries that were made to him there.

1. There he saw the glory of God; (v. 4.) *Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there*, the same appearance of the living creatures, and the wheels, and the throne, that he had seen, ch. i. Note, God's servants, wherever they are, and whithersoever they go, ought to carry about with them a believing regard to the glory of God, and to set that always before them: and those that have seen God's power and glory in the sanctuary, should desire to see it again, so as they have seen it, Ps. lxiii. 2. Ezekiel has this repeated vision of the glory of God, both to give credit to, and to put honour upon, the following discoveries. But it seems to have a further intention here; it was to aggravate this sin of Israel, in changing their own God, the God of Israel, (who is a God of so much glory as here he appears to be,) for dunghill gods, scandalous gods, false gods, and indeed no gods. Note, The more glorious we see God to be, the more odious we shall see sin to be, especially idolatry, which turns his truth into a lie, his glory into shame. It was also to aggravate their approaching misery, when this glory of the Lord should remove from them, (ch. xi. 23.) and leave the house and city desolate.

2. There he saw the reproach of Israel—and that was *the image of jealousy*, set northward, at

*the gate of the altar, v. 3, 5.* What image this was, is uncertain; probably, an image of Baal, or of the grove, which Manasseh made, and set in the temple, (2 Kings xxi. 7. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 3.) which Josiah removed, but his successors, it seems, replaced there, as probably they did the *chariots of the sun*, which he found *at the entering in of the house of the Lord*; (2 Kings xxiii. 11.) and this is here said to be in the *entry*. But the prophet, instead of telling us what image it was, which might gratify our curiosity, tells us that it was the *image of jealousy*, to convince our consciences that, whatever image it was, it was in the highest degree offensive to God, and *provoked him to jealousy*; he resented it as a husband would resent the whoredoms of his wife, and would certainly revenge it; for *God is jealous, and the Lord revenges*, Nah. i. 2. The very setting up of this image in the *house of the Lord* was enough to *provoke him to jealousy*; for it is in the matters of his worship that we are particularly told, *I the Lord thy God am a jealous God*. They that placed this image *at the door of the inner gate*, where the people assembled, called the *gate of the altar*, (v. 5.) thereby plainly intended, (1.) To affront God, to provoke him to his face, by advancing an idol to be a rival with him for the adorations of his people, in contempt of his law, and in defiance of his justice. (2.) To debauch the people, and pick them up as they were entering into the courts of the Lord's house to bring their offerings to him, and to tempt them to offer them to this image; like the adulteress Solomon describes, that *sits at the door of her house, to call passengers who go right on their ways, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither*, Prov. ix. 14. With good reason therefore is this called the *image of jealousy*.

We may well imagine what a surprise, and what a grief it was to Ezekiel, to see this image in the house of God, when he was in hopes that the judgments they were under had, by this time, wrought some reformation among them: but there is more wickedness in the world, in the church, than good men think there is. And now, [1.] God appeals to him whether this was not bad enough, and a sufficient ground for God to go upon in casting off this people, and abandoning them to ruin. Could he, or any one else, expect any other than that *God should go far from his sanctuary*, when there were such abominations committed there, in that very place; nay, was he not perfectly driven thence? They did these things designedly, and on purpose that he should leave his sanctuary, and so shall their doom be; they have hereby, in effect, like the Gadarenes, desired him *to depart out of their coasts*, and therefore he will depart, he will no more dignify and protect his sanctuary, as he had done, but will give it up to reproach and ruin. But, [2.] Though this is bad enough, and serves abundantly to justify God in all that he brings upon them, yet the matter will appear to be much worse; *But turn thee yet again*, and thou wilt be amazed *to see greater abominations than these*. Where there is one abomination, it will be found there are many more. Sins do not go alone.

7. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. 8. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold, a door. 9. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10. So I went in and saw; and, behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Is-

rael, poured upon the wall round about. 11. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censor in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. 12. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.

We have here a further discovery of the abominations that were committed at Jerusalem, and within the confines of the temple too. Now observe,

I. How this discovery is made. God, in vision, brought him to the *door of the court*, the outer court, along the sides of which the priests' lodgings were. God could have introduced him at first into the *chambers of imagery*, but he brings him to them by degrees, partly to employ his own industry, in searching out these mysteries of iniquity, and partly to make him sensible with what care and caution those idolaters concealed their idolatries. Before the priests' apartments they had run up a wall, to make them the more private, that they might not lie open to the observation of those who passed by; a shrewd sign that they did something which they had reason to be ashamed of. *He that doeth evil hates the light*. They were not willing that those who saw them in God's house should see them in their own, lest they should see them contradict themselves, and undo in private what they did in public. But *behold, a hole in the wall*, (v. 7.) a spy-hole, by which you might see that which would give cause to suspect them. When hypocrites screen themselves behind the wall of an external profession, and with it think to conceal their wickedness from the eye of the world, and carry on their designs the more successfully, it is hard for them to manage it with so much art but that there is some hole or other left in the wall, something that betrays them to those who look diligently, not to be what they pretend to be. The ass's ears in the fable appeared from under the lion's skin. This *hole in the wall* Ezekiel made wider, and, *behold, a door*, v. 8. This door he goes in by into the *treasury*, or some of the apartments of the priests, and *sees the wicked abominations that they do there*, v. 9. Note, Those that would discover the mystery of iniquity in others, or in themselves, must accomplish a diligent search; for Satan has his wiles, and depths, and devices, which we should not be ignorant of, and *the heart is deceitful above all things*; in the examining of it therefore we are concerned to be very strict.

II. What the discovery is; it is a very melancholy one.

1. He sees a chamber set round with idolatrous pictures; (v. 10.) *All the idols of the house of Israel*, which they had borrowed from the neighbouring nations, were *poured upon the wall round about*, even the vilest of them, *the forms of creeping things*, which they worshipped, and *beasts*, even *abominable ones*, which are poisonous and venomous; at least, they were abominable when they were worshipped. This was a sort of pantheon, a collection of all the idols together, which they paid their devotions to. Though the second commandment, in the letter of it, forbids only graven images, yet painted ones are as bad and as dangerous.

2. He sees this chamber filled with idolatrous

worshippers; (v. 11.) There were *seventy men of the elders of Israel* offering incense to these painted idols. Here was a great number of idolaters strengthening one another's hands in this wickedness, though it was in a private chamber, and the meeting industriously concealed; yet here were seventy men engaged in it. I doubt these elders were many more than those in Babylon that sat before the prophet in his house, v. 1. They were *seventy men*, the number of the great Sanhedrim, or chief council of the nation, and we have reason to fear, the same men; for they were the *ancients of the house of Israel*, not only in age, but in office, who were bound, by the duty of their place, to restrain and punish idolatry, and to destroy and abolish all superstitious images wherever they found them; yet these were they that did themselves worship them in private, so undermining that religion, which in public they professed to own and promote, only because by it they held their preferments. They had *every man his censor in his hand*; so fond were they of the idolatrous service, that they would all be their own priest; and very prodigal they were of their perfumes in honour of these images, for *a thick cloud of incense went up*, that filled the room. O that the zeal of these idolaters might shame the worshippers of the true God out of their indifference to his service! The prophet took particular notice of one whom he knew, who stood in the midst of these idolaters, as chief among them, being perhaps president of the great council at this time, or most forward in this wickedness. No wonder the people were corrupt, when the elders were so. The sins of leaders are leading sins.

3. What the remark is, that is made upon it; (v. 12.) "*Son of man, hast thou seen this?* Couldst thou have imagined that there was such wickedness committed?" It is here observed concerning it, (1.) That it was done *in the dark*; for sinful works are *works of darkness*. They concealed it, lest they should lose their places, or at least their credit. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the world, which the day will declare; *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*. (2.) That this one idolatrous chapel was but a specimen of many the like; here they met together, to worship their images in concert, but, it should seem, they had *every man the chamber of his imagery* besides, a room in his own house for this purpose, in which every man gratified his own fancy with such pictures as he liked best. Idolaters had their household gods, and their family-worship of them in private, which is a shame to those who call themselves *Christians*, and yet have no church in their house, no worship of God in their family. Had they *chambers of imagery*, and shall not we have chambers of devotion? (3.) That atheism was at the bottom of their idolatry. They worship images *in the dark*, the images of the gods of other nations, and they say, "*Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom we should serve, seeth us not; Jehovah hath forsaken the earth, and we may worship what god we will, he regards us not.*" [1.] They think themselves out of God's sight; they say, *The Lord seeth us not*. They imagined, because the matter was carried on so closely, that men could not discover it, nor did any of their neighbours suspect them to be idolaters, that therefore it was hid from the eye of God; as if there were any *darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of our treacherous departure from him; but the church argues right, as to this very sin of idolatry, (Ps. xlv. 20.) *If we have forgotten the name of our God, and stretched forth our hand to a strange god, shall not*

*God search this out?* No doubt, he shall. [2.] They think themselves out of God's care; "*The Lord has forsaken the earth*, and looks not after the affairs of it; and then we may as well worship any other god as him." Or, "*He has forsaken our land, and left it to be a prey to its enemies*; and therefore it is time for us to look out for some other god, to whom to commit the protection of it; our one God cannot, or will not, deliver us; and therefore let us have many." This was a blasphemous reflection upon God, as if he had forsaken them first, else they would not have forsaken him. Note, Those are ripe indeed for ruin, who are arrived at such a pitch of impudence as to lay the blame of their sins upon God himself.

13. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. 14. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. 15. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. 16. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. 17. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger; and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. 18. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

Here we have,

1. More and greater abominations discovered to the prophet. He thought that what he had seen was bad enough, and yet, (v. 13.) *Turn thee again, and thou shalt see yet greater abominations*, and greater still, (v. 15.) as before, v. 6. There are those who live in retirement, who do not think what wickedness there is in this world; and the more we converse with it, and the further we go abroad into it, the more corrupt we see it. When we have seen that which is bad, we may have our wonder at it made to cease by the discovery of that which, upon some account or other, is a great deal worse. We shall find it so in examining our own hearts, and searching into them; there is a world of iniquity in them, a great abundance and variety of abominations, and when we have found out much amiss, still we shall find more; for the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it perfectly?

Now the abominations here discovered were,

1. *Women weeping for Tammuz*, v. 14. An abominable thing indeed, that any should choose rather to serve an idol in tears than to serve the true God with joyfulness and gladness of heart! Yet such absurdities as these are they guilty of, who



*follow after lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies.* Some think it was for Adonis, an idol among the Greeks, others for Osiris, an idol of the Egyptians, that they shed these tears. The image, they say, was made to weep, and then the worshippers wept with it. They bewailed the death of this Tammuz, and anon rejoiced in its returning to life again. These mourning women sat at the door of the gate of the Lord's house, and there shed their idolatrous tears, as it were in defiance of God and the sacred rites of his worship; and some think, with their idolatry, prostrating themselves also to corporal whoredom; for these two, commonly, went together; and they that dishonoured the divine nature by the one, were justly given up to vile affections and a reprobate sense, to dishonour the human nature, which no where ever sunk so far below itself as in these idolatrous rites.

2. *Men worshipping the sun, v. 16.* And this was so much the greater an abomination, that it was practised in the inner court of the Lord's house, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar; there, where the most sacred rites of their holy religion used to be performed, was this abominable wickedness committed: justly might God in jealousy say to those who thus affronted him at his own door, as the king to Haman, *Will he force the queen also before me in the house?* Here were about twenty-five men giving that honour to the sun which is due to God only; some think they were the king and his princes; it should rather seem that they were priests, for this was the court of the priests, and the proper place to find them in. They that were intrusted with the true religion, had it committed to their care, and were charged with the custody of it, they were the men that betrayed it. (1.) They turned their back toward the temple of the Lord, resolutely forgetting it, and designedly slighting it, and putting contempt upon it. Note, When men turn their backs upon God's institutions, and despise them, it is no marvel if they wander endlessly after their own inventions. Impiety is the beginning of idolatry and all iniquity. (2.) They turned their faces toward the east, and worshipped the sun, the rising sun. This was an ancient instance of idolatry; it is mentioned in Job's time, (Job xxxi. 26.) and had been generally practised among the nations, some worshipping the sun under one name, others under another; these priests, finding it had antiquity and general consent and usage on its side, (the two pleas which the priests use at this day in defence of their superstitious rites, and particularly this of worshipping toward the east,) practised it in the court of the temple, thinking it an omission that it was not inserted in their ritual. See the folly of idolaters in worshipping that as a god, and calling it *Baal—a lord*, which God made to be a servant to the universe; (for such the sun is, and so his name *Shemesh* signifies, Deut. iv. 19.) and in adoring the borrowed light, and despising the *Father of lights!*

II. The inference drawn from these discoveries; (v. 17.) "*Hast thou seen this, O son of man, and couldest thou have thought ever to see such things done in the temple of the Lord?*" Now, 1. He appeals to the prophet himself concerning the heinousness of the crime. Can he think it is a light thing to the house of Judah, who know and profess better things, and are dignified with so many privileges above other nations? Is it an excusable thing in them that have God's oracles and ordinances, that they commit the abominations which they commit here? Do not they deserve to suffer that thus sin? Should not such abominations as these make desolate? Dan. ix. 27. 2. He aggravates it from the fraud and oppression that were to be found in all parts of the nation; *They have filled*

*the land with violence.* It is not strange if they that wrong God thus, make no conscience of wronging one another, and with all that is sacred trample likewise upon all that is just. And their wickedness in their conversations made even the worship they paid to their own god an abomination; (Isa. i. 11, &c.) "*They fill the land with violence, and then they return to the temple to provoke me to anger there; for even their sacrifices, instead of making an atonement, do but add to their guilt; they return to provoke me, (they repeat the provocation, do it, and do it again,) and lo, they put the branch to their nose;*" a proverbial expression, denoting perhaps their scoffing at God, and having him in derision; they snuffed at his service, as men do when they put a branch to their nose. Or, it was some custom used by idolaters in honour of the idols they served. We read of garlands used in their idolatrous worship, (Acts xiv. 13.) cut of which every zealot took a branch, which they smelled to as a nosegay. Dr. Lightfoot (*Hor. Heb. in Joh. xv. 6.*) gives another sense of this place; *They put the branch to their wrath, or to his wrath*, as the Masorites read it; they are still bringing more fuel (such as the withered branches of the vine) to the fire of divine wrath, which they have already kindled, as if that wrath did not burn hot enough already. Or, *putting the branch to the nose* may signify the giving of a very great affront and provocation either to God or man; they are an abusive generation of men. 3. He passes sentence upon them that they shall be utterly cut off; *Therefore*, because they are thus furiously bent upon sin, *I will also deal in fury with them, v. 18.* *They filled the land with their violence*, and God will fill it with the violence of their enemies; and he will not lend a favourable ear to the suggestions, either, (1.) Of his own pity; *Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity*; repentance shall be hid from his eyes; or, (2.) Of their prayers; *Though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them*; for still their sins cry louder for vengeance than their prayers cry for mercy. God will now be as deaf to their prayers as their own idols were, on whom they cried aloud, but in vain, 1 Kings xviii. 26. Time was when God was ready to have heard even before they cried, and to answer while they were yet speaking; but now they shall seek me early, and not find me, Prov. i. 28. It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart, that God will regard.

## CHAP. IX.

The prophet had, in vision, seen the wickedness that was committed at Jerusalem, in the foregoing chapter, and we may be sure that it was not represented to him worse than really it was; now here follows, of course, a representation of their ruin approaching; for when sin goes before, judgments come next. Here is, I. Preparation made of instruments that were to be employed in the destruction of the city, v. 1, 2. II. The removal of the Shechinah from the cherubim to the threshold of the temple, v. 3. III. Orders given to one of the persons employed, who is distinguished from the rest, for the marking of a remnant to be preserved from the common destruction, v. 3, 4. IV. The warrant signed for the execution of those that were not marked, and the execution begun accordingly, v. 5, 7. V. The prophet's intercession for the mitigation of the sentence, and a denial of any mitigation, the decree being now gone forth, v. 8, 10. VI. The report made by him that was to mark the pious remnant of what he had done in that matter, v. 11. And this shows a usual method of Providence in the government of the world.

1. **H**E cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in

his hand. 2. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter-weapon in his hand; and one man among them *was* clothed with linen, with a writer's ink-horn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. 3. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed with linen, which *had* the writer's ink-horn by his side; 4. And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

In these verses, we have,

I. The summons given to Jerusalem's destroyers to come forth and give their attendance. He that appeared to the prophet, (*ch. viii. 2.*) that had brought him to Jerusalem, and had showed the wickedness that was done there, *he cried, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, (v. 1.)* or, as it might better be read, and nearer the original, *They that have charge over the city are drawing near.* He had said, (*ch. viii. 18.*) *I will deal in fury;* Now, says he to the prophet, thou shalt see who are to be employed as the instruments of my wrath; *Appropinquaverunt visitationes civitatis—The visitations (or visitors) of the city are at hand.* They would not *know* the day of their visitation in mercy, and now they are to be *visited in wrath.*

Observe, 1. How the notice of this is given to the prophet; *He cried it in mine ears with a loud voice,* which intimates the vehemency of him that spake; when men are highly provoked, and threaten in anger, they speak loud; they that regard not the counsels God gives them in a still, small voice, shall be made to hear the threatenings, to hear and tremble. It denotes also the prophet's unwillingness to be told this; he was deaf on that ear, but there is no remedy, their sin will not admit an excuse, and therefore their judgment will not admit a delay; *he cried it in mine ears with a loud voice,* he made me hear it, and I heard it with a sad heart.

2. What this notice is; There are those *that have charge over the city* to destroy it, not the Chaldean armies, they are to be indeed employed in this work, but they are not the visitors, they are only the servants, or tools rather. God's angels have received a charge now to lay that city waste, which they had long had a charge to protect and watch over; they are at hand, as destroying angels, as ministers of wrath, *for every man has his destroying weapon in his hand,* as the angel that kept the way of the tree of life with a flaming sword. Note, Those that have by sin made God their Enemy, have made the good angels their enemies too. These visitors are called and *caused to draw near.* Note, God has ministers of wrath always within call, always at command; invisible powers, by whom he accomplishes his purposes. The prophet is made to see this in vision, that he might with the greater assurance in his preaching denounce these judgments. God told it him with a loud voice, *taught it him with a strong hand,* (*Isa. viii. 11.*) that it might make the deeper impression upon him, and that he might thus proclaim it in the people's ears.

II. Their appearance, upon this summons, is recorded. Immediately six *men came,* (*v. 2.*) one for

each of the principal gates of Jerusalem. Two destroying angels were sent against Sodom, but six against Jerusalem; for Jerusalem's doom in the judgment will be thrice as heavy as that of Sodom. There is an angel watching at every gate to destroy, to bring in judgments from every quarter, and to take heed that none escape. One angel served to destroy the first-born of Egypt, and the camp of the Assyrians, but here are six. In the Revelation we find seven, that were to *pour out the vials of God's wrath,* *Rev. xv. 6.* They came with every one a *slaughter-weapon in his hand,* prepared for the work to which they were called. The nations of which the king of Babylon's army was composed, which some reckon to be six, and the commanders of his army, (of whom *six* are named as principal, *Jer. xxxix. 3.*) may be called the *slaughter-weapons* in the hands of the angels. The angels are thoroughly furnished for every service.

Observe, 1. From whence they came; *from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north; (v. 2.)* either because the Chaldeans came from the north, (*Jer. i. 14. Out of the north an evil shall break forth,*) or because the image of jealousy was set up at the door of the inner gate, that looks toward the north, *ch. viii. 3, 5.* At that gate of the temple the destroying angels entered, to show what it was that opened the door to them. Note, That way that sin lies, judgment may be expected to come. 2. Observe where they placed themselves; *They went in, and stood beside the brazen altar,* on which sacrifices were wont to be offered, and atonement made. When they acted as destroyers, they acted as sacrificers, not from any personal revenge or ill-will, but with a pure and sincere regard to the glory of God; for to his justice all they slew were offered up as victims. *They stood by the altar,* as it were, to protect and vindicate that, and plead its righteous cause, and avenge the horrid profanation of it. At the altar they were to receive their commission to destroy, to intimate that the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was *not to be purged by sacrifice.*

III. The notice taken of one among the destroying angels distinguished in his habit from the rest, from whom some favour might be expected; it should seem, he was not one of the six, but *among them,* to see that mercy be mixed with judgment, *v. 2. This man was clothed with linen,* as the priests were, and he had a *writer's ink-horn* hanging at his side, as anciently attornies and lawyers' clerks had, which he was to make use of, as the other six were to make use of their *destroying weapons.* Here the honours of the pen exceeded those of the sword; they were angels that bore the sword, but he was the Lord of angels that made use of the *writer's ink-horn;* for it is generally agreed, among the best interpreters, that this man represented Christ as Mediator, saving those that are his from the flaming sword of divine justice. He is our *High Priest,* clothed with holiness, nor that was signified by the *fine linen,* *Rev. xix. 8.* As Prophet, he wears the *writer's ink-horn*—the book of life is the Lamb's book; the great things of the law and gospel which God has written to us, are of his writing, for it is the Spirit of Christ, in the writers of the scripture, that testifies to us, and the Bible is *the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Note, It is a matter of great comfort to all good Christians, that, in the midst of the destroyers and the destructions that are abroad, there is a Mediator, a great High Priest, who has an interest in heaven, and whom saints on earth have an interest in.

IV. The removal of the appearance of the divine glory from over the cherubim. Some think this was that usual display of the divine glory which was between the cherubims over the mercy-seat, in

the most holy place, hat took leave of them now, and never returned; for it is supposed it was not in the second temple. Others think it was that display of the divine glory which the prophet now saw over the cherub in vision; and this is more probable, because this is called *the glory of the God of Israel*, (*ch. viii. 3.*) and this is it which he had now his eye upon; this was gone to *the threshold of the house*, as it were to call to the servants that attended without the door, to send them on their errand, and give them their instructions. And the removal of this, as well as the former, might be significant of God's departure from them, and leaving them their house desolate; and when God goes, all good goes; but he goes from none till they first drive him from them. He went at first no further than *the threshold*, that he might show how loath he was to depart, and might give them both time and encouragement to invite his return to them, and his stay with them. Note, God's departures from a people are gradual, but gracious souls are soon aware of the first step he takes towards a remove. Ezekiel immediately observed that *the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub*: and what is a vision of angels, if God be gone?

V. The charge given to *the man clothed in linen* to secure the pious remnant from the general desolation. We do not read that this Saviour was summoned and sent for, as the destroyers were; for he is always ready, *appearing in the presence of God for us*; and to him, as the most proper Person, the care of those that are marked for salvation is committed, *v. 4.* Now observe,

1. The distinguishing character of this remnant that is to be saved. They are such as *sigh and cry*, sigh in themselves, as men in pain and distress, cry to God in prayer, as men in earnest, because of *all the abominations* that are committed in Jerusalem. It was not only the idolatries they were guilty of, but all their other enormities, that were abominations to God. These pious few had witnessed against those abominations, and had done what they could in their places to suppress them; but, finding all their attempts for the reformation of manners fruitless, they sat down, and *sighed, and cried*, wept in secret, and complained to God, because of the dishonour done to his name by their wickedness, and the ruin it was bringing upon their church and nation. Note, It is not enough that we do not delight in the sins of others, and that we have not fellowship with them, but we must mourn for them, and lay them to heart, we must grieve for that which we cannot help, as those that hate sin for its own sake, and have a tender concern for the souls of others, as David, (*Ps. exix. 136.*) and Lot, who *reved his righteous soul* with the wicked conversion of his neighbours. The abominations committed in Jerusalem are to be in a special manner lamented, because they are in a particular manner offensive to God.

2. The distinguishing care taken of them. Orders are given to find them all out that are of such a pious, public spirit; "*Go through the midst of the city* in quest of them, and though they are ever so much dispersed, and ever so closely hid from the fury of their persecutors, yet see that you discover them, and *set a mark upon their foreheads.*" (1.) To signify that God owns them for his, and he will confess them another day. A work of grace in the soul is to God a *mark upon the forehead*, which he will acknowledge as his mark, and by which he knows them that are his. (2.) To give to them who are thus marked an assurance of God's favour, that they may know it themselves; and the comfort of knowing it will be the most powerful support and cordial in calamitous times. Why should we perplex ourselves about this temporal life, if we know by the mark that we have eternal life? (3.) To be

a direction to the destroyers whom to pass by, as the blood upon the door-posts was an indication that that was an Israelite's house, and the first-born there must not be slain. Note, Those who keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity, God will keep safe in times of common calamity. They that distinguish themselves shall be distinguished; they that cry for other men's sins shall not need to cry for their own afflictions; for they shall be either delivered from them, or comforted under them. God will set a mark upon his mourners, will buck their sighs, and bottle their tears. *The sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads*, (*Rev. vii. 3.*) was the same token of the care God has of his own people with this here; only this was to secure them from being destroyed, that from being seduced, which is equivalent.

5. And to the others he said in my hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. 7. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain; go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city. 8. And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? 9. Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness; for they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not. 10. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; but I will recompense their way upon their head. 11. And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the ink-horn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

In these verses, we have,

1. A command given to the destroyers to do execution according to their commission. *They stood by the brazen altar*, waiting for orders; and orders are here given them to cut off and destroy all that were either guilty of, or accessory to, the abominations of Jerusalem, and that did not *sigh and cry* for them. Note, When God has gathered his wheat into his garner, nothing remains but to *burn up the chaff*, *Matth. iii. 12.*

1. They are ordered to destroy all, (1.) Without exception; they must *go through the city, and smite*, they must *slay utterly*, slay to destruction, give them their death's wound; they must make no distinction of age or sex, but cut off *old and young*; neither the beauty of the virgins, nor the innocency of their babes, shall secure them. This was fulfilled in the death of multitudes by famine and pestilence, especially by the sword of the Chaldeans, as far as the military execution went. Sometimes even such bloody work as this has been God's work. But what an evil thing is sin then, which provokes the

God of infinite mercy to such severity! (2.) Without compassion; *Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity;* (v. 5.) you must not save any whom God has doomed to destruction, as Saul did Agag and the Amalekites, that is *doing the work of God deceitfully*, Jer. xlviii. 10. None need to be more merciful than God is; and he had said, (ch. viii. 18.) *Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity.* Note, Those that live in sin, and hate to be reformed, will perish in sin, and deserve not to be pitied; for they might easily have prevented the ruin, and would not.

2. They are warned not to do the least hurt to them that were marked for salvation; "*Come not near any man upon whom is the mark, do not so much as threaten or frighten any of them; it is promised them that there shall no evil come nigh them, and therefore you must keep at a distance from them.*" The king of Babylon gave particular orders that Jeremiah should be protected. Baruch and Ebed-melech were secured, and, it is likely, others of Jeremiah's friends, for his sake. God had promised that *it should go well with his remnant, and they should be well treated;* (Jer. xv. 11.) and we have reason to think that none of the mourning, praying remnant fell by the sword of the Chaldeans, but that God found out some way or other to secure them all; as in the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Christians were all secured in a city called *Pella*, and none of them perished with the unbelieving Jews. Note, None of those shall be lost whom God has marked for life and salvation; for the foundation of God stands sure.

3. They are directed to *begin at the sanctuary*, (v. 6.) that sanctuary which, in the chapter before, he had seen the horrid profanation of; they must begin there, because there the wickedness began, which provoked God to send these judgments; the debaucheries of the priests were the poisoning of the springs, to which all the corruption of the streams was owing. The wickedness of the sanctuary was of all other most offensive to God, and therefore there the slaughter must begin; "*Begin there, to try if the people will take warning by the judgments of God upon their priests, and will repent and reform; begin there, that all the world may see and know that the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, and hates sin most in those that are nearest to him.*" Note, When judgments are abroad, they commonly *begin at the house of God*, 1 Pet. iv. 17. *You only have I known, and therefore I will punish you,* Amos iii. 2. God's temple is a sanctuary, a refuge and protection for penitent sinners, but not for any that *go on still in their trespasses*; neither the sacredness of the place, nor the eminency of their place in it, will be their security.

It should seem, the destroyers made some difficulty of putting men to death in the temple, but God bids them not hesitate at that, but, (v. 7.) *Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain.* They will not be taken from the altar, (as was appointed by the law, Exod. xxi. 14.) but think to secure themselves by *keeping hold of the horns of it*, like Job, and therefore, like him, let them *die there*, 1 Kings ii. 30, 31. There the blood of one of God's prophets had been shed, (Matth. xxiii. 35.) and therefore there let their blood be shed. Note, If the servants of God's house defile it with their idolatries, God will justly suffer the enemies of it to defile it with their violences, Ps. lxxix. 1. But these acts of necessary justice were really, whatever they were ceremonially, rather a purification than a pollution of the sanctuary; it was *putting away evil from among them*.

4. They were appointed to *go forth into the city*, v. 6, 7. Note, Wherever sin has gone before, judg-

ment will follow after: and though *judgment begins at the house of God*, yet it shall not end there. The holy city shall no more be a protection to the wicked people than the holy house was to the wicked priests.

II. Here is execution done accordingly. They observed their orders, and, 1. *They began at the elders, the ancient men that were before the house*, and slew them first, either those seventy ancients who worshipped idols in their chambers, (ch. viii. 12.) or those twenty-five who *worshipped the sun between the porch and the altar*, who might more properly be said to be *before the house*. Note, Ringleaders in sin may expect to be first met with by the judgments of God; and the sins of those who are in the most eminent and public stations, call for the most exemplary punishments. 2. They proceeded to the common people; *They went forth, and slew in the city*; for when the decree is gone forth, there shall be no delay; if God begin, he will make an end.

III. Here is the prophet's intercession for a mitigation of the judgment, and a reprieve for some; (v. 8.) *While they were slaying them, and I was left, I fell upon my face.* Observe here, 1. How sensible the prophet was of God's mercy to him, in that he was spared, when so many round about him were cut off. *Thousands fell on his right hand, and on his left*, and yet the destruction did not come nigh him; *only with his eyes did he behold the just reward of the wicked*, Ps. xci. 7, 8. He speaks as one that narrowly escaped the destruction, attributing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our *lives given us for a prey*; for we might justly have perished with them that perish. 2. Observe how he improved this mercy; he looked upon it that *therefore* he was left, that he might stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God. Note, We must look upon it that for this reason we are spared, that we may do good in our places, may do good by our prayers. Ezekiel did not triumph in the slaughter he made, but his *flesh trembled for fear of God*; (as David's, Ps. cxix. 120.) he *fell on his face, and cried*, not in fear for himself, (he was one of them that were marked,) but in compassion to his fellow-creatures. They that sigh and cry for the *sins* of sinners, cannot but sigh and cry for their *miseries* too; yet the day is coming, when all this concern will be entirely swallowed up in a full satisfaction in this, that God is glorified; and they that now *fall on their faces, and cry, Ah, Lord God!* will lift up their heads, and sing, *Hallelujah*, Rev. xix. 1, 3. The prophet humbly expostulates with God; "*Wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel*, and there shall be none left but the few that are marked? Shall the Israel of God be destroyed, utterly destroyed? When there are but a few left, shall those few be cut off, who might have been the seed of another generation? And will the God of Israel be himself their Destroyer? Wilt thou now destroy Israel, who was wont to protect and deliver Israel? Wilt thou so *pour out thy fury upon Jerusalem*, as by the total destruction of the city to ruin the whole country too? Surely thou wilt not!" Note, Though we acknowledge that *God is righteous*, yet we have leave to *plead with him concerning his judgments*, Jer. xii. 1.

IV. Here is God's denial of the prophet's request for a mitigation of the judgment, and his justification of himself in that denial, v. 9, 10. 1. Nothing could be said in extenuation of this sin. God was as willing to show mercy as the prophet could desire; he always is so; but here the case will not admit it; it is such, that mercy cannot be granted

without wrong to justice; and it is not fit that one attribute of God should be glorified at the expense of another. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that he should destroy, especially that he should destroy Israel? By no means. But the truth is, their crimes are so flagrant, that the reprieve of the sinners would be a connivance at the sin; "*The iniquity of the house of Judah and Israel is exceeding great, there is no suffering them to go on at this rate, the land is filled with innocent blood, and when the city-courts are appealed to for the defence of injured innocency, the remedy is as bad as the disease, for the city is full of perverseness, or wresting of judgment; and that which they support themselves with in this iniquity, is the same atheistical, profane principle, with which they flattered themselves in their idolatry, ch. viii. 12. The Lord has forsaken the earth, and left it to us to do what we will in it; he will not intermeddle in the affairs of it; and, whatever wrong we do, he sees not; he either knows it not, or will not take cognizance of it.*" Now how can these expect benefit by the mercy of God, who thus bid defiance to his justice? No, nothing can be offered by an advocate in excuse of the crimes, while the criminal puts in such a plea as this in his own vindication; and therefore, 2. Nothing can be done to mitigate the sentence; (v. 10.) "Whatever thou thinkest of it, as for me, mine eyes shall not spare, neither will I have pity; I have borne with them as long as it was fit that such impudent sinners should be borne with, and therefore now I will recompense their way on their head." Note, Sinners sink and perish under the weight of their own sins; it is their own way, which they deliberately chose, rather than the way of God, and which they obstinately persisted in, in contempt of the word of God, that is recompensed on them. Great iniquities justify God in great severities; nay, he is ready to justify himself, as he does here to the prophet, for he will be clear when he judges.

V. Here is a return made of the writ of protection, which was issued out for the securing of them that mourned in Zion; (v. 11.) *The man clothed with linen reported the matter*, gave an account of what he had done in pursuance of his commission; he had found out all that mourned in secret for the sins of the land, and cried out against them by a public testimony, and had marked them all in the forehead; Lord, *I have done as thou hast commanded me*. We do not find that those who were commissioned to destroy, reported what destruction they had made, but he who was appointed to protect, reported his matter; for it would be more pleasing both to God, and to the prophet, to hear of those that were saved, than of those that perished. Or, this report was made now, because the thing was finished, whereas the destroying work would be a work of time, and when it was brought to an end, then the report should be made. See how faithful Christ is to the trust reposed in him! Is he commanded to secure eternal life to the chosen remnant? He has done as was commanded him; *Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost none*.

## CHAP. X.

The prophet had observed to us, (ch. viii. 4.) that when he was in vision at Jerusalem, he saw the same appearance of the glory of God there, that he had seen by the river of Chebar; now, in this chapter, he gives us some account of the appearance there, as far as was requisite for the clearing up of two further indications of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, which God here gave the prophet. 1. The scattering of the coals of fire upon the city, which were taken from between the cherubims, v. 2. 2. The removal of the glory of God from the temple, and its being upon the wing to be gone, v. 8. 22. When God goes out of a people, all judgments break in upon them.

1. **T**HEN I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire-stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. 2. And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thy hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight. 3. Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. 4. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD's glory. 5. And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh. 6. And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels. 7. And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims; and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen; who took it, and went out.

To possess us with a holy awe and dread of God, and to fill us with his fear, we may observe, in this part of the vision which the prophet had,

I. The glorious appearance of his majesty. Something of the invisible world is here made visible; some faint representations of its brightness and beauty, some shadows; but such as are no more to be compared with the truth and substance than a picture with the life; yet here is enough to oblige us all to the utmost reverence in our thoughts of God and approaches to him, if we will but admit the impressions this discovery of him will make.

1. He is here in the firmament above the head of the cherubims, v. 1. He manifests his glory in the upper world, where purity and brightness are both in perfection; and the vast expanse of the firmament aims to speak the God that dwells there infinite. It is the firmament of his power and of his prospect too; for from thence he beholds all the children of men. The divine nature infinitely transcends the angelical nature, and God is above the head of the cherubims, in respect not only of his dignity above them, but of his dominion over them. Cherubims have great power and wisdom and influence, but they are subject to God and Christ.

2. He is here upon the throne, or that which had the appearance of the likeness of a throne; (for God's glory and government infinitely transcend all the brightest ideas our minds can either form or receive concerning them;) and it was as it were a sapphire-stone, pure and sparkling; such a throne has God prepared in the heavens, far exceeding the thrones of any earthly potentates.

3. Here he is attended with a glorious train of holy angels. When God came into his temple, the

cherubims stood on the right side of the house, (v. 3.) as the Prince's life-guard attending the gate of his palace. Christ has angels at command. The orders given to all the angels of God are, *to worship him*. Some observe, that they stood on the right side of the house, that is, the south side, because on the north side the image of jealousy was, and other instances of idolatry, from which they would place themselves at as great a distance as might be.

4. The appearance of his glory is veiled with a cloud, and yet out of that cloud darts forth a dazzling lustre; in the house and inner court there was a cloud and darkness, which filled them, and yet either the outer court, or the same court, after some time, *was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory*, v. 3, 4. There was a darting forth of light and brightness; but if any over-curious eye pried into it, it would find itself lost in a cloud. His righteousness is conspicuous as the great mountains, and the brightness of it fills the court; but his judgments are a great deep, which we cannot fathom, a cloud, which we cannot see through. The brightness discovers enough to awe and direct our consciences; but the cloud forbids us to expect the gratifying of our curiosity; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. Thus, (Hab. iii. 4.) *He had beams coming out of his hand, and yet there was the hiding of his power*. Nothing is more clear than that God is, nothing more dark than what he is. God covers himself with light, and yet, as to us, makes darkness his pavilion. God took possession of the tabernacle and temple in a cloud, which was always the symbol of his presence. In the temple above there will be no cloud, but we shall see face to face.

5. The cherubims made a dreadful sound with their wings, v. 5. The vibration of them, as of the strings of musical instruments, made a curious melody; bees, and other winged insects, make a noise with their wings. Probably, this intimated their preparing to remove, by stretching forth and lifting up their wings, which made this noise as it were to give warning of it. This noise is said to be as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaks, as the thunder, which is called the voice of the Lord, (Ps. xxix. 3.) or as the voice of the Lord when he spake to Israel on mount Sinai; and therefore he then gave the law with abundance of terror, to signify with what terror he would reckon for the violation of it, which he was now about to do. This noise of their wings was heard even to the outer court, the court of the people; for the Lord's voice, in his judgments, cries in the city, which those may hear, that do not, as Ezekiel, see the visions of them.

II. The terrible directions of his wrath. This vision has a further tendency than merely to set forth the divine grandeur; further orders are to be given for the destruction of Jerusalem. The greatest devastations are made by fire and sword: for a general slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, orders were given in the foregoing chapter; now here we have a command to lay the city in ashes, by scattering coals of fire upon it, which in the vision were fetched from between the cherubims.

1. For the issuing out of orders to do this, the glory of the Lord was lifted up from the cherub, (as in the chapter before for the giving of orders there, v. 3.) and stood upon the threshold of the house, in imitation of the courts of judgment which they kept in the gates of their cities. The people would not hear the oracles which God delivered to them from his holy temple, and therefore from thence they shall be made to hear their doom.

2. The man clothed in linen, who had marked those who were to be preserved, is to be employed in this service; for the same Jesus that is the Protector and Saviour of them that believe, having all

judgment committed to him, that of condemnation as well as that of absolution, will come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those that obey not his gospel. He that sits on the throne calls to the man clothed in linen to go in between the wheels, and fill his hands with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. This intimates, (1.) That the burning of the city and temple by the Chaldeans was a consumption determined, and that therein they executed God's counsel, did what he designed before should be done. (2.) That the fire of divine wrath, which kindles judgment upon a people, is just and holy, for it is fire fetched from between the cherubims. The fire on God's altar, where atonement was made, had been slighted, to avenge which, fire is here fetched from heaven, like that by which Nadab and Abihu were killed for offering strange fire. If a city, or town, or house be burned, whether by design or accident, if we trace it in its original, we shall find that the coals which kindled the fire came from between the wheels; for there is not any evil of that kind in the city, but the Lord has done it. (3.) That Jesus Christ acts by commission from the Father, for from him he receives authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Christ came to send fire on the earth, (Luke xii. 49.) and in the great day will speak this world into ashes. By fire from his hand, the earth, and all the works that are therein, will be burnt up.

3. This man clothed with linen readily attended to this service; though, being clothed with linen, he was very unfit to go among the burning coals, yet, being called, he said, *Lo, I come*; this commandment he had received of his Father, and he complied with it; the prophet saw him go in, v. 2. He went in, and stood beside the wheels, expecting to be furnished there with the coals he was to scatter; for what Christ was to give, he first received, whether for mercy or judgment. He was directed to take fire, but he stayed till he had it given him, to show how slow he is to execute judgment, and how long-suffering to us-ward.

4. One of the cherubims reached him a handful of fire from the midst of the living creatures. The prophet, when he first saw this vision, observed that there were burning coals of fire, and lamps, that went up and down among the living creatures; (ch. i. 13.) from thence this fire was taken, v. 7. The spirit of burning, the refiner's fire, by which Christ purifies his church, is of a divine original. It is by a celestial fire, fire from between the cherubims, that wonders are wrought. The cherubim put it into his hand; for the angels are ready to be employed by the Lord Jesus, and to serve all his purposes.

5. When he had taken the fire, he went out, no doubt to scatter it up and down upon the city, as he was directed. And who can abide the day of his coming? Who can stand before him when he goes out in his anger?

8. And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings. 9. And when I looked, behold, the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl-stone. 10. And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel. 11. When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the



head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went. 12. And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, *were* full of eyes round about, *even* the wheels, that they four had. 13. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel! 14. And every one had four faces: the first face *was* the face of a cherub, and the second face *was* the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. 15. And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar. 16. And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them; and when the cherubims lifted up their wings, to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. 17. When they stood, *these* stood; and when they were lifted up, *these* lifted up themselves *also*: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them. 18. Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. 19. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also *were* beside them; and *every one* stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above. 20. This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel, by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they *were* the cherubims. 21. Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man *was* under their wings. 22. And the likeness of their faces *was* the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

We have here a further account of the vision of God's glory which Ezekiel saw, here intended to introduce that direful omen of the departure of that glory from them, which would open the door for ruin to break in.

1. Ezekiel sees the glory of God shining in the sanctuary, so as he had seen it *by the river of Chebar*, and gives an account of it, that they who had by their wickedness provoked God to depart from them, might know what they had lost, and might lament after the Lord, groaning out their lachryms, *Where is the glory?*

Ezekiel here sees the operations of Divine Providence in the government of the lower world, and the affairs of it, represented by the *four wheels*; and the perfections of the holy angels, the inhabitants of the upper world, and their ministrations, represented by the *four living creatures*, every one of which had *four faces*: the agency of the angels in directing the affairs of this world is represented by the close communication that was between the *living creatures* and the *wheels*, the wheels being guided by them in all their motions, as the chariot

is by him that drives it; but the same Spirit being both in the *living creatures* and in the *wheels*, denotes that inferior wisdom which serves its own purposes by the ministration of angels, and all the occurrences of this lower world. So that this vision gives our faith a view of that throne which the Lord has *prepared in the heavens*, and that kingdom of his which *rules over all*, Ps. ciii. 19.

The prophet observes, that this was the same vision with that he saw by the river of Chebar; (v. 15, 22.) and yet in one thing there seems to be a material difference, that that which was there the *face of an ox*, and was *on the left side*, (ch. i. 10.) is here the *face of a cherub*, and is the *first face*, (v. 14.) whence some have concluded that the peculiar face of a cherub was that of an ox, which the Israelites had an eye to when they made the golden calf. I rather think that in this latter vision the first face was the proper appearance or figure of a cherub, which Ezekiel knew very well, being a priest, by what he had seen in the temple of the Lord, (1 Kings vi. 29.) but which we now have no certainty of at all; and by this Ezekiel knew assuredly, whereas before he only conjectured it, that they were all cherubims, though putting on different faces, v. 20. And this first appearing in the proper figure of a cherub, and yet it being proper to retain the number of four, that of the ox is left out and dropped, because the face of the cherubim had been most abused by the worship of an ox. As sometimes when God appeared to deliver his people, so now when he appeared to depart from them, *he rode upon a cherub*, and *d d fu*. Now observe here,

1. That this world is subject to turns and changes, and various revolutions; the course of affairs in it is represented by *wheels*, (v. 9.) sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and sometimes another, they are still ebbing and flowing like the sea, waxing and waning like the moon, 1 Sam. ii. 4, &c. Nay, their appearance is as if there were a *wheel in the midst of a wheel*, (v. 10.) which intimates the mutual references of providences to each other, their dependences on each other, and the joint tendency of all to one common end, while their motions as to us are intricate and perplexed, and seemingly contrary.

2. That there is an admirable harmony and uniformity in the various occurrences of providence; (v. 13.) *As for the wheels*, though they moved several ways, yet *it was cried to them, O wheel*; they were all as one, being guided by one Spirit to one end, for God works all according to the counsel of his own will, which is one, for his own glory, which is one. And this makes the disposals of Providence truly admirable, and to be looked upon with wonder. As the works of his creation, considered separately, were *good*, but altogether, *very good*, so the wheels of providence, considered by themselves, are wonderful, but put them together, and they are very wonderful; *O wheel!*

3. That the motions of Providence are steady and regular, and whatever the Lord pleases that he does, and is never put upon new counsels. *The wheels turned not as they went*, (v. 11.) and the *living creatures went straight forward*, v. 22. Whatever difficulties lay in their way, they were sure to get over them, and were never obliged to stand still, turn aside, or go back. So perfectly known to God are all his works, that he is never put upon new counsels.

4. That God makes more use of the ministration of angels in the government of this lower world than we are aware of; *The four wheels were by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub*, v. 9. What has been imagined by some concerning the spheres above, that every orb has its intelligence to guide it, is here intimated concerning the wheels below, that every

wheel has its cherub to guide it. We think it a satisfaction to us, if under the wise God there are wise men employed in managing the affairs of kingdoms and churches; whether there be so or no, it appears by this that there are wise angels employed, *a cherub to every wheel.*

5. That all the motions of providence and all the ministrations of angels are under the government of the great God. They are all *full of eyes*; those eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the earth, and which the angels have always an eye to, *v. 12.* The *living creatures* and the *wheels* concur in their motions and rests; (*v. 17.*) for the *Spirit of life*, as it may be read, or the *Spirit of the living creatures, is in the wheels.* The spirit of God directs all the creatures, both upper and lower, so as to make them serve the divine purpose. Events are not determined by the *wheel of fortune*, which is blind, but by the *wheels of Providence*, which are full of eyes.

II. Ezekiel sees the glory of God removing out of the sanctuary, the place where God's honour had long dwelt, and this sight is as sad as the other was grateful. It was pleasant to see that God had not *forsaken the earth*, (as the idolaters suggested, *ch. ix. 9.*) but sad to see that he was *forsaking his sanctuary.* The *glory of the Lord stood over the threshold*, *v. 4.* But now it *departed from off the threshold*, having thence given the necessary orders for the destruction of the city, and it *stood over the cherubims*, not those in the most holy place, but those that Ezekiel now saw in vision, *v. 18.* It ascended that stately chariot, as the judge, when he comes off the bench, goes into his coach, and is gone. And immediately the *cherubims lifted up their wings*, (*v. 19.*) as they were directed, and they *mounted up from the earth*, as birds upon the wing; and *when they went out*, the wheels of this chariot were not drawn, but went by instinct, *beside them*; by which it appeared, that the *Spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.* Thus when God is leaving a people in displeasure, angels above, and all events here below, shall concur to further his departure. But observe here, In the courts of the temple where the people of Israel had dishonoured their God, had cast off his yoke, and withdrawn the shoulder from it, blessed angels appear very ready to serve him, to draw in his chariot, and to *mount upward* with it. God had shewn the prophet how the will of God was disobeyed by men on earth; (*ch. viii.*) here he shows him how readily it is obeyed by angels and inferior creatures; and it is a comfort to us, when we grieve for the wickedness of the wicked, to think how his angels do his commandments, *hearkening to the voice of his word*, Ps. ciii. 20.

Let us now, 1. Take a view of this chariot in which the *glory of the God of Israel rides triumphantly.* He that is the God of Israel, is the God of heaven and earth, and has the command of all the powers of both. Let the faithful Israelites comfort themselves with this, that he who is their God is above the cherubims; their Redeemer is so, (1 Pt. iii. 22.) and has the sole and sovereign disposal of all events, the *living creatures* and the *wheels* agree to serve him, so that he is *Head over all things to the church.* The Rabbins call this vision that Ezekiel had, *Mercabah*, the *vision of the chariot*; and from thence they call the more abstruse part of divinity, which treats concerning God and spirits, *Opus curvâs*—The *work of the chariot*, as they do the other part that is more plain and familiar, *Opus bereshith*—The *work of the creation.* 2. Let us attend the motions of this chariot; The *cherubims*, and the *glory of God* above them, *stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house*, ready to depart and leave the house, *v. 19.* But observe with how many stops and pauses God departs, as loath to go,

as if to see if there be any that will intercede with him to return. None of the priests in the inner court, between the temple and the altar, would court his stay; therefore he leaves their court, and stands at the *east gate*, which led into the *court of the people*, to see if any of them would yet at length stand in the gap. Note, God removes by degrees from a provoking people; and, when he is ready to depart, would return to them, if they were but a repenting, praying people.

## CHAP. XI.

This chapter concludes the vision which Ezekiel saw, and this part of it furnishes him with two messages; 1. A message of wrath against those who continued still at Jerusalem, and were there in the height of presumption, thinking they should never fall, *v. 1. 13.* 11. A message of comfort to those who were carried captives into Babylon, and were there in the depth of despondency, thinking they should never rise. And as the former are assured that God has judgments in store for them, notwithstanding their present security; so the latter are assured that God has mercy in store for them, notwithstanding their present distress, *v. 14. 21.* And so the glory of God removes further, *v. 22, 23.* The vision disappears, (*v. 24.*) and Ezekiel faithfully gives his hearers an account of it, *v. 25.*

1. **M**OREOVER, the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house, which looketh eastward: and, behold, at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2. Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel, in this city; 3. Which say, It is not near: let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh. 4. Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man. 5. And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me Speak; Thus saith the Lord, Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. 6. Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Your slain, whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron; but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it. 8. Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord God. 9. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. 10. Ye shall fall by the sword: I will judge you in the border of Israel and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 11. This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof: but I will judge you in the border of Israel: 12. And ye shall know that I am the Lord: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that

are round about you. 13. And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah, the son of Benarrah, died: then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

We have here,

I. The great security of the princes of Jerusalem, notwithstanding the judgments of God that were upon them. The prophet was brought, in vision, to the gate of the temple where these princes sat in council upon the present arduous affairs of the city; *The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me to the east gate of the Lord's house, and behold, twenty-five men were there.* See how obsequious the prophet was to the Spirit's orders, and how observant of all the discoveries that were made to him. It should seem, these twenty-five men were not the same with those twenty-five whom he saw at the door of the temple, *worshipping toward the east;* (ch. viii. 16.) those seem to have been priests or Levites, for they were between the porch and the altar, but these were princes sitting in the gate of the Lord's house, to try causes, (Jer. xxvi. 10.) and these here are charged, not with corruptions in worship, but mal-administration to the government; two of them are named, because they were the most leading, active men, and perhaps because the prophet knew them, though he had been some years absent; *Pelatiah*, and *Jaazaniah*, not that mentioned, ch. viii. 11. for he was the son of *Shaphan*, this is the son of *Azur*. Some tell us that Jerusalem was divided into twenty-four wards, and that these were the governors or aldermen of those wards, with their mayor or president. Now observe,

1. The general character which God gives of these men to the prophet; (v. 2.) *These are the men that devise mischief;* under pretence of concerning measures for the public safety, they harden people in their sins, and take off their fear of God's judgments which they are threatened with by the prophets; *they give wicked counsel in this city,* counselling them to restrain and silence the prophets, to rebel against the king of Babylon, and to resolve upon holding the city out to the last extremity. Note, It is bad with a people when the things that belong to their peace are hid from the eyes of those who are intrusted with their counsels. And when mischief is done, God knows at whose door to lay it, and, in the day of discovery and recompense, will be sure to lay it at the right door, and will say, *These are the men that devised it,* though they are great men, and pass for wise men, and must not now be contradicted or controlled.

2. The particular charge exhibited against them in proof of this character. They are indicted for words spoken at their council-board, which he *that stands in the congregation of the mighty* would take cognizance of; (v. 3.) they said to this effect, "*It is not near;* the destruction of our city, that has been so often threatened by the prophets, *is not near, not so near as they talk of.*" They are conscious to themselves of such an enmity to reformation, that they cannot but conclude it will come at last; but they have such an opinion of God's patience, (though they have long abused it,) that they are willing to hope it will not come this great while. Note, Where Satan cannot persuade men to look upon the judgment to come as a thing doubtful and uncertain, yet he gains his point by persuading them to look upon it as a thing at a distance, so that it loses its force. If it be sure, yet *it is not near*, whereas, in truth, *the Judge stands before the door.*

Now if the destruction is not near, they conclude, *Let us build houses;* let us count upon a continuance,

for *this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh.* This seems to be a proverbial expression, signifying no more than this, "We are as safe in this city as flesh in a boiling pot; the walls of the city shall be to us as *walls of brass*, and shall receive no more damage from the besiegers about it, than the caldron does from the fire under it. Those that think to force us out of our city into captivity, shall find it to be as much at their peril as it would be to take the flesh out of a boiling pot with their hands." This appears to be the meaning of it, by the answer God gives to it, (v. 9.) "*I will bring you out of the midst of the city, where you think yourselves safe, and then it will appear (v. 11.) that this is not your caldron, neither are you the flesh.*" Perhaps it has a particular reference to the *flesh of the peace-offerings*, which it was so great an offence for the priests themselves to take out of the caldron while it was in seething; (as we find, 1 Sam. ii. 13, 14.) and then it intimates that they were the more secure because Jerusalem was the holy city, and they thought themselves a holy people in it, not to be meddled with. Some think this was a banter upon Jeremiah, who in one of his first visions saw Jerusalem represented by a *seething pot*, Jer. i. 13. "Now," say they, in a way of jest and ridicule, "if it be a seething pot, we are as the flesh in it, and who dares meddle with us?" Thus they continued mocking the messengers of the Lord, even while they suffered for so doing; but *be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.* Those hearts are hard indeed, which are made more secure by those words of God which were designed for warning to them.

II. The method taken to awaken them out of their security. One would think that the providences of God, which related to them, were enough to startle them; but to help them to understand and improve those, the word of God is sent them to give them warning; (v. 4.) *Therefore prophesy against them,* and try to undeceive them; *prophesy, O son of man,* upon these dead and dry bones. Note, The greatest kindness ministers can do to secure sinners is, to preach against them, and to show them their misery and danger though they are ever so unwilling to see it. We then act most for them, when we appear most against them. But the prophet being at a loss what to say to men that were hardened in sin, and that had defiance to the judgments of God, *the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him,* to make him full of power and courage, and *said unto him, Speak.* Note, When sinners are flattering themselves into their own ruin, it is time to *speak*, and to tell them that they shall have no peace if they go on. Ministers are sometimes so bashful and timorous, and so much at a loss, that they must be put on to speak, and to speak boldly. But he that commands the prophet to speak, gives him instructions what to say; and he must address himself to them as *the house of Israel*, (v. 5.) for not the princes only, but all the people, were concerned to know the truth of their cause, to know the worst of it. They are the *house of Israel*, and therefore the *God of Israel* is concerned, in kindness to them, to give them warning; and they are concerned, in duty to him, to take the warning.

And what is it that he must say to them in God's name?

1. Let them know that the God of heaven takes notice of their vain confidences with which they support themselves; (v. 5.) "*I know the things that come into your minds, every one of them,* what secret reasons you have for these resolutions, and what you aim at in putting so good a face upon a matter you know to be bad." Note, God perfectly knows not only the things that come out of our mouths, but the things that come into our minds;

not only all we say, but all we think; even those thoughts that are most suddenly darted into our minds, and that as suddenly slip out of them again, so that we ourselves are scarcely aware of them, yet God knows them; he knows us better than we know ourselves; *he understands our thoughts afar off*: the consideration of this should oblige us to keep our hearts with all diligence, that no vain thoughts come into them, or lodge within them.

2. Let them know that of all who had fallen, or should yet fall in Jerusalem, by the sword of the Chaldeans, they who advised to stand it out, should be accounted before God the murderers; and those slain were the only ones that should remain in the city, as the *flesh in the caldron*, v. 6. "*You have multiplied your slain in the city, not only those whom you have by the sword of justice unjustly put to death under colour of law, but those whom you have by your wilfulness and pride unwisely exposed to the sword of war, though you were told by the prophets that you should certainly go by the worst.*" Thus, you with your stubborn humour, *have filled the streets of Jerusalem with the slain.*" Note, Those who are either unrighteous or imprudent in beginning or carrying on a war, bring upon themselves a great deal of the guilt of blood; and those who are slain in battles or sieges which they, by such a reasonable peace as the war aimed at, might have prevented, will be called *their slain*. Now these slain are the only flesh that shall be left in this *caldron*, v. 7. There shall none remain to keep possession of the city but those that are buried in it. There shall be no inhabitant of Jerusalem but the inhabitants of the graves there, no freeman of the city but the free among the dead.

3. Let them know that how impregnable soever they thought their city to be, they should be forced out of it, either driven to flight, or dragged into captivity; *I will bring you forth out of the midst of it*, whether you will or no, v. 7, 9. They had provoked God to forsake the city, and thought they should do well enough by their own policy and strength when he was gone; but God will make them know that there is no peace to them that have left their God. If they have by their sins driven God from his house, he will soon by his judgments drive them from theirs; and it will be found that those are least safe that are most secure; "*This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh; you shall not soak away in it as you promise yourselves, and die in your nest; you think yourselves safe in the midst thereof, but you shall not be long there.*"

4. Let them know that when God has got them out of the midst of Jerusalem, he will pursue them with his judgments wherever he finds them; the judgments which they thought to shelter themselves from by keeping close in Jerusalem. They feared the sword if they should go out to the Chaldeans, and therefore would abide in their *caldron*; But, says God, *I will bring a sword upon you*, (v. 8.) *and you shall fall by the sword*, v. 10. Note, The fear of the wicked shall come upon him. And there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission, no, not in walls of brass. They were afraid of trusting to the mercy of strangers. "But," says God, "*I will deliver you into the hands of strangers, whose resentments you shall feel, since you were not willing to lie at their mercy.*" See Jer. xxxviii. 17, 18. They thought to escape the judgments of God, but God says that he will *execute judgments upon them*; and whereas they resolved, if they must be judged, that it should be in Jerusalem, God tells them, (v. 10. and again, v. 11.) that he will judge them *in the borders of Israel*, which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar slew all the nobles of Judah at Riblah in the land of

Hamath, on the utmost border of the land of Canaan. Note, Those who have taken ever so deep root in the place where they live, cannot be sure that in that place they shall die.

5. Let them know that all this is the due punishment of their sin, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God against them; *Ye shall know that I am the Lord*, v. 10. and again, v. 12. Those shall be made to know by the sword of the Lord, who would not be taught by his word, what a hatred he has to sin, and what a fearful thing it is for impenitent sinners to fall into his hands. *I will execute judgments*, and then you shall know that *I am the Lord*, for the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes upon those that *have not walked in his statutes*. Hereby it is known that he made the law, because he punishes the breach of it. *I will execute judgments among you*, (says God,) because *you have not executed my judgments*, v. 12. Note, The executing of the judgments of God's mouth by us, in a uniform, steady course of obedience to his law, is the only way to prevent the executing of the judgments of his hand upon us, in our ruin and confusion; one way or other, God's judgments will be executed; the law will take place either in its precept or in its penalty. If we do not give honour to God by executing his judgments as he has commanded, he will *get him honour* upon us by executing his judgments as he has threatened; and thus we shall know that he is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, that will not be mocked. And observe, When they cast off God's statutes, and walked not in them, they did *after the manners of the heathen that were round about them*, and introduced into their worship all their impure, ridiculous, and barbarous usages. When men leave the settled rule of divine institutions, they wander endlessly. Justly therefore was this made the reason why they should *keep God's ordinances*, that they might not *commit the abominable customs of the heathen*, Lev. xviii. 30.

III. This awakening word is immediately here followed by an awakening providence, v. 13. Where we may observe,

1. With what *power* Ezekiel prophesied, or, rather, what a divine power went along with it; *It came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died*; he was mentioned, v. 1. as a principal man among the twenty-five princes that made all the mischief in Jerusalem. It should seem, this was done in vision now, as the slaying of the ancient men, (ch. ix. 6.) upon occasion of which Ezekiel prayed, (v. 8.) as he did here; but it was an assurance that when this prophecy should be published, it should be done in fact. The death of Pelatiah was an earnest of the complete accomplishment of this prophecy. Note, God is pleased oftentimes to single out some sinners, and make them monuments of his justice, for warning to others of what is coming; and some that thought themselves very safe, are snatched away suddenly, and drop down dead in an instant; as Ananias and Sapphira at Peter's feet when he prophesied.

2. With what *pity* Ezekiel prayed. Though the sudden death of Pelatiah was a confirmation of Ezekiel's prophecy, and really an honour to him, yet he was in deep concern about it, and laid it to heart as if he had been his relation or friend. *He fell on his face, and cried with a loud voice*, as one in earnest; "*Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?*" Many are swept away by the judgments we have been under; and shall the remnant which have escaped the sword, die thus by the immediate hand of heaven? Then thou wilt indeed make a full end." Perhaps it was Ezekiel's infinity to bewail the death of this wicked prince thus, as it was Samuel's to mourn so long for Saul; but thus he showed how far he was from de-

siring the woful day he foretold. David lamented the sickness of those that hated and persecuted him. And we ought to be much affected with the sudden death of others, yea, though they are wicked.

14. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 15. Son of man, thy brethren, *even* thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, *are* they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get ye far from the LORD; unto us is this land given in possession. 16. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. 17. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. 18. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof, from thence. 19. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; 20. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 21. But *as for them* whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own head, saith the Lord God.

Prophecy was designed to exalt *every valley*, as well as to bring low *every mountain and hill*; (Isa. xl. 4.) and prophets were to speak not only conviction to the presumptuous and secure, but comfort to the despised and desponding that trembled at God's word. The prophet, having in the former part of this chapter received instructions for the awakening of those that were at *ease in Zion*, is in these verses furnished with comfortable words for those that mourned in Babylon, and *by the rivers* there sat weeping when they remembered Zion. Observe,

I. How the pious captives were trampled upon and insulted over by those who continued in Jerusalem, *v.* 15. God tells the prophet what the inhabitants of Jerusalem said of him and the rest of them that were already carried away to Babylon. God had owned them as *good figs*, and declared it was for their good that he had sent them into Babylon; but the inhabitants of Jerusalem abandoned them, supposing them that were really the best saints to be the greatest sinners of all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. Observe, 1. How they are described; They are *thy brethren*, (says God to the prophet,) whom thou hast a concern and affection for; they are *the men of thy kindred*; (*the men of thy redemption*, so the word is;) thy next of kin, to whom the right of redeeming the alienated possession belongs, but who are so far from being able to do it, that they are themselves gone into captivity. They are *the whole house of Israel*; God so accounts of them, because they only have retained their integrity, and are bet-

tered by their captivity. They are not only of the same family and nation with Ezekiel, but of the same spirit; they were his hearers, and he had communion with them in holy ordinances; and perhaps upon that account they are called *his brethren*, and *the men of his kindred*. 2. How they were disowned by the inhabitants of Jerusalem; they said of them, *Get ye far from the Lord*. They that were at *ease* and *proud* themselves, scorned their brethren that were *humbled* and under humbling providences. (1.) They cut them off from being members of their church; because they had separated themselves from their rulers, and in compliance with the will of God had surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon, they excommunicated them, and said, "*Get ye far from the Lord, we will have nothing to do with you.*" These that were superstitious were very willing to shake off those who were conscientious, and were severe in their censures of them and sentences against them, as if they were forsaken and forgotten of the Lord, and were cut off from the communion of the faithful. (2.) They cut them off from being members of the commonwealth too, as if they had no longer any part or lot in the matter; "*Unto us is this land given in possession*, and you have forfeited your estates by surrendering to the king of Babylon, and we are thereby become entitled to them." God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the contempt which those that are in prosperity put upon their brethren that are in affliction.

II. The gracious promises which God made to them in consideration of the insolent conduct of their brethren toward them. They that hated them and cast them out, said, *Let the Lord be glorified*; but *he shall appear to their joy*, Isa. lxvi. 5. God owns that his hand was gone out against them, which had given occasion to their brethren to triumph over them; (*v.* 16.) "*It is true, I have cast them far off among the heathen, and scattered them among the countries*; they look as if they were an abandoned people, and so mingled with the nations that they would be lost among them; but I have mercy in store for them." Note, God takes occasion from the contempts which are put upon his people to speak comfort to them; as David hoped God would reward him good for Shimei's cursing. His time to support his people's hopes is, when their enemies are endeavouring to drive them to despair. Now God promises,

1. That he will make up to them the want of the temple and the privileges of it; (*v.* 16.) *I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come*. They at Jerusalem have the temple, but without God; they in Babylon have God, though without the temple. (1.) *God will be a sanctuary to them*, a place of refuge; to him they shall flee, and in him they shall be safe, as he was that took hold on *the horns of the altar*. Or, rather, they shall have such communion with God in the land of their captivity, as it was thought could be had no where but in the temple: they shall there *see God's power and his glory*, so as they used to *see it in the sanctuary*; they shall have the tokens of God's presence with them, and his grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises, as well as ever the altar sanctified the gift, so that they shall *please the Lord better than an ox or bullock*. (2.) *He will be a little sanctuary*, not seen or observed by their enemies, who looked with an evil and an envious eye upon *that house* at Jerusalem which was *high and great*, 1 Kings ix. 8. They were but few and mean, and a *little sanctuary* was fittest for them. God *regards the low estate of his people*, and suits his favours to their circumstances. Observe the condescensions of divine grace; *the great God will be to his people a little sanctuary*.

Note, They that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, if it be not their own fault, may have the want of them abundantly made up in the immediate communications of divine grace and comforts.

2. That God would in due time put an end to their afflictions, bring them out of the land of their captivity, and settle them again, them or their children, in their own land; (v. 17.) "*I will gather even you that are thus dispersed, thus despised, and given over for lost by your own countrymen; I will gather you from the people, distinguish you from those with whom you are mingled, deliver you from those by whom you are held captives, and assemble you in a body out of the countries where you have been scattered; you shall not come back one by one, but all together, which will make your return more honourable, safe, and comfortable; and then I will give you the land of Israel, which now your brethren look upon you as for ever shut out from.*" Note, It is well for us that men's severe censures cannot cut us off from God's gracious promises. There are many that will be found to have a place in the holy land, whom uncharitable men by their monopolies of it to themselves, had secluded from it. *I will give you the land of Israel, give it you again by a new grant, and they shall come thither.* If there be any thing in the change of the person from *you* to *them*, it may signify the posterity of those to whom the promise is made. "*You shall have the title as the patriarchs had, and they that come after shall have the possession.*"

3. That God by his grace would part between them and their sins, v. 18. Their captivity shall effectually cure them of their idolatry; *When they come thither to their own land again, they shall take away all the detestable things thereof.* Their idols that had been their detestable things, should now be looked upon with detestation; not only the idols of Babylon, where they were captives, but the idols of Canaan, where they were natives; they should not only not worship them as they had done, but they should not suffer any monuments of them to remain; *they shall take all the abominations thereof from thence.* Note, *Then* it is in mercy that we return to a prosperous estate, when we return not to the sins and follies of that state. *What have I to do any more with idols?*

4. That God would powerfully dispose them to their duty; they shall not only *cease to do evil*, but they shall *learn to do well*; because there shall be not only an end of their troubles, but a return to their peace.

(1.) God will plant good principles in them; he will make the tree good, v. 19. This is a gospel-promise, and is made good to all those whom God designs for the heavenly Canaan; for God prepares all for heaven whom he has prepared heaven for. It is promised, [1.] That God *will give them one heart*, a heart entire for the true God, and not divided as it had been among many gods; a heart firmly fixed and resolved for God, and not wavering; steady and uniform, and not inconstant with itself. *One heart* is a sincere and upright heart, its intentions of a piece with its professions. [2.] That he *will put a new spirit within them*, a temper of mind agreeable to the new circumstances into which God in his providence would bring them. All that are sanctified have a *new spirit*, quite different from what it was; they act from new principles, walk by new rules, and aim at new ends. A new name, or a new face, will not serve without a *new spirit*. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* [3.] That he *will take away the stony heart out of their flesh*, out of their corrupt nature. Their hearts shall no longer be, as they have been, dead and dry, and hard and heavy, as a stone; no longer incapable of bearing good fruit, so that the good seed is lost

upon it, as it was on the *stony ground*. [4.] That he *will give them a heart of flesh*, not dead or proud flesh, but living flesh; he will make their hearts sensible of spiritual pains and spiritual pleasures; will make them tender, and apt to receive impressions; this is God's work, it is his gift, his gift by promise; and a wonderful and happy change it is that is wrought by it, from death to life. This is promised to those whom God would bring back to their own land; for *then* such a change of the condition is for the better indeed, when it is accompanied with such a change of the heart; and such a change must be wrought in all those that shall be brought to the *better country*, that is, the heavenly.

(2.) Their practices shall be consonant to these principles; *I will give them a new spirit*, not that they may be able to discourse well of religion, and to dispute for it, but that *they may walk in my statutes*, in their whole conversation, and *keep mine ordinances* in all acts of religious worship, v. 20. These two must go together; and those, to whom God has given a *new heart* and a *new spirit*, will make conscience of both; and then *they shall be my people, and I will be their God.* The ancient covenant, which seemed to have been broken and forgotten, shall be renewed. By their idolatry, it should seem, they had cast God off, by their captivity, it should seem, God had cast them off; but when they were cured of their idolatry, and delivered out of their captivity, God and his Israel own one another again. God, by his good work in them, will make them his *people*; and then, by the tokens of his good will toward them, he will show that he is their *God*.

III. Here is a threatening of wrath against those who hated to be reformed. As, when judgments are threatened, the righteous are distinguished so as not to share in the evil of those judgments; so, when favours are promised, the wicked are distinguished so as not to share in the comfort of those favours; they have no part or lot in the matter, v. 21. *But as for them that have no grace, what have they to do with peace?* Observe, 1. Their description; their *heart walks after the heart of their detestable things*; they have as great a mind to worship devils as devils have to be worshipped. Or, in opposition to the *new heart* which God gives his people, which is a heart after his own heart, they have a *heart after the heart of their idols*; in their temper and practice they conformed themselves to the characters and accounts given them of their idols, and the ideas they have of them, and of them they learned lewdness and cruelty. Here lies the root of all their wickedness, the corruption of the heart; as the root of their reformation is laid in the renovation of the heart. The heart has its walks, and according as those are, the man is. 2. Their doom; it carries both justice and terror in it; *I will recompense their way upon their own head*; I will deal with them as they deserve. There needs no more than this to speak God righteous, that he does but render to men according to their deserts. And yet such are the deserts of sin, that there needs no more than this to speak the sinner miserable.

22. Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. 23. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city. 24. Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to



them of the captivity: so the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had shewed me.

Here is, 1. The departure of God's presence from the city and temple. When the message was committed to the prophet, and he was fully apprized of it, fully instructed how to separate between the *precious and the vile, then the cherubims lifted up their wings, and the wheels beside them, (v. 22.)* as before, *ch. x. 19.* Angels, when they have done their errands in this lower world, are upon the wing to be gone, for they lose no time. *We left the glory of the Lord last at the east gate of the temple, (ch. x. 19.)* which is here said to be in the *midst of the city.* Now here we are told, that, finding, and wondering, that there was none to intercede, none to uphold, none to invite its return, it removed next to *the mountain, which is on the east side of the city, (v. 23.)* that was the *mount of Olives.* On the mountain they had set up their idols, to confront God in his temple, when he dwelt there, *(1 Kings xi. 7.)* and thence it was called the *mount of corruption; (2 Kings xxiii. 13.)* therefore their God does as it were set up his standard, his tribunal, as it were to confront them, who thought to keep possession of the temple for themselves now that God had left it. From that mountain there was a full prospect of the city, thither God removed, to make good what he had said, *(Deut. xxxii. 26.)* *I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be.* It was from this mountain that Christ beheld the city, and wept over it, in the foresight of its last destruction by the Romans. *The glory of the Lord removed thither, to be as it were yet within call, and ready to return, if now at length, in this their day, they would have understood the things that belonged to their peace.* Loath to depart bids often farewell. God, by going away thus slowly, thus gradually, intimated that he left them with reluctance, and would not have gone if they had not perfectly forced him from them. He did now, in effect, say, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?* But though he bear long, he will not bear always, but will at length forsake those, and cast them off for ever, who have forsaken him, and cast him off.

2. The departure of this vision from the prophet; at length it *went up from him, (v. 24.)* he saw it mount upward, till it went out of sight, which would be a confirmation to his faith that it was a heavenly vision, that it descended from above, for thitherward it returned. Note, The visions which the saints have of the glory of God, will not be constant till they come to heaven. They have glimpses of that glory, which they soon lose again; visions which go *up from them; tastes of divine pleasures, but not a continual feast.* It was from the *mount of Olives that the vision went up, typifying the ascension of Christ to heaven from that very mountain, when those that had seen him manifested in the flesh, saw him no more.* It was foretold *(Zech. xiv. 4.)* that *his feet should stand upon the mount of Olives, stand last there.*

3. The prophet's return to them of the captivity. The same Spirit that had carried him in a trance or ecstasy to Jerusalem, brought him back to Chaldea; for there the bounds of his habitation are at present appointed, and that is the place of his service. The Spirit came to him, not to deliver him out of captivity, but (which was equivalent) to support and comfort him in his captivity.

4. The account which he gave to his hearers of all he had seen and heard, *v. 25.* He received, that he might give, and he was *faithful to him that*

*appointed him; he delivered his message very honestly; he spake all that, and that only, which God had shewed him: he told them of the great wickedness he had seen at Jerusalem, and the ruin that was hastening toward that city, that they might not repent of their surrendering themselves to the king of Babylon, as Jeremiah advised them, and blame themselves for it, nor envy those that stayed behind, and laughed at them for going when they did, nor wish themselves there again, but be content in their captivity.* Who would covet to be in a city so full of sin, and so near to ruin? It is better to be in Babylon under the favour of God, than in Jerusalem under his wrath and curse. But though this was delivered immediately to them of the captivity, yet we may suppose that they sent the contents of it to them at Jerusalem, with whom they kept up a correspondence; and well had it been for Jerusalem, if she had taken the warning hereby given.

## CHAP. XII.

Though the vision of God's glory he gone up from the prophet, yet his word comes to him still, and is by him sent to the people, and to the same purport with that which was discovered to him in the vision, namely, to set forth the terrible judgments that were coming upon Jerusalem, by which the city and temple should be entirely laid waste. In this chapter, I. The prophet, by removing his stuff, and quitting his lodgings, must be a sign to set forth Zedekiah's flight out of Jerusalem in the utmost confusion when the Chaldeans took the city, *v. 1.-16.* II. The prophet, by eating his meat with trembling, must be a sign to set forth the famine in the city during the siege, and the consternation that the inhabitants should be in, *v. 17.-20.* III. A message is sent from God to the people, to assure them that all these predictions should have their accomplishment very shortly, and not be deferred, as they flattered themselves, *v. 21.-28.*

1. **T**HE word of the LORD also came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house. 3. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. 4. Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity. 5. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. 6. In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground; for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel. 7. And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with my hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight. 8. And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?

13. Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, This burden *concerneth* the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them. 11. Say, I *am* your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall remove, and go into captivity. 12. And the prince that *is* among them shall bear upon *his* shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth; they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with *his* eyes. 13. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. 14. And I will scatter toward every wind all that *are* about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them. 15. And they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries. 16. But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Perhaps Ezekiel reflected with so much pleasure upon the vision he had had of the glory of God, that often, since it went up from him, he was wishing it might come down to him again, and, having seen it once and a second time, he was willing to hope he might be a third time so favoured; but we do not find that he ever saw it any more; and yet *the word of the Lord comes to him*; for God did in *divers manners speak to the fathers*, (Heb. i. 1.) and they often *heard the words of God*, when they did not *see the visions of the Almighty*. Faith comes by hearing that word of prophecy, which is more sure than vision. We may keep up our communion with God without raptures and ecstasies.

In these verses, the prophet is directed,

I. By what signs and actions to express the approaching captivity of Zedekiah king of Judah; that was the thing to be foretold; and it is foretold to them that are already in captivity, because as long as Zedekiah was upon the throne, they flattered themselves with hopes that he would make his part good with the king of Babylon, whose yoke he was now projecting to shake off; from which, it is probable, these poor captives promised themselves great things, and, it may be, when he was forming that design, he privately sent encouragement to them to hope that he would rescue them shortly, or procure their liberty by exchange of prisoners; and while they were fed with these vain hopes, they could not set themselves either to submit to their affliction, or get good by their affliction. It was therefore necessary, but very difficult, to convince them that Zedekiah, instead of being their deliverer, should very shortly be their fellow-sufferer. Now, one would have thought, it might have been sufficient if the prophet had only told them this in God's name, as he does afterward; (v. 10.) but, to prepare them for the prophecy of it, he must first give them a sign of it; must speak it to their eyes first, and then to their ears: and here we have,

1. The reason why he must take this method; (v. 2.) it is because they are a stupid, dull, unthinking people, that will not heed, or will soon forget, or at least will not be at all affected with, what they only hear of; it will make no impression at all upon them; *Thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house*, whom it is next to impossible to work any good upon; *they have eyes and ears*, they have intellectual powers and faculties, but they *see not*, they *hear not*; they were idolaters, whose character it was, that they were like the idols they worshipped, which *have eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not*, Ps. cxv. 5, 8. Note, These are to be reckoned rebellious, that shut their eyes against the divine light, and stop their ears to the divine law. The ignorance of them that are wilfully ignorant, that have faculties and means, and will not use them, is so far from being their excuse, that it adds rebellion to their sin. None so blind, so deaf, as those that will not hear, that will not see. They *see not*, they *hear not*; for they are a rebellious house. The cause is all from themselves; the darkness of the understanding is owing to the stubbornness of the will. Now this is the reason why he must speak to them by signs, as deaf people are taught, that they might be either instructed or ashamed. Note, Ministers must accommodate themselves not only to the weakness, but to the wilfulness, of those they deal with, and deal with them accordingly: if they dwell among those that are rebellious, they must speak to them the more plainly and pressingly, and take that course that is most likely to work upon them, that they may be left inexcusable.

2. The method he must take to awaken and affect them; he must furnish himself with all necessities *for removing*, (v. 3.) provide for a journey clothes and money; he must *remove from one place to another*, as one unsettled and forced to shift; this he must do *by day*, in the sight of the people; he must bring out all his household goods to be packed up and sent away; (v. 4.) and, because all the doors and gates were either locked up that they could not pass through them, or so guarded by the enemy that they durst not, he must therefore *dig through the wall*, and convey his goods away clandestinely through that breach in the wall, v. 5. He must carry his goods away himself upon his own shoulders, for want of a servant to attend him; he must do this *in the twilight*, that he might not be discovered; and, when he has made what shift he can to secure some of the best of his effects, he must himself steal away *at even in their sight*, with fear and trembling, and must go *as they that go forth into captivity*, (v. 4.) that is, he must *cover his face*, (v. 6.) as being ashamed to be seen, and afraid to be known, or in token of very great sorrow and concern; he must go away as a poor broken tradesman, who, when he is forced to shut up shop, hides his head, or runs his country.

Thus Ezekiel must be himself a sign to them, and when perhaps he seemed somewhat backward to put himself to all this trouble, and to expose himself to be bantered and ridiculed for it, to reconcile him to it, God says, (v. 3.) "*It may be they will consider*, and will by it be taken off from their vain confidences, *though they be a rebellious house*." Note, We must not despair, even of the worst, but that yet they may be brought to bethink themselves, and repent; and therefore we must continue the use of proper means for their conviction and conversion, because, while there is life, there is hope. And ministers must be willing to go through the most difficult and inconvenient offices, (for such was this Ezekiel's removing,) though there be but the '*it may be*' of success. If but one soul be awakened to *consider*, our care and pains will be well bestowed.

3. Ezekiel's ready and punctual obedience to the orders God gave him; (v. 7.) *I did so as I was commanded*. Hereby he teaches us, and ministers especially, (1.) To obey with cheerfulness every command of God, even the most difficult. Christ himself *learned obedience*, and so we must all. (2.) To do all we can for the good of the souls of others, to put ourselves to any trouble or pains for the conviction of those that are unconvinced. *We do all things*, that is, we are willing to do any thing, *dearly beloved, for your edifying*. (3.) To be ourselves affected with those things wherewith we desire to affect others. When Ezekiel would give his hearers a melancholy prospect, he does himself put on a melancholy aspect. (4.) To sit loose to this world, and prepare to leave it; to carry out our *stuff for removing*, because *we have here no continuing city*. *Arise, depart, this is not your rest, for it is polluted*. Thou dwellest in a *rebellious house*, therefore prepare for removing; for who would not be willing to leave such a house, such a wicked world as this is?

11. He is directed by what words to explain those signs and actions, as Agabus, when he bound his own hands and feet, told whose binding was thereby signified. But observe, it was not till morning that God gave him an exposition of the sign, till the next morning, to keep up in him a continual dependence upon God for instruction. As what God does, so what he directs us to do, perhaps we know not now, but shall know hereafter.

1. It was supposed that the people would ask the meaning of this sign, or at least they should; (v. 9.) *"Hath not the house of Israel said unto thee, What doest thou?"* Yes, I know they have. *Though they are a rebellious house*, yet they are inquisitive concerning the mind of God; as those (Isa. lviii. 2.) who *sought God daily*. Therefore the prophet must do such a strange, uncouth thing, that they might inquire what it meant; and then, it may be hoped, people will take notice of what is told them, and profit by it, when it comes to them in answer to their inquiries. But some understand it as an intimation, that they had not made any such inquiries; *Hath not this rebellious house* so much as asked thee, *What doest thou?* No, they take no notice of it; but tell them the meaning of it, though they do not ask." Note, When God sends us by his ministers, he observes what entertainment we give to the messages he sends us; he hearkens and hears what we say to them, and what inquiries we make upon them; and is much displeased if we pass them by without taking any notice of them. When we have heard the word, we should apply ourselves to our ministers for further instruction; and then we shall know, if we thus follow on to know.

2. The prophet is to tell them the meaning of it. In general, (v. 10.) *This burthen concerns the prince in Jerusalem*; they knew who that was, and gloried in it now that they were in captivity, that they had a prince of their own in Jerusalem, and that the *house of Israel* was yet entire there, and therefore doubted not but in time to do well enough; "But tell them," says God, "that in what thou hast done they may read the doom of their friends at Jerusalem. *Say, I am your sign*," v. 11. As the conversation of ministers should teach the people what they should do, so the providences of God concerning them are sometimes intended to tell them what they must expect. The unsettled state and removes of ministers give warning to people what they must expect in this world, no continuance, but constant changes. When times of trouble are coming on, Christ tells his disciples, *They shall first lay their hands on you*, Luke xxi. 12.

(1.) The people shall be led away into captivity; (v. 11.) *As I have done, so shall it be done unto them*, they shall be forced away from their own houses,

no more to return to them, neither shall *their place know them any more*. We cannot say concerning our dwelling-place, that it is our resting-place; for how far we may be tossed from it before we die, we cannot foresee.

(2.) The prince shall in vain attempt to make his escape, for he also shall go into captivity. Jeremiah had told Zedekiah the same to his face; (Jer. xxxiv. 3.) *Thou shalt not escape, but shalt surely be taken*. Ezekiel here foretells it to those who made him their confidence, and promised themselves relief from him. [1.] That he shall himself carry away his own goods; *He shall bear upon his shoulder some of his most valuable effects*. Note, The judgments of God can turn a prince into a porter. He that was wont to have the regalia carried before him, and to march through the city at noon-day, shall now himself carry his goods on his back, and steal away out of the city in the twilight. See what a change sin makes with men! All the avenues to the palace being carefully watched by the enemy, *they shall dig through the wall, to carry out thereby*. Men shall be their own housebreakers, and steal away their own goods; so it is when the sword of war has cancelled all right and property. [2.] That he shall attempt to escape in a disguise, with a mask or vizor on, which *shall cover his face*, so that he shall be able only to look before him, and shall *not see the ground with his eyes*. He who, when he was in pomp, *affected to be seen*, now that he is in his flight, *is afraid to be seen*; let none therefore either be proud of being looked at, or overmuch pleased with looking about them, when they see a king with *his face covered, that he cannot see the ground*. [3.] That he shall be made a prisoner, and carried captive into Babylon; (v. 13.) *My net will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare*. It seemed to be the Chaldean's net, and their snare, but God owns it for his. Those that think to escape the sword of the Lord, will find themselves taken in his net. Jeremiah had said, that king Zedekiah should see the *king of Babylon*, and that he should go to Babylon; Ezekiel says, He shall be brought to Babylon, yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there. Those that were disposed to cavil, would perhaps object that these two prophets contradicted one another; for one said, He shall see the *king of Babylon*, the other said, He shall not see *Babylon*; and yet both proved true: he did see the *king of Babylon* at Riblah, where he passed sentence upon him for his rebellion, but there he had his eyes put out, so that he did not see *Babylon* when he was brought thither. These captives expected to see their prince come to Babylon as a conqueror, to bring them out of their trouble; but he shall come thither a prisoner, and his disgrace will be a great addition to their troubles. Little joy could they have in seeing him, when he could not see them. [4.] That all his guards should be dispersed, and utterly disabled to do him any service; (v. 14.) *I will scatter all that are about him to help him*, so that he shall be left helpless; *I will scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries*, (v. 15.) to be monuments of divine justice wherever they go. But are there not hopes that they may rally again? (He that flies one time, may fight another time;) No, *I will draw out the sword after them*, which shall cut them off wherever it finds them; for the sword that God draws out will be sure to do the execution designed, yet of Zedekiah's scattered troops some shall escape; (v. 16.) *I will leave a few men of them*; though they shall all be scattered, yet they shall not all be cut off, some shall have their *lives given them for a prey*; the end for which they are thus remarkably spared, is very observable, *that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen*

*whither they come*; the troubles they are brought into will bring them to themselves and to their right mind, and then they will acknowledge the justice of God in all that is brought upon them, and will make an ingenuous confession of their sins which provoked God thus to contend with them; and as by this it shall appear that they were spared in mercy, so hereby they will make a suitable, grateful return to God for his favours to them in sparing them. Note, When God has remarkably delivered us from the deaths wherewith we were surrounded, we must look upon it that for this end, among others, we were spared, that we might glorify God, and edify others, by making a penitent acknowledgment of our sins. Those that by their afflictions are brought to this, are then made to know *that God is the Lord*, and may help to bring others to the knowledge of him. See how God brings good out of evil! The dispersion of sinners, who had done God much dishonour and disservice in their own country, proves the dispersion of penitents, who shall do him much honour and service in other countries. The Levites are by a curse *divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel*, yet it is turned into a blessing, for thereby they have the fairest opportunity to *teach Jacob God's law*.

17. Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 18. Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness; 19. And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord God of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *and of the land of Israel*, They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of them that dwell therein. 20. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I *am the Lord*.

Here again the prophet is made a sign to them of the desolations that were coming on Judah and Jerusalem.

1. He must himself eat and drink in care and fear, especially when he was in company, *v. 17, 18*. Though he was under no apprehension of danger to himself, but lived in safety and plenty, yet he must *eat his bread with quaking*, (the bread of sorrows, *Ps. cxxvii. 2.*) and *drink his water with trembling and with carefulness*, that he might express the calamitous condition of those that should be in Jerusalem during the siege: not that he must dissemble, and pretend to be in fear and care when really he was not; but, being to foretell this judgment, to show that he firmly believed it himself, and yet was far from desiring it, in the prospect of it he was himself affected with grief and fear. Note, When ministers speak of the ruin coming upon impenitent sinners, they must endeavour to speak feelingly, as those that *know the terrors of the Lord*. And they must be content to endure hardness, so they may but do good.

2. He must tell them that *the inhabitants of Jerusalem* should in like manner eat and drink with care and fear, *v. 19, 20*. Both those that have their home in Jerusalem, and those *of the land of Israel*, that come to shelter themselves there, *they shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment*, either because they are afraid it will not hold out, but they shall want short-

ly, or because they are continually expecting the alarms of the enemy, *their life hanging in doubt before them*, (*D. ut. xxviii. 66.*) so that what they have they shall have no enjoyment of, nor will it do them any good. Note, Care and fear, if they prevail, are enough to imbitter all our comforts, and are themselves very sore judgments. They shall be reduced to these straits, that thus by degrees, and by the hand of those that thus straiten them, both city and country may be laid in ruins; for it is no less than an utter destruction of both that is aimed at in these judgments; *that her land may be desolate from all the fulness thereof, may be stripped of all its ornaments, and robbed of all its fruits; and then of course the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste*, for they are *served by the field*. This universal desolation was coming upon them, and then no wonder that they eat their bread with care and fear. Now we are here told, (1.) How bad the cause of this judgment was; it is *because of the violence of all them that dwell therein*; their injustice and oppression, and the mischief they did one another; for which God would reckon with them, as well as for the affronts put upon him in his worship. Note, The decay of virtue in a nation brings on a decay of every thing else; and when neighbours devour one another, it is just with God to bring enemies upon them to devour them all. (2.) How good the effect of this judgment should be; *Ye shall know that I am the Lord*, and if, by these judgments, they learn to know him aright, that will make up the loss of all they are deprived of by these desolations. Those are happy afflictions, how grievous soever to flesh and blood, that help to introduce us into, and improve us in, an acquaintance with God.

21. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 22. Son of man, what is that proverb *that ye have in the land of Israel*, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth! 23. Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God, I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. 24. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25. For I *am the Lord*: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God. 26. Again, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 27. Son of man, behold, *they of the house of Israel* say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times *that are far off*. 28. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, There shall none of my words be prolonged any more; but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God.

Various methods have been used to awaken this secure and careless people to an expectation of the judgments coming, that they might be stirred up by repentance and reformation, to prevent them. The prophecies of their ruin were confirmed by visions,

and illustrated by signs, and all with such evidence and power, that one would think they must needs be wrought upon; but here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and guarded against it, namely, by telling themselves, and one another, that though these judgments threatened should come at last, yet they would not come of a long time. This suggestion, with which they bolstered themselves up in their security, is here answered, and showed to be vain and groundless, in two messages which God sent to them by the prophet at different times, both to the same purport; such care, such pains, must the prophet take to undeceive them! v. 21, 26. Observe,

I. How they flattered themselves with hopes that the judgments should be delayed. One saying they had, which was become proverbial in the land of Israel, v. 22. They said, "*The days are prolonged*, the judgments are not come when they were expected to come; but seem to be still put off *de die in diem—from day to day*, and therefore we may conclude that *every vision fails*, because it should seem that some do; that, because the destruction is not come yet, it will never come; we will never trust a prophet again, for we have been worse frightened than hurt." And another saying they had, which, if it would not conquer their convictions, yet should cool their affections, and abate their concern, and that was, "*The vision is for a great while to come*, it refers to events at a vast distance, and *he prophesies of things*, which, though they may be true, are yet very *far off*, so that we need not to trouble our heads about them, (v. 27.) we may die in honour and peace before these troubles come." And if indeed the troubles had been thus adjourned, they might have made themselves easy, as Hezekiah did, *Is it not well, if peace and truth shall be in my days?* But it was a great mistake, and they did but deceive themselves into their own ruin; and God is here much displeased at it, for, 1. It was a wretched abuse of the patience of God, who, because for a time he kept silence, was thought to be *altogether such a one as themselves*, Ps. l. 21. That *forbearance of God*, which should have led them to repentance, hardened them in sin. They were willing to think their works were not *evil*, because sentence against them was not *executed speedily*; and therefore concluded the *vision itself failed*, because the *days were prolonged*. 2. It received countenance from the false prophets that were among them, as should seem from the notice God takes (v. 24.) of the *vain visions*, and *flattering divinations*, even *within the house of Israel*, to whom were committed the *oracles of God*. No marvel if they that deceived themselves by worshipping pretended deities, deceived themselves by crediting pretended prophecies, to which *strong delusions* God justly gave them up for their idolatries. 3. These sayings were become proverbial, they were industriously spread among the people, so that they were got into every one's mouth, and not only so, but were generally assented to, as proverbs are, not only the proverbs of the ancients, but those of the moderns too. Note, It is a token of universal degeneracy in a nation, when corrupt and wicked sayings are grown proverbial; and it is an artifice of Satan, by them to confirm men in their prejudices against the word and ways of God, and a great offence to the God of heaven. It will not serve for an excuse, in saying ill, to plead that it is a common saying.

II. How they are assured that they do but deceive themselves, for the judgments shall be hastened, these profane proverbs shall be confronted; *Tell them therefore, The days are at hand*; (v. 23.) and again, (v. 28.) *There shall none of my words be prolonged any more*. Their putting the evil day far from them does but provoke God to bring it the

sooner upon them; and it will be so much the sorer, so much the heavier, so much the more a surprise and terror to them, when it does come. He must tell them,

1. That God will certainly silence the lying proverbs, and the lying prophecies, with which they buoyed up their vain hopes, and will make them ashamed of both; (1.) *I will make this proverb to cease*; for when they find the days of vengeance are come, and not one iota or tittle of the prediction falls to the ground, they will be ashamed to use it as a *proverb in Israel*, *The days are prolonged, and the vision fails*. Note, Those that will not have their eyes opened, and their mistakes rectified, by the word of God, shall be undeceived by his judgments, for *every mouth that speaks perverse things shall be stopped*. (2.) *There shall be no more any vain vision*, v. 24. The false prophets, who told the people they should have peace, and should soon see an end of their troubles, shall be disproved by the event, and then shall be ashamed of their pretensions, and shall hide their heads, and inpose silence upon themselves. Note, As truth was older than error, so it will survive it; it got the start, and it will get the race. The true prophet's visions and predictions stand, and are in full force, power, and virtue; they give law, and receive credit, when the *vain visions*, and the *flattering divinations*, are lost and forgotten, and *shall be no more in the house of Israel*; for great is the truth, and will prevail.

2. That God will certainly, and very shortly, accomplish every word that he has spoken. With what majesty does he say it, (v. 25.) *I am the LORD! I am Jehovah!* That glorious name of his speaks him a God giving being to his word by the performance of it, and therefore to the patriarchs, who lived by faith in a promise not yet performed, he was not known by his name *Jehovah*, Exod. vi. 3. But as he is Jehovah in making good his promise, so he is in making good his threatenings. Let them know then that God, *with whom they have to do*, is the great Jehovah, and therefore,

(1.) *He will speak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; I am the Lord, I will speak*. God will have his saying, whoever gainsays it. God's oracles are called *lively ones*, for they still speak, when the pagan oracles are long ago struck dumb. There has been, and shall be, a succession of God's ministers to the end of the world, by whom he will speak; and though contempt may be put upon them, that shall not put a period to their ministration; *In your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word*. Even in the worst ages of the church God *left not himself without witness*, but raised up men that spake for him, that spake from him. *I will say the word*, the word that shall stand.

(2.) *The word that he speaks shall come to pass*, it shall infallibly be accomplished according to the true intent and meaning of it, and according to the full extent and compass of it; *I will say the word, and will perform it*; (v. 25.) for his mind is never changed nor his arm shortened, nor is infinite wisdom ever unplussed. With men, saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God; with him it is *dictum, factum—said and done*. In the works of providence, as in those of creation, *he speaks, and it is done*; for he said, *Let there be light, and there was light*: *Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament*, Numb. xxiii. 19. 1 Sam. xv. 29. Whereas they had said, *Every vision fails*, (v. 22.) God says, "*No, there shall be the effect of every vision*, (v. 23.) it shall not return void, but every sign shall be answered by the thing signified." They that see the *visions of the Almighty*, do not see *vain visions*; God confirms the word of his servants by performing it.

(3.) It shall be accomplished very shortly; "*The*

*days are at hand, when you shall see the effect of every vision, v. 23.* It is said, it is sworn, that *delay shall be no longer*; (Rev. x. 6.) the year of God's patience is now just expired, and he will no longer defer the execution of the sentence. *It shall be no more prolonged*; (v. 25.) he has borne with you a great while, but he will not bear always. *In your days, O rebellious house, shall the word that is said be performed*, and you shall see the threatened judgments, and share in them. *Behold, the Judge stands at the door.* The *righteous are taken away from the evil to come*, but this *rebellious house shall not be so quietly taken away*; no, they shall live to be hurried away, *to be chased out of the world.*" This is repeated again; (v. 28.) "*There shall none of my words be prolonged any more*, but judgment shall now hasten on apace; and the longer the bow has been in the drawing, the deeper shall the arrow pierce." When we tell sinners of death and judgment, heaven and hell, and think by them to persuade them to a holy life, though we do not find them downright infidels, (they will own that they do believe there is a state of rewards and punishments in the other world,) yet they put by the force of those great truths, and avoid the impressions of them, by looking upon the things of the other world as very remote; they tell us, "*The vision you see is for many days to come, and you prophesy of the times that are very far off*;" it will be time enough to think of them when they come nearer;" whereas really there is but a step between us and death, between us and an awful eternity; *yet a little while, and the vision shall speak and not lie*, and therefore it concerns us to redeem time, and get ready with all speed for a future state; for though it is future, it is very near; and while impenitent sinners slumber, their *damnation slumbers not*.

### CHAP. XIII.

Mention had been made, in the chapter before, of the vain visions and flattering divinations with which the people of Israel had suffered themselves to be imposed upon; (v. 24.) now this whole chapter is levelled against them. God's faithful prophets are no where so sharp upon any sort of sinners as upon the false prophets; not because they were the most spiteful enemies to them, but because they put the highest affront upon God, and did the greatest mischief to his people. The prophet here shows the sin and punishment, 1. Of the false prophets, v. 1.-16. 11. Of the false prophetesses, v. 17.-23. Both agreed to soothe men up in their sins, and, under pretence of comforting God's people, to flatter them with hopes that they should yet have peace; but the prophets shall be proved liars, their prophecies were shams, and the expectation of the people illusions; for God will let them know, that the *deceived and the deceiver are his*, are both accountable to him, Job xii. 16.

1. **AND** the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord; 3. Thus saith the Lord God, Wo unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4. O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. 5. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. 6. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith; and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. 7. Have ye not

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seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken? 8. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. 9. And my hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

The false prophets, who are here prophesied against, were some of them at Jerusalem; (Jer. xxiii. 14.) *I have seen in the prophets at Jerusalem a horrible thing*; some of them among the captives in Babylon, for to them Jeremiah writes, (Jer. xxix. 8.) *Let not your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you.* And as God's prophets, though at a distance from each other in place or time, yet preached the same truths, which was an evidence that they were guided by one and the same good Spirit, so the false prophets prophesied the same lies, being actuated by one and the same spirit of error. There were little hopes of bringing them to repentance, they were so hardened in their sin; yet Ezekiel must prophesy against them, in hopes that the people might be cautioned not to hearken to them; and thus a testimony will be left upon record against them, and they thereby left inexcusable.

Ezekiel had express orders to *prophesy against the prophets of Israel*; so they called themselves, as if none but they had been worthy of the name of Israel's prophets, who were indeed Israel's deceivers. But it is observable that Israel was never imposed upon by pretenders to prophecy till after they had rejected and abused the true prophets; as afterward, they were never deluded by counterfeit messiahs, till after they had refused the true Messiah, and rejected him. These false prophets must be required to *hear the word of the Lord*. They took upon them to speak what concerned others, as from God; let them now hear what concerned themselves, as from him.

And two things the prophet is directed to do;

1. To discover their sin to them, and to convince them of that if possible, or thereby to prevent their proceeding any further, by making *manifest their folly unto all men*, 2 Tim. iii. 9. They are here called *foolish prophets*, (v. 3.) men that did not at all understand the business they pretended to: to make fools of the people, they made fools of themselves, and put the greatest cheat upon their own souls. Let us see what is here laid to their charge.

1. They pretend to have a commission from God, whereas he never *sent them*; they thrust themselves into the prophetic office, without warrant from him who is the *Lord God of the holy prophets*, which was a foolish thing; for how could they expect that God should own them in a work to which he never called them? They are *prophets out of their own hearts*; so the margin reads it; (v. 2.) prophets of their own making, v. 6. *They say, The Lord saith*, they pretend to be his messengers, but the *Lord hath not sent them*, has not given them any orders; they counterfeit the broad seal of heaven, than which they cannot do a greater indignity to mankind, for hereby they put a reproach upon divine revelation, lessen its credit, and weaken its credibility; when these pretenders are found to be deceivers, atheists and infidels will thence infer, they are all so. *The Lord has not sent them*; for, though crafty enough



in other things, like the foxes, and very wise for the world, yet they are *foolish prophets*, and have no experimental acquaintance with the things of God. Note, Foolish prophets are not of God's sending, for whom he sends he either finds fit, or makes fit. Where he gives warrant, he gives wisdom.

2. They pretend to have instructions from God, whereas he never made himself and his mind known to them; *They followed their own spirit*, (v. 3.) they deliver that as a message from God, which is the product either of their subtle invention, to serve a turn for themselves, or of their own crazed and heated imagination, to give vent to a fancy; for *they have seen nothing*, they have not really had any heavenly vision; they pretend that what they say, *the Lord saith it*, but God disowns it, "*I have not spoken it*, I never said it, never meant any such thing." What they delivered was not what they had seen or heard, as that is which the ministers of Christ deliver, (1 John i. 1.) but either what they had dreamed, or what they thought would please those they coveted to make an interest in; this is called *their seeing vanity and lying divination*, (v. 6.) they pretend to have seen that which they did not see, and produced that as a divine truth, which they knew to be false. To the same purport, (v. 7.) *Ye have seen a vain vision, and spoken a lying divination*, which had no divine original, and would have no effect, but would certainly be disproved by the event; the words are changed, (v. 8.) *Ye have spoken vanity and seen lies*; what they saw and what they said was all alike, a mere sham; they saw nothing, they said nothing to the purpose, nothing that could be relied on, or that deserved regard. Again, (v. 9.) *they see vanity, and divine lies*; they pretend to have had visions, as the true prophets had, whereas really they had none, but either it was the creature of their own fancy, (they thought they had a vision, as men in a delirium do, that was *seeing vanity*;) or it was a fiction of their own politics, and they knew they had none, and then they *saw lies, and divined lies*. See Jer. xxiii. 16, &c. Note, Since the devil is universally known to be the father of lies, those put the highest affront imaginable upon God, who tell lies, and then father them upon him. But they that had put God's character upon Satan, in worshipping devils, arrived at length at such a pitch of impiety as to put Satan's character upon God.

3. They took no care to prevent the judgments of God, that were breaking in upon the kingdom. They are like *the foxes in the deserts*, running to and fro, and seeming to be in a great hurry, but it was to get away, and shift for their own safety, not to do any good; *The hireling flees, and leaves the sheep*. They are like foxes that are greedy of prey for themselves, crafty and cruel to feed themselves. But, (v. 5.) "*Ye have not gone up into the gaps, nor made up the hedge of the house of Israel*. A breach is made in their fences, at which judgments are ready to pour in upon them, and then, if ever, is the time to do them service; but ye have done nothing to help them." They should have made intercession for them, to turn away the wrath of God; but they were not praying prophets, had no interest in heaven, nor intercourse with heaven, (as prophets used to have, Gen. xx. 7.) and so could do them no service that way. They should have made it their business by preaching and advice, to bring people to repentance and reformation, and so have *made up the hedge*, and put a stop to the judgments of God; but this was none of their care, they contrived how to please people, not how to profit them. They saw a deluge of profaneness and impiety breaking in upon the land, waging war with virtue and holiness, and threatening to crush them and bear them down, and then they should have come in to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord

against the mighty, by witnessing against the wickedness of the time and place they lived in; but they thought that would be as dangerous a piece of service as standing in a breach to make it good against the besiegers, and therefore they declined it, did nothing to stem the tide, stood not in the battle against vice and immorality, but basely deserted the cause of religion and reformation, *in the day of the Lord*, when it was proclaimed, *Who is on the Lord's side? Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?* Ps. xciv. 16. Those were unworthy the name of prophets, that could think so favourably of sin, and had so little zeal for God and the public welfare.

4. They flattered people into a vain hope that the judgments God had threatened would never come, whereby they hardened those in sin whom they should have endeavoured to turn from sin; (v. 6.) *They have made others to hope* that all should be well, and they should have peace, though they went on still in their trespasses, and that the event would confirm the word. They were still ready to say, *We will warrant you that these troubles will be at an end quickly, and we shall be in prosperity again*; as if their warrants would confirm false prophecies, in defiance of God himself.

II. He is directed to denounce the judgments of God against them for these sins, from which their pretending to the character of prophets would not exempt them.

1. In general, here is a *Wo* against them, (v. 3.) and what that wo is, we are told; (v. 8.) *Behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God*. Note, Those are in a woful condition, that have God against them. Wo, and a thousand woes, to them that have made him their Enemy.

2. In particular, they are sentenced to be excluded from all the privileges of the commonwealth of Israel, for they are adjudged to have forfeited them all; (v. 9.) *God's hand shall be upon them*, to seize them, and bring them to his bar, to shut them out from his presence, and they will find it a *fearful thing to fall into his hands*. They pretend to be prophets, particular favourites of Heaven, and authorized to preside in the congregation of his church on earth; but by pretending to the honours they were not entitled to they lost those that otherwise they might have enjoyed, Matth. v. 19. Their doom is, (1.) To be expelled out of the communion of saints, and not to be looked upon as belonging to it; *They shall not be in the secret of my people*; their folly shall be so clearly manifested, that they shall never be consulted, nor their advice asked; they shall not be present at any debates about public affairs. Or, rather, they shall not be in the assembly of God's people for religious worship, for they shall be ashamed to show their heads there, when they are proved by the events to be false prophets, and, like Cain, shall *go out from the presence of the Lord*. The people that are deceived by them shall abandon them, and resolve to have no more to do with them. They that usurped Moses's chair shall not be allowed so much as a *door-keeper's place*. In the great day they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, (Ps. i. 5.) when God gathers his saints together to him, (Ps. l. 5, 16.) to be for ever with him. (2.) To be expunged out of the book of the living. They shall die in their captivity, and shall die childless, shall leave no posterity to take their denomination from them, and so their names shall not be found among those who either themselves or their posterity returned out of Babylon, of whom a particular account was kept in a public register, which was called *the writing of the house of Israel*, such as we have, Ezra ii. They shall not be found among the living in Jerusalem, Isa. iv. 3. Or, They shall not be found written

among those whom God has from eternity chosen to be vessels of his mercy to eternity. We read of those who *prophesied in Christ's name*, and yet he will tell them that he *never knew them*, (Matth. vii. 22, 23.) because they were not among those that were *given to him*. The Chaldee Paraphrase reads it, *They shall not be written in the writing of eternal life, which is written for the righteous of the house of Israel*. See Ps. lxi. 28. (3.) To be forever excluded out of the land of Israel. God has *sworn in his wrath* concerning them, that *they shall never enter* with the returning captives into the land of Canaan, which a second time remains a rest for them. Note, Those who oppose the design of God's threatenings, and will not be awed and influenced by them, forfeit the benefit of his promises, and cannot expect to be comforted and encouraged by them.

10. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and *there was no peace*; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar.

11. Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. 12. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones, in my fury, to consume it. 14. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 15. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar; and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; 16. To wit, the prophets of Israel, which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and *there is no peace*, saith the Lord God.

We have here more plain dealing with the false prophets, and some further articles of their doom. We have seen the people made ashamed of the false prophets, (though sometimes they had been fond of them,) and casting them away, as they shall do their false gods, with indignation; now here we find them as much ashamed of their false prophecies, which they had sometimes depended upon with much assurance. Observe,

1. How the people are deceived by the false prophets. Those flatterers seduce them, saying, *Peace, and there was no peace*, v. 10. They pretended to have *seen visions of peace*, v. 16. But that could not be, for *there was no peace*, saith the Lord God. There was no prosperity designed for them, and therefore there could be no ground for their security; yet they told them that God was at peace with them, and had mercy in reserve for them, and that the war they were engaged in with the Chaldeans, should soon end in an honourable peace, and their land should enjoy a happy repose and tranquillity.

They told the idolaters and other sinners, that there was neither harm nor danger in the way they were in. Thus they *seduced God's people*, they put a cheat upon them, led them into mistakes, and drew them aside out of that way of repentance and reformation which the other prophets were endeavouring to bring them into. Note, Those are the most dangerous seducers, who suggest to sinners that which tends to lessen their dread of sin and their fear of God. Now this is compared to the building of a slight, rotten wall, or, according to our Saviour's similitude, which is to the same purport with this, (Matth. vii. 26.) the *building of a house upon the sand*, which seems to be a shelter and protection for awhile, but will fall when a storm comes. One false prophet built the wall, set up the notion that God was not at all displeased with Jerusalem, but that the city should be confirmed in its flourishing state, and be victorious over the powers that now threatened it. This notion was very pleasing, and he that started it made himself very acceptable by it, and was caressed by every body; which invited others to say the same. They made the matter look yet more plausible and promising; they *daubed the wall*, which the first had built, but it was with *untempered mortar*, sorry stuff, that will not bind nor hold the bricks together; they had no ground for what they said, nor had it any consistency with itself, but was like ropes of sand. They did not strengthen the wall, were in no care to make it firm, to see that they went upon sure grounds; they only daubed it to hide the cracks, and made it look well to the eye. And the wall thus built, when it comes to any stress, much more to any distress, will bulge and totter, and come down by degrees. Note, Doctrines that are groundless, though ever so grateful, that are not built upon a scripture-foundation, nor fastened with a scripture-cement, though ever so plausible, ever so pleasing, are not of any worth, nor will stand men in any stead. And those hopes of peace and happiness which are not warranted by the word of God, will but cheat men, like a wall that is well *daubed* indeed, but ill built.

11. How they will be soon undeceived by the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth.

1. God will in anger bring a terrible storm that shall beat fiercely and furiously upon the wall. The descent which the Chaldean army shall make upon Judah, and the siege which they shall lay to Jerusalem, will be as an *overflowing shower*, or inundation, (such as Solomon calls a *sweeping rain* that *leaves no food*, Prov. xxviii. 3.) will bear down all before it, as the deluge did in Noah's time: *Ye, O great hailstones, shall fall*, the artillery of heaven, every hailstone like a cannon-ball, battering this wall, and with these a *stormy wind*, which is sometimes so strong as to *rend the rocks*, (1 Kings xix. 11.) much more an ill-built wall, v. 11. But that which makes this *rain*, and *hail*, and *wind* most terrible, is, that they arise from the wrath of God, and are enforced by that; that is it that sends them, that is it that gives them the setting-on; (v. 13.) it is a *stormy wind in my fury*, and an *overflowing shower in mine anger*, and *great hailstones in my fury*. The fury of Nebuchadnezzar and his princes, who highly resented Zedekiah's treachery, made the invasion very formidable, but that was nothing in comparison with God's displeasure; *the staff in their hand is mine indignation*, Isa. x. 5. Note, An angry God has winds and storms at command, wherewith to alarm secure sinners; and his wrath makes them frightful and forcible indeed; for *who can stand before him when he is angry?*

2. This storm shall overturn the wall; *it shall fall*, and the wind shall *rend it*, (v. 11.) the *hailstones shall consume it*; (v. 13.) I will *break it down*, (v.

14.) and *bring it to the ground*, so that the *foundation thereof shall be discovered*, it will appear how false, how rotten it was, to the prophetic reproach of the builders; when the Chaldean army has made Judah and Jerusalem desolate, then this credit of the prophets, and the hopes of the people, will both sink together; the former will be found false in flattering the people, and the latter foolish in suffering themselves to be imposed upon by them, and so exposed to so much the greater confusion, when the judgment shall surprise them in their security. Note, Whatever men think to shelter themselves with against the judgments of God, while they continue unreformed, will prove but a *refuge of lies*, and will not profit them *in the day of wrath*. See Isa. xxviii. 17. Men's anger cannot shake that which God has built, (for the blast of the terrible ones is but as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise, but never stirs the wall; see Isa. xxv. 4.) but God's anger will overthrow that which men have built in opposition to him. They and all their attempts, they and all the securities wherein they intrench themselves, shall be as a *bowing wall*, and as a *tottering fence*; (Ps. lxxii. 3, 10.) and when their vain predictions are disproved, and their vain expectations disappointed, then it will be discovered that there was no ground for either; (Hab. iii. 13.) *the day will declare what every man's work is, and the fire will try it*, 1 Cor. iii. 13.

3. The builders of the wall, and those that daubed it, will themselves be buried in the ruins of it; *It shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof*, v. 14. And thus the threatenings of God's wrath, and all the just intentions of it, shall be accomplished to the uttermost, both upon the wall and upon them *that have daubed it*, v. 15. The same judgments that will prove the false prophets to be false, will punish them for their falsehood; and they themselves shall be involved in the calamity which they made the people believe there was no danger of, and become monuments of that justice which they bid defiance to. Thus, if the *blind lead the blind*, both the blind leaders and the blind followers will *fall together into the ditch*. Note, Those that deceive others will, in the end, prove to have deceived themselves; and no doom will be more dreadful than that of unfaithful ministers, that flattered sinners in their sins.

4. Both the deceivers and the deceived, when they thus perish together, will justly be ridiculed and triumphed over; (v. 12.) *When the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you*, by those that gave credit to the true prophets, and feared the word of the Lord, "Now where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed the wall? What is gone with all the fine soft words and fair promises wherewith you flattered your wicked neighbours, and all the assurances you gave them that the troubles of the nation should soon be at an end? The *righteous shall laugh at them*, the righteous God shall, righteous men shall, saying, *Lo, this is the man that made not God his Strength*, Ps. lii. 6, 7. *I will also laugh at your calamity*, Prov. i. 26. They will say unto you, (v. 15.) *The wall is no more, neither he that daubed it*; your hopes are vanished, and they that supported them, even the *prophets of Israel*," v. 16. Note, those that usurp the honours that do not belong to them, will shortly be filled with the shame that does.

17. Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, 18. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the women that sew pillows to all arm-holes, and make

kerchiefs upon the head of every stature, to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive *that come unto you*? 19. And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear *your lies*? 20. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, *I am* against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly; and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, *even* the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly. 21. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that *I am* the LORD. 22. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life; 23. Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that *I am* the LORD.

As God has promised that when he pours out his Spirit upon his people, both *their sons and their daughters shall prophesy*, so the devil, when he acts as a spirit of lies and falsehood, is so in the mouth, not only of false prophets, but of false prophetesses too; and those are the deceivers whom the prophet is here directed to prophesy against; for they are not such despicable enemies to God's truths as deserve not to be taken notice of; nor yet will either the weakness of their sex excuse their sin, nor the tenderness and respect that are owing to it, exempt them from the reproaches and threatenings of the word of God; no, *Son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people*, v. 17. God takes no pleasure in owning them for his people; They are *thy people*, as Exod. xxxii. 7. The women pretend to a spirit of prophecy, and are in the same song with the men, as Ahab's prophets were; *Go on, and prosper*. They *prophesy out of their own heart* too; they say what comes uppermost, and what they know nothing of; Therefore *prophesy against them* from God's own mouth. The prophet must set his face against them, and try if they can look him in the face, and stand to what they say. Note, When sinners grow very impudent, it is time for reprovers to be very bold. Now observe,

I. How the sin of these false prophetesses is described, and what are the particulars of it.

1. They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and to be told their fortune; "You do mischief by *your lying to my people that hear your lies*;" (v. 19.) they come to be told the truth, but you tell them lies; and because you humour them in their sins, they are willing to hear you." Note, It is ill with those people who can better hear pleasing lies than unpleasing truths; and it is a temptation to them who lie in wait to deceive to tell lies, when they find people willing to hear them, and to excuse themselves with this, *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*—If the people will be deceived, let them.

2. They profaned the name of God by pretending

to have received those lies from him; (v. 19.) "*Ye pollute my name among my people, and make use of that for the patronising of your lies, and the gaining of credit to them.*" Note, Those greatly pollute God's holy name, that make use of it to give countenance to falsehood and wickedness. Yet this they did *for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread*: they did it for gain; they cared not what dishonour they did to God's name by their lying, so they could but make a hand of it for themselves. There is nothing so sacred which men of mercenary spirits, in whom the love of this world reigns, will not profane and prostitute, if they can but get money by the bargain. But they did it for poor gain; if they could get no more for it, rather than break, they would sell you a false prophecy that should please you to a nicety, for the beggar's dole, *a piece of bread, or a handful of barley*; and yet that was more than it was worth. Had they asked it as an alms, for God's sake, surely they might have had it, and God would have been honoured; but, taking it as a fee for a false prophecy, God's name is polluted, and the smallness of the reward greates the offence; *for a piece of bread that man will transgress*, Prov. xxviii. 21. Had their poverty been their temptation *to steal, and so to take the name of the Lord in vain*, it had not been so bad as when it tempted them *to prophesy lies in his name*, and so to profane it.

3. They kept people in awe, and terrified them with their pretensions; "*You hunt the souls of my people, (v. 18.) hunt them to make them flee, (v. 20.) hunt them into gardens*; (so the margin reads it;) you use all the arts you have to court or compel them into those places where you deliver your pretended predictions; or, you have got such an influence upon them, that you make them do just as you would have them do, and tyrannize over them." It was indeed the people's fault, that they did regard them, but it was their fault by lies and falsehoods to command that regard; they pretended *to save the souls alive that came to them*, v. 18. If they would but be hearers of them, and contributors to them, they might be sure of salvation; thus they beguiled unstable souls that had a concern about salvation as their end, but did not rightly understand the way, and therefore hearkened to those who were most confident in promising it them. But will you pretend to save souls, or secure salvation to your party? Those are justly suspected, that make such pretensions.

4. They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane; *You slay the souls that should not die, and save those alive that should not live*, v. 19. This is explained, v. 22. "*You have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad*; because they would not, they durst not, countenance your pretensions, you thundered out the judgments of God against them, to their great grief and trouble; you put them under invidious characters, to make them either despicable or odious to the people, and pretended to do it in God's name, which made them go many a time with a sad heart; whereas it was the will of God that they should be comforted, and by having respect put upon them should have encouragement given them. But, on the other side, and which is still worse, you have *strengthened the hands of the wicked*, and emboldened them to go on in their *wicked ways*, and not to return from them, which was the thing the true prophets with earnestness called them to. You have promised sinners life in their sinful ways, have told them that they shall have peace though they go on, by which their *hands have been strengthened*, and their hearts hardened." Some think this here refers to the severe censures they passed upon those who were

already gone into captivity, who were humbled under their affliction, by which their hearts were made sad; and the commendations they gave to those who rebelled against the king of Babylon, who were hardened in their impieties, by which their *hands were strengthened*; or, by their polluting of the name of God they saddened the hearts of good people who have a value and veneration for the word of God, and confirmed atheists and infidels in their contempt of divine revelation, and furnished them with arguments against it. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for, who grieve the spirits, and weaken the hands, of good people, and who gratify the lusts of sinners, and animate them in their opposition to God and religion. Nor can any thing strengthen the hands of sinners more than to tell them that they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance, though they do not return from their wicked ways.

5. They mimicked the true prophets, by giving signs for the illustrating of their false predictions, as Hananiah did; (Jer. xxviii. 10.) and they were signs agreeable to their sex; they *sewed little pillows to the people's arm-holes*, to signify that they might be easy, and repose themselves, and needed not be disquieted with the apprehensions of trouble approaching. And they *made kerchiefs upon the head of every stature*, of persons of every age, young and old, distinguishable by their stature, v. 18. These kerchiefs were badges of liberty, or triumph; intimating that they should not only be delivered from the Chaldeans, but be victorious over them. Some think these were some superstitious rites which they used with those to whom they delivered their divinations, preparing them for the reception of them, by putting enchanted pillows under their arms, and handkerchiefs on their heads, to raise their fancies and their expectations of something great. Or, perhaps, the expressions are figurative; they did all they could to make people secure, which is signified by *laying them easy*, and to make people proud, which is signified by dressing them fine with handkerchiefs, perhaps laid or embroidered on their heads.

II. How the wrath of God against them is expressed. Here is a *wo* to them; (v. 18.) and God declares himself against the methods they took to delude and deceive, v. 20. But what course will God take with them?

1. They shall be confounded in their attempts, and shall proceed no further; for (v. 23.) ye shall *see no more vanity, nor divine divinations*; not that they shall themselves lay down their pretensions in a way of repentance, but when the event gives them the lie, they shall be silent for shame. Or, their fancies and imaginations shall not be disposed to receive impressions which assist them in their divinations as they have been; or they themselves shall be cut off.

2. God's people shall be delivered out of their hands; when they see themselves deluded by them into a false peace and a fool's paradise, and that though they would not leave their sin, their sin has left them, and they *see no more vanity, nor divine divinations*, they shall turn their back upon them, shall slight their predictions, the righteous shall be no more saddened by them, no, nor the wicked strengthened; *The pillows shall be torn from their arms, and the kerchiefs from their heads*, the fallacies shall be discovered, their frauds detected, and the people of God shall no more be in their hand, to be hunted as they had been. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from a servile regard to, and fear of, those who, under colour of a divine authority, impose upon and tyrannize over the consciences of men, and say to their souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*. But it is a sore grief to those

who delight in such usurpations, to have their power broken, and the prey delivered; such was the reformation to the church of Rome. And when God does this, he makes it to appear that he is the Lord, that it is his prerogative to give law to souls.

### CHAP. XIV.

Hearing the word, and prayer, are two great ordinances of God, in which we are to give honour to him, and may hope to find favour and acceptance with him; and yet, in this chapter, to our great surprise, we find some waiting upon God in the one, and some in the other, and yet not meeting with success, as they expected. 1. The elders of Israel come to bear the word, and inquire of the prophet, but, because they are not duly qualified, they meet with a rebuke instead of acceptance, (v. 1. . 5.) and are called upon to repent of their sins, and reform their lives, else it is at their peril to inquire of God, v. 6. . 11. II. Noah, Daniel, and Job, are supposed to pray for this people, and yet, because the decree is gone forth, and the destruction of them is determined by a variety of judgments, their prayers shall not be answered, v. 12. . 21. And yet it is promised, in the close, that a remnant shall escape, v. 22, 23.

1. **THEN** came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. 2. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 3. Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? 4. Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; 5. That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. 6. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself: 8. And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 9. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him; 11. That the house of Israel may go

no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord God.

Here is, 1. The address which some of the elders of Israel made to the prophet, as an oracle, to inquire of the Lord by him; They came, and sat before him, v. 1. It is probable that they were not of those who were now his fellow-captives, and constantly attended his ministry, (such as those we read of, *ch. viii. 1.*) but some occasional hearers; some of the grandes of Jerusalem who were come upon business to Babylon, perhaps public business, on an embassy from the king, and in their way called on the prophet, having heard much of him, and being desirous to know if he had any message from God, which might be some guide to them in their negotiation. By the severe answer given them, one would suspect they had a design to ensnare the prophet, or to try if they could catch hold of any thing that might look like a contradiction to Jeremiah's prophecies, and so they might have occasion to reproach them both. However, they feigned themselves just men, complimented the prophet, and sat before him gravely enough, as God's people used to sit. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to be found employed in the external performances of religion.

2. The account which God gave the prophet privately concerning them. They were strangers to him, he only knew that they were *elders of Israel*, that was the character they wore, and as such he received them with respect, and, it is likely, was glad to see them so well disposed; but God gives him their real character, (v. 3.) they were idolaters, and did only consult Ezekiel, as they would any oracle of a pretended deity, to gratify their curiosity; and therefore he appeals to the prophet himself, whether they deserved to have any countenance or encouragement given them; "*Should I be inquired of at all by them?*" Should I accept their inquiries as an honour to myself, or answer them for satisfaction to them? No; they have no reason to expect it;" for, (1.) They have set up their idols in their heart; they not only have idols, but they are in love with them, they dote upon them, are wedded to them, and have laid them so near their hearts, and have given them so great a room in their affections, that there is no parting of them. The idols they have set up in their houses, though they are now at a distance from the chambers of their imagery, yet they have them in their hearts, and they are ever and anon worshipping them in their fancies and imaginations; They have made their idols to ascend upon their hearts; (so the word is;) they have subjected their hearts to their idols, they are upon the throne there: or, when they come to inquire of the prophet, they pretended to put away their idols, but it was in pretence only, they still had a secret reserve for them, they kept them up in their hearts; and if they left them for awhile, it was *cum animo revertendi*—with an intention to return to them, not a final farewell. Or, it may be understood of spiritual idolatry; those whose affections are placed upon the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense, whose god is their money, whose god is their belly, they set up their idols in their heart. Many who have no idols in their sanctuary, have idols in their hearts; which is no less an usurpation of God's throne, and a profanation of his name. Little children, keep yourselves from those idols. (2.) They put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face. Their silver and gold were called the stumbling-block of their iniquity, (*ch. vii. 19.*) their idols of silver and gold, by the beauty of which they were

allured to idolatry, and so it was the block at which they stumbled, and fell into that sin; or, *their iniquity is their stumbling-block*, which throws them down, so that they fall into ruin. Note, Sinners are their own tempters; *every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust*; and so they are their own destroyers; *If thou scornest, thou shalt alone bear it*; and thus they put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their own faces, and stumble upon it, though they see it before their eyes. It intimates that they are resolved to go on in sin, whatever comes of it; *I have loved strangers, and after them I will go*; that is the language of their hearts. And should God be inquired of by such wretches? Do they not hereby rather put an affront upon him than do him any honour, as those did, who bowed the knee to Christ, in mockery? Can they expect an answer of peace from God, who thus continue their acts of hostility against him? “Ezekiel, what thinkest thou of it?”

3. The answer which God, in just displeasure, orders Ezekiel to give them, *v. 4*. Let them know that it is not out of any disrespect to their persons, that God refuses to give them an answer, but it is laid down as a rule for *every man of the house of Israel*, whoever he be, that if he continue in love and league with his idols, and come to inquire of God, God will resent it as an indignity done to him, and will answer him according to his real iniquity, not according to his pretended piety. He comes to the prophet, who, he expects, will be civil to him, but God will give him his answer, by punishing him for his impudence; *I the Lord, who speak, and it is done*; *I will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols*. Observe, Those who set up idols in their hearts, and set their hearts upon their idols, commonly have a multitude of them. Humble worshippers God answers according to the multitude of his mercies, but bold intruders he answers according to the multitude of their idols, that is, (1.) According to the desire of their idols; he will give them up to their own hearts' lust, and leave them to themselves to be as bad as they have a mind to be, till they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. Men's corruptions are idols in their hearts, and they are of their own setting up; their temptations are the stumbling-block of their iniquity, and they are of their own putting, and God will answer them accordingly; let them take their course. (2.) According to the desert of their idols; they shall have such an answer as it is just that such idolaters should have. God will punish them as he punishes idolaters, that is, when they stand in need of his help, he will send them to the gods whom they have chosen, *Judg. x. 13, 14*. Note, The judgment of God will dwell with men according to what they are really, that is, according to what their hearts are, not according to what they are in show and profession.

And what will be the end of this? What will this threatened answer amount to? He tells them, (*v. 5*.) *That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart*, may lay them open to the world, that they may be ashamed; nay, lay them open to the curse, that they may be ruined. Note, The sin and shame, and pain and ruin of sinners, are all from themselves, and their own hearts are the snares in which they are taken; they seduce them, they betray them; their own consciences witness against them, condemn them, and are a terror to them. If God take them, if he discover them, if he convict them, if he bind them over to his judgment, it is all by their own hearts. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. The house of Israel is ruined by its own hands; Because they are all estranged from me through their idols*. Note, [1.] The ruin of sinners is owing to their estrangement from God. [2.] It is through

some idol or other, that the hearts of men are estranged from God; some creature has gained that place and dominion in the heart, that God should have.

4. The extent of this answer which God had given them, to all the house of Israel, *v. 7, 8*. The same thing is repeated, which intimates God's just displeasure against hypocrites, who mock him with the shows and forms of devotion, while their hearts are estranged from him, and at war with him. Observe, (1.) To whom this declaration belongs; it concerns not only every one of the house of Israel, (as before, *v. 4*.) but the stranger that sojourns in Israel: let him not think it will be an excuse for him in his idolatries, that he is but a stranger and a sojourner in Israel, and does but worship the gods that his father served, and that he himself was bred up in the service of; no, let him not expect any benefit from Israel's oracles or prophets, unless he thoroughly renounce his idolatry. Note, Even professedly shall not be countenanced, if they be not sincere: a dissembled conversion is no conversion. (2.) The description here given of hypocrites: They separate themselves from God by their fellowship with idols; they cut themselves off from their relation to God, and their interest in him; they break off their acquaintance and intercourse with him, and set themselves at a distance from him. Note, Those that join themselves to idols, separate themselves from God; nor shall any be for ever separated from the vision and fruition of God, but such as now separate themselves from his service, and willfully withdraw their allegiance from him. But there are those who thus separate themselves from God, and yet come to the prophets, with a seeming respect and deference to their office, to inquire of them concerning God; either to satisfy a vain curiosity, to stop the mouth of a clamorous conscience, or to get or save a reputation among men; but without any desire to be acquainted with God, or any design to be ruled by him. (3.) The doom of those who thus trifle with God, and think to impose upon him: *“I the Lord will answer him by myself: let me alone to deal with him; I will give him an answer that shall fill him with confusion, that shall make him repent of his daring impiety.”* He shall have his answer, not by the words of the prophet, but by the judgments of God. And I will set my face against that man; which denotes great displeasure against him, and a fixed resolution to ruin him. God can outface the most impenitent sinner. The hypocrite thought to save his credit, nay, and to gain applause, but, on the contrary, God will make him a sign and a proverb: will inflict such judgments upon him, as shall make him remarkable and contemptible in the eyes of all about him; his misery shall be made use of to express the greatest misery: as when the worst of sinners are said to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites, *Matth. xxiv. 51*. God will make him an example; his judgments upon him shall be for warning to others to take heed of mocking God: for thus shall it be done to the man that separates himself from God, and yet pretends to inquire concerning him. The hypocrite thought to have passed for one of God's people, and to have crowded into heaven among them; but God will cut him from the midst of his people, will discover him, and pluck him out from the thickest of them; and by this, says God, ye shall know that I am the Lord. By the discovery of hypocrites, it appears that God is omniscient: ministers know not how people stand affected when they come to hear the word, but God does; and by the punishment of hypocrites, it appears that he is a jealous God, and one that cannot, and will not, be imposed upon.

5. The doom of those pretenders to prophecy,



who give countenance to these pretenders to piety, v. 9, 10. These hypocritical inquirers, though Ezekiel will give them no comfortable answer, yet hope to meet with some other prophets that will; and if they do, as perhaps they may, let them know that God permits those lying prophets to deceive them, in part of punishment: "*If the prophet that flatters them be deceived, and gives them hopes which there is no ground for, I the Lord have deceived that prophet, have suffered the temptation to be laid before him, and suffered him to yield to it, and overruled it for the hardening of those in their wicked courses, who were resolved to go on in them.*" We are sure that God is not the Author of sin, but we are sure that he is the Lord of all, and the Judge of sinners, and that he often makes use of one wicked man to destroy another, and so of one wicked man to deceive another. Both are sins in him who does them, and so they are *not* from God: both are punishments to him to whom they are done, and so they are from God. We have a full instance of this in the story of Ahab's prophets, who were deceived by a lying spirit, which God put into their mouths, (1 Kings xxii. 23.) and another in those whom God gives up to strong delusions to believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. But read the fearful doom of the lying prophet; *I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him.* When God has served his own righteous purposes by him, he shall be reckoned with for his unrighteous purposes: as when God had made use of the Chaldeans for the wasting of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their rage; so when he had made use of false prophets, and afterward of false christ, for the deceiving of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their falsehood. But herein we must acknowledge (as Calvin upon this place reminds us) that God's judgments are a great deep; that we are incompetent judges of them: and that though we cannot account for the equity of God's proceedings to the satisfying and silencing of every caviller, yet there is a day coming when he will be justified before all the world; and particularly in this instance, when the punishment of the prophet that flattereth the hypocrite in his evil way, shall be as the punishment of the hypocrite that seeketh to him, and bespeaks smooth things only, Isa. xxx. 10. The ditch shall be the same to the blind leader, and the blind followers.

6. The good counsel that is given them for the preventing of this fearful doom; (v. 6.) "*Therefore repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; let this separate between you and them, that they separate not between you and God; because they set God's face against you, do you turn away your faces from them:* which denotes, not only forsaking them, but forsaking them with loathing and detestation; "Turn from them as from abominations that you are sick of; and then you will be welcome to inquire of the Lord. Come now, and let us reason together."

7. The good issue of all this, as to the house of Israel; therefore the pretending prophets, and the pretending saints, shall perish together by the judgments of God, that, some being made examples, the body of the people may be reformed; that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, v. 11. Note, The punishments of some are designed for the prevention of sin, that others may hear, and fear, and take warning. When we see what comes of those that go astray from God, we should thereby be engaged to keep close to him. And if the house of Israel go not astray, they will not be polluted any more. Note, Sin is a polluting thing; it renders the sinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and in his own eyes too, whenever conscience is awakened; and

therefore they shall no more be polluted, that they may be my people, and I may be their God. Note, Those whom God takes into covenant with himself, must first be cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and those who are so cleansed shall not only be saved from ruin, but be entitled to all the privileges of God's people.

12. The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 13. Son of man, when the land sinneth against me, by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it. 14. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. 15. If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: 16. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. 17. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: 18. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. 19. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: 20. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. 21. For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? 22. Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters; behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. 23. And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.

The scope of these verses is to show,

1. That national sins bring national judgments; when virtue is ruined and laid waste, every thing else will soon be ruined and laid waste too: (v. 13.) When the land sins against me, when vice and wickedness become epidemical, when the land sins

by *trespassing grievously*, when the sinners are become very numerous, and their sins very heinous, when gross impieties and immoralities universally prevail, *then will I stretch forth mine hand upon it*, for the punishment of it; the divine power shall be vigorously and openly exerted, the judgments shall be extended and stretched forth to all the corners of the land, to all the concerns and interests of the nation. Grievous sins bring grievous plagues.

2. That God has a variety of sore judgments wherewith to punish sinful nations; and he has them all at command, and inflicts which he pleases. He did indeed give David his choice what judgment he would be punished with for his sin in numbering the people; for any of them would serve to answer the end, which was to lessen the number he was proud of: but David, in effect, referred it to God again; "*Let us fall into the hands of the Lord*;" let him choose with what rod we shall be beaten." But he uses a variety of judgments, that it may appear he has an universal dominion, and that in all our concerns we may see our dependence on him.

*Four sore judgments* are here specified: (1.) *Famine*. The denying and withholding of common mercies is itself judgment enough, there needs no more to make a people miserable. God needs not bring the staff of oppression, it is but *breaking the staff of bread*, and the work is soon done; he *cuts off man and beast*, by cutting off the provisions which nature makes for both in the annual products of the earth. God *breaks the staff of bread*, when, though we have bread, yet we are not nourished and strengthened by it; (Hag. i. 6.) *Ye eat, but ye have not enough*. (2.) *Hurtful beasts, noisome and noxious*, either as poisonous, or as ravenous: God can make these *to pass through the land*, to increase in all parts of it, and to bereave it, not only of the tame cattle, preying upon their flocks and herds, but of their people, devouring men, women, and children, so that *no man may pass through because of the beasts*; none dare travel even in the high roads, for fear of being pulled in pieces by lions, or other beasts of prey, as the children of Beth-el by two bears. Note, When men revolt from their allegiance to God, and rebel against him, it is just with God that the inferior creatures should rise up in arms against man, Lev. xxvi. 22. (3.) *War*; God often chastises sinful nations by bringing a sword upon them, the sword of a foreign enemy, and he gives it its commission, and orders what execution it shall do; (v. 17.) he says, *Sword, go through the land*. It is bad enough if the sword do but enter into the borders of a land, but much worse when it *goes through the bowels* of a land. By it God *cuts off man and beast*, horse and foot; what execution the sword does, God does by it; for it is his sword, and it acts as he directs. (4.) *Pestilence*; a dreadful disease, which has sometimes depopulated cities; by it God *pours out his fury in blood*; that is, in death: the pestilence kills as effectually as if the blood were shed by the sword; for it is poisoned by the disease; *the sickness* we call it. See how miserable the case of mankind is, that lies thus exposed to deaths in various shapes! See how dangerous the case of sinners is, against whom God has so many ways of fighting; so that though they escape one judgment, God has another waiting for them!

3. That, when God's professing people revolt from him, and rebel against him, they may justly expect a complication of judgments to fall upon them. God has various ways of contending with a sinful nation: but if Jerusalem, the holy city, *become a harlot*, God will send upon her all his *four sore judgments*; (v. 21.) for the nearer any are to God in name and profession, the more severely will he reckon with them, if they reproach that worthy

name by which they are called, and give the lie to that profession. They shall be punished *seven times more*.

4. That there may be, and commonly are, some few very good men, even in those places that, by sin, are ripened for ruin. It is no foreign supposition, that, even in a land that has *trespassed grievously*, there may be *three such men* as Noah, Daniel, and Job. Daniel was now living, and at this time had scarcely arrived to the prime of his eminence, but he was already famous, at least this word of God concerning him would without fail make him so; yet he was carried away into captivity with the first of all, Dan. i. 6. Some of the better sort of people in Jerusalem might perhaps think that if Daniel (of whose fame in the king of Babylon's court they had heard much) had but continued in Jerusalem, it had been spared for his sake, as the magicians in Babylon were. "No," says God, "though you had him, who was as eminently good in bad times and places, as Noah in the old world, and Job in the land of Uz, yet a reprieve should not be obtained." In the places that are most corrupt, and in the ages that are most degenerate, *there are a remnant* which God reserves to himself, and which *still hold fast their integrity*, and stand fair for the honour of *delivering the land*, as the innocent are said to do, Job xxii. 30.

5. That God often spares very wicked places for the sake of a few godly people, in them. This is implied here as the expectation of Jerusalem's friends in the day of its distress: "Surely God will stay his controversy with us; for are there not some among us, that are emptying the measure of national guilt by their prayers, as others are filling it by their sins? And rather than God will *destroy the righteous with the wicked*, he will preserve *the wicked with the righteous*." If Sodom might have been spared for the sake of ten good men, surely Jerusalem may."

6. That such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job will prevail, if any can, to turn away the wrath of God from a sinful people. Noah was a perfect man, and kept his integrity, when all flesh had corrupted their way; and for his sake, his family, though one of them was wicked, (Ham,) was saved in the ark. Job was a great example of piety, and mighty in prayer for his children, for his friends; and God turned his captivity when he prayed. Those were very ancient examples, before Moses that great intercessor; and therefore God mentions them, to intimate that he had some very peculiar favourites long before the Jewish nation was formed or founded, and would have such when it was ruined; for which reason, it should seem, those names were made use of, rather than Moses, Aaron, or Samuel; and yet, lest any should think that God was partial in his respects to the ancient days, here is a modern instance, a living one, placed between those two that were the glories of antiquity, and he now a captive, and that is Daniel, to teach us not to lessen the useful, good men of our own day, by over-magnifying the ancients. Let the children of the captivity know that Daniel, their neighbour, and *companion in tribulation*, being a man of great humility, piety, and zeal for God, and instant and constant in prayer, had as good an interest in heaven as Noah or Job had. Why may not God raise up as great and good men now as he did formerly, and do as much for them?

7. That when the sin of a people is come to its height, and the decree is gone forth for their ruin, the piety and prayers of the best men shall not prevail to finish the controversy. This is here asserted again and again, that, *though these three men were in Jerusalem at this time*, yet they should *deliver neither son nor daughter*; not so much as the

little ones should be spared for their sakes, as the little ones of Israel were upon the prayer of Moses, Numb. xiv. 31. No, *the land shall be desolate*, and God will not hear their prayers for it, though *Moses and Samuel stood before him*, Jer. xv. 1. Note, Abused patience will turn at last into inexorable wrath; and it should seem as if God would be more inexorable in Jerusalem's case than in another, (v. 6.) because, beside the divine patience, they had enjoyed greater privileges than any people besides, which were the aggravations of their sin.

8. That though pious, praying men may not prevail to deliver others, yet *they shall deliver their own souls, by their righteousness*; so that though they may suffer in the common calamity, yet to them the property of it is altered, it is not to them what it is to the wicked; it is unstung, and does them no hurt; it is sanctified, and does them good; sometimes *their souls*, their lives, are remarkably delivered, and given them for a prey; *their souls*, at least, their spiritual interests, are secured; if their bodies be not delivered, yet *their souls* are. *Riches indeed profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death*, from so great a death, so many deaths as are here threatened. This should encourage us to keep our integrity in times of common apostacy, that, if we do so, we shall be *hid in the day of the Lord's anger*.

9. That, even then when God makes the greatest desolations by his judgments, he reserves some to be the monuments of his mercy, v. 22, 23. In Jerusalem itself, though marked for utter ruin, yet *there shall be left a remnant*, who shall not be cut off by any of those *sore judgments* before mentioned, but shall be carried into captivity, both *sons and daughters*, who shall be the seed of a new generation. The young ones, who were not grown up to such an obstinacy in sin as their fathers were, who were therefore cut off as incurable, these *shall be brought forth* out of the ruins of Jerusalem by the victorious enemy, and behold, *they shall come forth to you* that are in captivity, they shall make a virtue of a necessity, and shall come the more willingly to Babylon, because so many of their friends are gone thither before them, and are there ready to receive them; and when they come, *you shall see their ways and their doings*; you shall hear them make a free and ingenuous confession of the sins they had formerly been guilty of, and a humble profession of repentance for them, with promises of reformation; and you shall see instances of their reformation, shall see what good their affliction has done them, and how prudently and patiently they conduct themselves under it. Their narrow escape shall have a good effect upon them; it shall change their temper and conversation, and make them new men. And this will redound, (1.) To the satisfaction of their brethren; *They shall comfort you, when ye see their ways*. Note, It is a very comfortable sight to see people, when they are under the rod, repenting, and humbling themselves, justifying God, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity. When we sorrow (as we ought to do) for the affliction of others, it is a great comfort to us in our sorrow to see them improving their afflictions, and making a good use of them. When those captives told their friends how bad they had been, and how righteous God was in bringing these judgments upon them, it made them very easy, and helped to reconcile them to the calamities of Jerusalem, to the justice of God in punishing his own people so, and to the goodness of God, which now appeared to have had kind intentions in all; and thus "You shall be comforted concerning all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and, when you better understand the thing, shall not have such direful apprehensions concerning it as you have had." Note, It is a debt

we owe to our brethren, if we have got good by our afflictions, to comfort them, by letting them know it. (2.) It will redound to the honour of God; "*Ye shall know that I have not done without cause*, not without a just provocation, and yet not without a gracious design, *all that I have done in it*." Note, When afflictions have done their work, and have accomplished that for which they were sent, then will appear the wisdom and goodness of God in sending them, and God will be not only justified, but glorified, in them.

## CHAP. XV.

Ezekiel has again and again, in God's name, foretold the utter ruin of Jerusalem; but, it should seem, he finds it hard to reconcile himself to it, and to acquiesce in the will of God in this severe dispensation: and therefore God takes various methods to satisfy him not only that it shall be so, but that there is no remedy, it must be so, it is fit that it should be so; here in this short chapter, he shows him (probably with design that he should tell the people) that it was as requisite Jerusalem should be destroyed, as that the dead and withered branches of a vine should be cut off, and thrown into the fire. 1. The similitude is very elegant; (v. 1..5.) but, II. The explanation of the similitude is very dreadful, v. 6..8.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, what is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? 3. Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? 4. Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burnt. Is it meet for any work? 5. Behold, when it was whole it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned? 6. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 7. And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I set my face against them. 8. And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord God.

The prophet, we may suppose, was thinking what a glorious city Jerusalem was, above any city in the world; it was the crown and joy of the whole earth; and therefore what a pity it was that it should be destroyed; it was a noble structure, the city of God, and the city of Israel's solemnities; but if these were the thoughts of his heart, God here returns an answer to them, by comparing Jerusalem to a vine.

1. It is true, if a vine be fruitful, it is a most valuable tree, none more so; it was one of those that were courted to have dominion over the trees, and the fruit of it is such as *cheers God and man*; (Judg. ix. 12, 13.) it makes glad the heart, Ps. civ. 15. So Jerusalem was planted a choice and noble vine, wholly a right seed; (Jer. ii. 21.) and if it had brought forth fruit suitable to its character, as a holy city, it would have been the glory both of God and Israel; it was a vine which *God's right hand had*

*planted, a branch out of a dry ground, which, though its original was mean and despicable, God had made strong for himself, (Ps. lxxx. 15.) to be to him for a name and for a praise.*

2. But if it be not fruitful, it is good for nothing, it is as worthless and useless a production of the earth as even thorns and briars are; *What is a vine-tree, if you take the tree by itself, without consideration of the fruit? What is it more than any tree, that it should have so much care taken of it, and so much cost laid out upon it? What is a branch of the vine, though it spread more than a branch which is among the trees of the forest, where it grows neglected and exposed? Or, as some read it, What is the vine more than any tree, if the branch of it be as the trees of the forest; if it bear no fruit, as forest-trees seldom do, being designed for timber-trees, not fruit-trees? Now there are some fruit-trees, the wood of which, if they do not bear, is of good use, and may be made to turn to a good account; but the vine is not of this sort; if that do not answer its end as a fruit-tree, it is worth nothing as a timber-tree. Observe,*

1. How this similitude is expressed here. The wild vine, that *is among the trees of the forest*, or the empty vine, (which Israel is compared to, Hos. x. 1.) that bears no more fruit than a forest-tree, is good for nothing, it is as useless as a briar, and more so, for that will add some sharpness to the thorny hedge, which the vine-branch will not do. He shows, 1. That it is fit for no use; the *wood of it is not taken to do any work*, one cannot so much as make a *pin of it to hang a vessel upon*, v. 3. See how variously the gifts of nature are dispensed for the service of man! Among plants, the roots of some, the seeds or fruits of others, the leaves of others, and of some the stalks, are most serviceable to us; so among trees, some are strong and not fruitful, as the oaks and cedars; others weak but very fruitful, as the vine, which is unsightly, low, and depending, yet of great use. Rachel is comely but barren, Leah homely but fruitful. 2. That therefore it is made use of *for fuel*; it will serve to heat the oven with. Because *it is not meet for any work, it is cast into the fire*, v. 4. When it is good for nothing else, it is useful this way, and answers a very needful intention, *for fuel* is a thing we must have, and to burn any thing *for fuel*, which is good for other work, is bid husbandry. *To what purpose is this waste?* The unfruitful vine is disposed of the same way with the briars and thorns, which are rejected, and *whose end is to be burned*, Heb. vi. 8. And what care is taken of it then? If a piece of solid timber be kindled, somebody perhaps may snatch it as a *brand out of the burning*, and say, "It is a pity to burn it, for it may be put to some better use;" but if the branch of a vine be on fire, and, as usual, both the ends of it and the middle be kindled together, nobody goes about to save it; *When it was whole it was meet for no work, much less when the fire has devoured it; (v. 5.)* even the ashes of it are not worth saving.

II. How this similitude is applied to Jerusalem:

1. That holy city was become unprofitable, and good for nothing; it had been as the *vine-tree among the trees of the vineyard*, abounding in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God; when religion flourished there, and the pure worship of God was kept up, many a joyful vintage was then gathered in from it; and while it continued so, God made a hedge about it; it was his *pleasant plant*, (Isa. v. 7.) he *watered it every moment, and kept it night and day*; (Isa. xxvii. 3.) but it was now become the *degenerate plant of a strange vine*, of a wild vine, (such as we read of, 2 Kings iv. 39.) a *vine-tree among the trees of the forest*, which, being wild, brings forth wild grapes, (Isa. v. 4.) which are not

only of no use, but are nauseous and noxious; (Deut. xxxii. 32.) *their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter*. It is explained, v. 8. "They have trespassed a trespass; they have treacherously perverted with God, and perfidiously apostatized from him;" for so the word signifies. Note, Professors of religion, if they do not live up to their profession, but contradict it, if they degenerate and depart from it, are the most unprofitable creatures in the world, like the *salt* that has *lost its savour*, and is therefore *good for nothing*, Mark ix. 50. Other nations were famed for valour or politics, some for war, others for trade, and retained their credit; but the Jewish nation, being famous as a holy people, when they lost their holiness, and became wicked, were thenceforth *good for nothing*; with that they lost all their credit and usefulness, and became the most base and despicable people under the sun, *trodden under foot of the Gentiles*. Daniel, and other pious Jews, were of great use in their generation; but the idolatrous Jews then, and the unbelieving Jews now, since the preaching of the gospel, have been, and are, of no common service, not fit *for any work*.

2. Being so, it is *given to the fire for fuel*. Note, Those who are not fruitful to the glory of God's grace, shall be fuel to the fire of his wrath; and thus, if they give not honour to him, he *will get him honour upon them*, honour that will shine bright in that flaming fire, by which impenitent sinners will be for ever consumed. He will not be a lesor at last by any of his creatures. *The Lord has made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked*, that would not otherwise be for him, *for the day of evil*; (Prov. xvi. 4.) and in those who would not glorify him as the God to whom duty belongs, he will be glorified as the God to whom vengeance belongs. The fire of God's wrath had before devoured both the ends of the Jewish nation, (v. 4.) Samaria and the cities of Judah; and now Jerusalem, that was the *midst of it*, was thrown into the fire, to be burnt too, for it is *meet for no work*, it will not be wrought upon by any of the methods God has taken to be serviceable to him. *The inhabitants of Jerusalem* were like a vine-branch, rotten and awkward; and therefore, (v. 7.) *I will set my face against them*, to thwart all their counsels, as they set their faces against God, to contradict his word and defeat all his designs. It is decreed, the consumption is determined; *I will make the land quite desolate*, and therefore, when they go out from one fire, another fire shall devour them, (v. 7.) the end of one judgment shall be the beginning of another, and their escape from one only a reprieve till another comes; they shall go from misery in their own country to misery in Babylon. They who kept out of the way of the sword, perished by famine or pestilence: when one descent of the Chaldean forces upon them was over, and they thought, *Surely the bitterness of death is past*, yet soon after they returned again with double violence, till they had made a full end. Thus they shall know that I am the LORD, a God of almighty power, *when I set my face against them*. Note, God shows himself to be the LORD, by perfecting the destruction of his implacable enemies as well as the deliverances of his obedient people. Those against whom God sets his face, though they may come out of one trouble little hurt, will fall into another, though they come out of the pit, will be taken in the snare, (Isa. xxiv. 18.) though they escape the sword of Hazeal, will fall by that of Jehu; (1 Kings xix. 17.) for evil pursues sinners: nay, though they go out from the fire of temporal judgments, and seem to die in peace, yet there is an everlasting fire that will devour them; for when God judges, first or last he will overcome; and he will be known by the judg-

ments which he executeth. See Matth. iii. 10. John xv. 6.

### CHAP. XVI.

Still God is justifying himself in the desolations he is about to bring upon Jerusalem; and very largely, in this chapter, he shows the prophet, and orders him to show the people, that he did but punish them as their sins deserved. In the foregoing chapter, he had compared Jerusalem to an unfruitful vine, that was fit for nothing but the fire; in this chapter, he compares it to an adulteress, that, in justice, ought to be abandoned and exposed; and he must therefore show the people their abominations, that they might see how little reason they had to complain of the judgments they were under. In this long discourse are set forth, I. The despicable and deplorable beginnings of that church and nation, v. 3. . 5. II. The many honours and favours God had bestowed upon them, v. 6. . 14. III. Their treacherous and ungrateful departures from him to the services and worship of idols, here represented by the most impudent whoredom, v. 15. . 34. IV. A threatening of terrible, destroying judgments, which God would bring upon them for this sin, v. 35. . 43. V. An aggravation both of their sin and their punishment, by comparison with Sodom and Samaria, v. 44. . 59. VI. A promise of mercy in the close, which God would show to a penitent remnant, v. 60. . 63. and this is designed for admonition to us.

1. **A** GAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem, Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite. 4. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee: thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. 5. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

Ezekiel is now among the captives in Babylon; but as Jeremiah at Jerusalem wrote for the use of the captives, though they had Ezekiel upon the spot with them, (*ch.* 29.) so Ezekiel wrote for the use of Jerusalem, though Jeremiah himself was resident there; and yet they were far from looking upon it as an affront to one another, or an interference with one another's business; for ministers have need of one another's help, both by preaching and writing. Jeremiah wrote to the captives for their consolation, which was the thing they needed; Ezekiel here is directed to write to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for their conviction and humiliation, which was the thing they needed. This is his commission, (v. 2.) "*Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations*, her sins; set them in order before her." Note, (1.) Sins are not only provocations which God is angry at, but abominations which he hates, as contrary to his nature, and which we ought to hate, Jer. xlv. 4. (2.) The sins of Jerusalem are in a special manner so. The practice of profaneness appears most odious in those that make a profession of religion. (3.) Though Jerusalem is a place of great knowledge, yet she is loath to know her abominations; so partial are men in their own favour, that they are hardly made to see and own their own badness, but deny it, palliate or extenuate it. (4.) It is requisite that we should know our sins, that we may confess them, and may justify God in what he brings upon us for them. (5.) It is the work of ministers to cause sinners, sinners in Jerusalem, to know their

abominations; to set before them the glass of the law, that in it they may see their own deformities and defilements; to tell them plainly of their faults; *Thou art the man.*

Now, that Jerusalem may be made to know her abominations, and particularly the abominable ingratitude she had been guilty of, it was requisite that she should be put in mind of the great things God had done for her, as the aggravations of her bad conduct toward him; and, to magnify these favours, she is, in these verses, made to know the meanness and baseness of her original, from what poor beginnings God raised her, and how unworthy she was of his favour, and of the honour he had put upon her. Jerusalem is here put for the Jewish church and nation, which is here compared to an outcast child, base-born and abandoned, which the mother herself has no affection or concern for.

1. The extraction of the Jewish nation was mean; "*Thy birth is of the land of Canaan*; (v. 3.) thou hadst from the very first the spirit and disposition of a Canaanite." The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, and they were there but *strangers and sojourners*, had no possession, no power, not one foot of ground of their own, but a burying-place. Abraham and Sarah were indeed their father and mother, but they were only inmates with the Amorites and Hittites, who, having the dominion, seemed to be as parents to the seed of Abraham, witness the court Abraham made to the children of Heth, (Gen. xxiii. 4, 8.) and the dependence they had upon their neighbours the Canaanites, and the fear they were in of them, Gen. xiii. 7.—xxxiv. 30. If the patriarchs, at their first coming to Canaan, had conquered it, and made themselves masters of it, it had put an honour upon their family, and had looked great in history; but, instead of that, they went from one nation to another, (Ps. cv. 13.) as tenants from one farm to another, almost as beggars from one door to another, when they were but few in number, yea, very few. And yet this was not the worst; their fathers had served other gods in Ur of the Chaldees; (Josh. xxiv. 2.) even in Jacob's family there were strange gods, Gen. xxxv. 2. Thus early had they a genius leading them to idolatry: and upon this account their ancestors were Amorites and Hittites.

2. When they first began to multiply, their condition was really very deplorable, like that of a newborn child, which must of necessity die from the womb if the knees prevent it not, Job iii. 11, 12. The children of Israel, when they began to increase into a people and became considerable, were thrown out from the country that was intended for them, a famine drove them thence. Egypt was the open field into which they were cast; there they had no protection or countenance from the government they were under, but, on the contrary, were ruled with rigour, and their lives embittered; they had no encouragement given them to build up their families; no help to build up their estates, no friends or allies to strengthen their interests. Joseph, who had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, was dead; the king of Egypt, who should have been kind to them for Joseph's sake, set himself to destroy this man-child as soon as it was born, (Rev. xii. 4.) ordered all the males to be slain, which, it is likely, occasioned the exposing of many as well as Moses, to which perhaps the similitude here has reference. The founders of nations and cities had occasion for all the arts and arms they were masters of, set their heads on work, by policies and stratagems, to preserve and nurse up their infant-states. *Tante molis erat Romanam condere gentem*.—So vast were the efforts requisite to the establishment of the Roman name. Virg. But the nation of Israel had no such care taken of it, no such pains taken with it, as Athens

Sparta, Rome, and other commonwealths, had when they were first founded, but, on the contrary, was doomed to destruction, like an infant new-born, exposed to wind and weather, *the navel-string not cut, the poor babe not washed, not clothed, not swaddled*, because not pitied, v. 4, 5. Note, We owe the preservation of our infant-lives to the natural pity and compassion which the God of nature has put into the hearts of parents and nurses toward new-born children. This infant is said to be *cast out, to the loathing of her person*: it was a sign that she was loathed by those that bare her, and she appeared loathsome to all that looked upon her. *The Israelites were an abomination to the Egyptians*, as we find, Gen xliii. 32.—xlvii. 34.

Some think that this refers to the corrupt and vicious disposition of that people from their beginning; they were not only the weakest and *feeblest of all people*, (Deut. vii. 7.) but the worst and most ill-humoured of all people; *God giveth thee this good land, not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people*, Deut. ix. 6. And Moses tells them there, (v. 24.) *You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you*. They were not *sufficed*, nor *washed*, nor *swaddled*; they were not at all tractable or manageable, nor cast into any good shape. God took them to be his people, not because he saw any thing in them inviting or promising, but *so it seemed good in his sight*. And it is a very apt illustration of the miserable condition of all the children of men by nature. *As for our nativity in the day that we were born*, we were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, our understandings darkened, our minds alienated from the life of God, polluted with sin, which rendered us loathsome in the eyes of God. *Marvel not* then that we are told, *Ye must be born again*.

6. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, *when thou wast in thy blood, Live*; yea, I said unto thee, *when thou wast in thy blood, Live*. 7. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: *thy breasts are fashioned, and thy hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare*. 8. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. 9. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. 10. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. 11. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. 12. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. 13. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment *was* of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work: thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and

oil; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. 14. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it *was* perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.

In these verses, we have an account of the great things which God did for the Jewish nation, in raising them up by degrees to be very considerable.

1. God saved them from the ruin they were upon the brink of in Egypt; (v. 6.) "*When I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, loathed and abandoned, and appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, then I said unto thee, Live*. I designed thee for life when thou wast doomed to destruction, and resolved to save thee from death." Those shall live, to whom God commands life. God looked upon the world of mankind as thus cast off, thus cast out, thus polluted, thus weltering in blood, and his thoughts toward it were thoughts of good, designing it *life, and that more abundantly*. By converting grace, he says to the soul, *Live*.

2. He looked upon them with kindness and a tender affection, not only pitied them, but *set his love upon them*, which was unaccountable, for there was nothing lovely in them; but *I looked upon thee and behold, thy time was the time of love*, v. 8. I was the kindness and love of God our Saviour, that sent Christ to redeem us, that sends the Spirit to sanctify us, that brought us out of a state of nature into a state of grace; that *was a time of love* indeed, distinguishing love, when God manifested his love to us, and courted our love to him; *Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour*, Cant. viii. 10.

3. He took them under his protection; "*I spread my skirt over thee*, to shelter thee from wind and weather, and to *cover thy nakedness*, that the shame of it might not appear." Boaz *spread his skirt over Ruth*, in token of the special favour he designed her, Ruth iii. 9. God took them into his care, as an eagle *bears her young ones upon her wings*, Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. When God owned them for his people, and sent Moses to Egypt to deliver them, which was an expression of the good-will of him that *dwelt in the bush*, then he *spread his skirt over them*.

4. He cleared them from the reproachful character which their bondage in Egypt laid them under; (v. 9.) "*Then washed I thee with water*, to make thee clean, and *anointed thee with oil*, to make thee sweet, and *supple thee*." All the disgrace of their slavery was rolled away, when they were brought, *with a high hand and a stretched-out arm, into the glorious liberty of the children of God*; when God said, *Israel is my son, my first-born. Let my people go, that they may serve me*. That word, backed as it was with so many works of wonder, *thoroughly washed away their blood*; and when God led them under the convoy of the pillar of cloud and fire, he *spread his skirt over them*.

5. He multiplied them and built them up into a people. This is here mentioned, (v. 7.) before his *spreading his skirt over them*, because *their numbers increased exceedingly*, while they were yet bond-slaves in Egypt; they *multiplied as the bud of the field* in spring-time, they *waxed great, exceeding mighty*, (Exod. i. 7, 20.) *their breasts were fashioned*, when they were formed into distinct tribes, and had officers of their own, (Exod. v. 19.) *their hair grew* when they grew numerous, whereas they had been *naked and bare*, very few, and therefore contemptible.

6. He admitted them into covenant with himself. See what glorious nuptials this poor forlorn infant is preferred to at last! How *she* is dignified, who at



first had scarcely her life *given her for a prey*; *I swore unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee*; this was done at Mount Sinai, when the covenant between God and Israel was sealed and ratified, *when thou becamest mine*. God called them his people, and himself the God of Israel. Note, Those to whom God gives spiritual life he takes into covenant with himself; by that covenant they become his subjects and servants, that intimates their duty; his portion, his treasure, that intimates their privilege; and it is confirmed with an oath, that we might have strong consolation.

7. He beautified and adorned them. This maid cannot forget her ornaments, and she is gratified with abundance of them, v. 10.—13. We need not be particular in the application of these; her wardrobe was well furnished with rich apparel, they had *embroidered work* to wear, shoes of fine badgers' skins, linen girdles, and silk veils, bracelets and necklaces, jewels and ear-rings, and even a beautiful crown, or coronet; perhaps this may refer to the jewels and other rich goods which they took from the Egyptians, which might well be spoken of thus long after as a merciful circumstance of their deliverance, when it was spoken of long before, (Gen. xv. 14.) *They shall come out with great substance*. Or, it may be taken figuratively for all those blessings of heaven which adorned both their church and state. In a little time they came to excellent ornaments, v. 7. The laws and ordinances which God gave them, were to them as ornaments of grace to the head, and chains about the neck, Prov. i. 9. God's sanctuary, which he set up among them, was a beautiful crown upon their head; it was the beauty of holiness.

8. He fed them with abundance, with plenty, with dainties; *Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil*; manna, angels' food; *honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock*. In Canaan they did eat bread to the full, the finest of the wheat, Deut. xxxii. 13, 14. Those whom God takes into covenant with himself are fed with the bread of life, clothed with the robe of righteousness, adorned with the graces and comforts of the spirit; the hidden man of the heart is that which is incorruptible.

9. He gave them a great reputation among their neighbours, and made them considerable, acceptable to their friends and allies, and formidable to their adversaries; *Thou didst prosper into a kingdom*; (v. 13.) which speaks both dignity and dominion; and, (v. 14.) *Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty*; the nations about had their eye upon them, and admired them for the excellent laws by which they were governed, the privilege they had of access to God, Deut. iv. 7, 8. Solomon's wisdom, and Solomon's temple, were very much the renown of that nation; and if we put all the privileges of the Jewish church and kingdom together, we must own that it was the most accomplished beauty of all the nations of the earth; the beauty of it was perfect, you could not name the thing that would be the honour of a people but it was to be found in Israel, in David's and Solomon's time, when that kingdom was in its zenith; piety, learning, wisdom, justice, victory, peace, wealth; and all sure to continue if they had kept close to God. *It was perfect, saith God, through my comeliness which I had put upon thee*; through the beauty of their holiness, as they were a people set apart for God, and devoted to him, to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory. This was it that put a lustre upon all their other honours, and was indeed the perfection of their beauty. We may apply this spiritually; sanctified souls are truly beautiful, they are so in God's sight, and they themselves may take the comfort of

it. But God must have all the glory, for they were by nature deformed and polluted, and, whatever comeliness they have, it is that which God has put upon them, and beautified them with, and he will be well pleased with the work of his own hands.

15. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. 16. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: *the like things* shall not come, neither shall it be so. 17. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them; 18. And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. 19. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, *wherewith I fed thee*, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord God. 20. Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. *Is this* of thy whoredoms a small matter, 21. That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them? 22. And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, *and wast polluted in thy blood*. 23. And it came to pass, after all thy wickedness, (wo, wo unto thee! saith the Lord God,) 24. That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street. 25. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. 26. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. 27. Behold, therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. 28. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied. 29. Thou hast, moreover, multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea, and yet thou

wast not satisfied herewith. 30. How weak is thy heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou doest all these *things*, the work of an imperious whorish woman; 31. In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thy high place in every street; and hast not been as a harlot, in that thou scornest hire; 32. *But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!* 33. They give gifts to all whores; but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. 34. And the contrary is in thee from *other* women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee; therefore thou art contrary.

In these verses we have an account of the great wickedness of the people of Israel, especially in worshipping idols, notwithstanding the great favours that God had conferred upon them, by which, one would think, they should have been for ever engaged to him. This wickedness of theirs is here represented by the lewd and scandalous conversation of that beautiful maid which was rescued from ruin, brought up and well provided for by a kind Friend and Benefactor, that had been in all respects as a Father and a Husband to her.

I. Their idolatry was the great provoking sin that they were guilty of; it began in the latter end of Solomon's time, (for from Samuel's till then I do not remember that we read any thing of it,) and from thence continued more or less the crying sin of that nation till the captivity; and though it now and then met with some check from the reforming kings, yet it was never totally suppressed, and for the most part appeared to a high degree impudent and barefaced. They not only worshipped the true God by images, as the ten tribes by the calves at Dan and Bethel, but they worshipped false gods, Baal and Moloch, and all the senseless rabble of the pagan deities.

II. This is that which is here all along represented (as often elsewhere) under the similitude of whoredom and adultery. 1. Because it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forsaking him, and embracing the bosom of a stranger; it is giving that affection and that service to his rivals, which are due to him alone. 2. Because it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is. 3. Because it debauches the conscience, sears and hardens it; and those who by their idolatries dishonour the divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie, and his glory into shame, God justly punishes by giving them over to a reprobate mind to dishonour the human nature with vile affections, Rom. i. 23, &c. It is a besotting, bewitching sin; and when men are given up to it, they seldom recover themselves out of the snare. 4. Because it is a shameful, scandalous sin, for those that have joined themselves to the Lord, to join themselves to an idol. Now observe here,

(1.) What were the causes of this sin; how came the people of God to be drawn away to the service of idols? How came a virgin so well taught, so well educated, to be debauched? Who would have thought it? But, [1.] They grew proud; (v. 15.)

*"Thou trustedst to thy beauty, and didst expect that that should make thee an interest, and didst play the harlot because of thy renown."* They thought, because they were so complimented and admired by their neighbours, that, further to ingratiate themselves with them, and return their compliments, they must join with them in their worship, and conform themselves to their usages. Solomon admitted idolatry to gratify his wives and their relations. Note, Abundance of young people are ruined by pride, and particularly pride in their beauty. *Rara est concordia formæ atque pudicitie* — *Beauty and chastity are seldom associated.* [2.] They forgot their beginning; (v. 22.) *"Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, how poor and mean and despicable thou wast, and what great things God did for thee, and what lasting obligations he laid upon thee thereby."* Note, It would be an effectual check to our pride and sensuality, to consider what we are, and how much we are beholden to the free grace of God. [3.] They were weak in understanding and in resolution; (v. 30.) *How weak is thy heart, seeing thou dost all these things.* Note, The strength of men's lusts is an evidence of the weakness of their hearts; they have no acquaintance with themselves, nor government of themselves. She is weak, and yet an imperious, whorish woman. Note, Those that are most foolish are commonly most imperious, and think themselves fit to manage others when they are far from being able to manage themselves.

(2.) What were the particulars of it.

[1.] They worshipped all the idols that came in their way; all that they were ever courted to the worship of; they were at the beck of all their neighbours; (v. 15.) *Thou pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by, his it was.* They were ready to close with every temptation of this kind, though ever so absurd. No foreign idol could be imported, no new god invented, but they were ready to catch at it; as a common strumpet that prostitutes herself to all new comers, and *multiplies her whoredoms*, v. 25. Thus some common drunkards will be company for every one that puts up the finger to them; how weak are the hearts of such!

[2.] They adorned their idol-temples, and groves, and high places, with the fine, rich clothing that God had given them; (v. 16, 18.) *Thou deckedst thy high places with divers colours, with the coats of divers colours, like Joseph's, which God had given them as particular marks of his favour, and hast played the harlot, worshipped idols thereupon; of this he saith, The like things shall not come; neither shall it be so;* this is a thing by no means to be suffered; I will never endure such practices as these without showing my retentments."

[3.] They made images for worship of the jewels which God had given them; (v. 17.) *the jewels of my gold and my silver, which I had given thee.* Note, It is God that gives us our *gold* and *silver*; the products of trade, of art and industry, are the gifts of God's providence to us, as well as the fruits of the earth. And what God gives us the use of he still retains a property in; it is *my silver* and *my gold*, though I have *given it thee*. It is *his* still, so that we ought to serve and honour him with it, and are accountable to him for the disposal of it. Every penny has God's image upon it as well as Cæsar's. Should we make our *silver* and *gold*, our plate, money, jewels, the matter of our pride and contention, our covetousness and prodigality, if we duly considered that it is *God's silver* and *his gold*? The Israelites began betimes to turn their jewels into idols, when Aaron made the golden calf of their ear-rings.

[4.] They served their idols with the good things

which God gave them for their own use, and to serve him with; (v. 18.) "*Thou hast set mine oil and my incense before them, upon their altars, as perfumes to these dunghill deities; my meat, and fine flour, and oil, and that honey which Canaan flowed with, and wherewith I fed thee, thou hast regaled them and their hungry priests with; hast made an offering of it to them for a sweet savour, to purify them, and procure acceptance with them: and thus it was, saith the Lord God; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused. These things thou hast done.*" He that knows all things, knows it." See how fond they were of their idols, that they would part with that which was given them for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families, to honour them with; which may shame our niggardliness and strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God.

[5.] They had sacrificed their children to their idols. This is insisted upon here, and often elsewhere, as one of the worst instances of their idolatry, as indeed there was none in which the devil triumphed so much over the children of men, both their natural reason and their natural affection, as in this; (see Jer. vii. 31.—xix. 5.—xxxii. 35.) *Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, and not only made them to pass through the fire, or between two fires, in token of their being dedicated to Moloch, but thou hast sacrificed them to be devoured, v. 20.* Never was there such an instance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the most barbarous tyranny as this was. Yet that was not the worst of it; it was an irreparable wrong to God himself, who challenged a special property in their children more than in their gold and silver, and their meat; They are my children, (v. 21.) the sons and daughters which thou hast borne unto me, v. 20. He is the Father of spirits, and rational souls are in a particular manner his; and therefore the taking away of life, human life, unjustly, is a high affront to the God of life. But the children of Israelites were his by a further right; they were the children of the covenant, born in God's house. He had said to Abraham, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*; they had the seal of the covenant in their flesh from eight days old; they were to bear God's name, and keep up his church; to murder them was in the highest degree inhuman, but to murder them in honour of an idol was in the highest degree impious. One cannot think of it without the utmost indignation: to see the pitiless hands of the parents shedding the guiltless blood of their own children, and by offering those pieces of themselves to the devil for dying sacrifices, openly avowing the offering up of themselves to him for living sacrifices! How absurd was this, that the children which were born to God, should be sacrificed to devils! Note, The children of parents that are members of the visible church, are to be looked upon as born unto God, and his children; as such, and under that character, we are to love them, and pray for them, bring them up for him, and, if he calls for them, cheerfully part with them to him; for *may he not do what he will w<sup>th</sup> his own?* Upon this instance of their idolatry, which indeed ought not to pass without a particular brand, this remark is made, (v. 20.) *Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter?* Which intimates, that there were those who made a small matter of it, and turned it into a jest. Note, There is no sin so heinous, so apparently heinous, which men of profligate consciences will not make a mock at. But is whoredom, is spiritual whoredom, a small matter? Is it a small matter for men to make their children brutes, and the devil their god? It will be a great matter shortly.

[6.] They built temples in honour of their idols, that others might be invited to resort thither, and

join with them in the worship of their idols; "*After all thy wickedness of this kind committed in private, for which, wo, wo unto thee,*" (that comes in a sad parenthesis, denoting those to be in a woful condition, who are going on in sin, and giving them warning in time, if they would but take it,) "*thou hast at length arrived at such a pitch of impudence as to proclaim it; thou hast long had a whore's heart, but now thou art come to have a whore's forehead, and canst not blush,*" v. 23.—25. *Thou hast built there an eminent place, a brothel-house; (so the margin reads it;) and such their idol-temples were. Thou hast made thee a high place, for one idol or other, in every street, and at every head of the way; and again, v. 31. They did all they could to seduce and debauch others, and to spread the contagion, by making the temptations to idolatry as strong as possibly they could; and hereby the ringleaders in idolatry did but make themselves vile, and even those that had courted them to it, finding themselves outdone by them, began to be surfeited with the abundance and violence of their idolatries; Thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, even by those that had admired it. The Jewish nation, by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despicable in the eyes even of their heathen neighbours: much more was their beauty abhorred by all that were wise and good, and had any concern for the honour of God and religion. Note, Those shame themselves, that bring a reproach on their profession. And justly will that beauty, that excellency, at length be made the object of the loathing of others, which men have made the matter of their own pride.*

(3.) What were the aggravations of this sin.

[1.] They were fond of the idols of those nations which had been their oppressors and persecutors. As, First, The Egyptians; they were a people notorious for idolatry, and for the most settish, senseless idolatries; they had of old abused them by their barbarous dealings, and of late by their treacherous dealings—were always either cruel or false to them; and yet so infatuated were they, that they committed fornication with the Egyptians their neighbours, not only by joining with them in their idolatries, but by entering into leagues and alliances with them, and depending upon them for help in their straits, which was an adulterous departure from God. Secondly, The Assyrians; they had also been vexatious to Israel; "*And yet thou hast played the whore with them; (v. 28.) though they lived at a greater distance, yet thou hast entertained their idols and their superstitious usages, and so hast multiplied thy fornications unto Chaldea, hast borrowed images of gods, patterns of altars, rites of sacrificing, and one foolery or other of that kind, from that remote country, that enemy's country, and hast imported them into the land of Canaan, enfranchised and established them there.*" Thus Mr. George Herbert long since foretold, or feared at least,

That Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames,  
By letting in them both, pollute her streams.

[2.] They had been under the rebukes of Providence for their sins, and yet they persisted in them; (v. 27.) *I have stretched out my hand over thee, to threaten and frighten thee; so God did before he laid his hand upon them to ruin and destroy them; and that is his usual method, to try to bring men to repentance first by lesser judgments; he did so here. Before he brought such a famine upon them as broke the staff of bread, he diminished their ordinary food, cut them short before he cut them off. When the overplus is abused, it is just with God to diminish that which is for necessity. Before he delivered them to the Chaldeans to be*

destroyed, he delivered them *to the daughters of the Philistines* to be ridiculed, for their idolatries; for they hated them, and, though they were idolaters themselves, yet were ashamed of the lewd way of the Israelites, who were grown more profane in their idolatries than any of their neighbours; who changed their gods, whereas other nations did not change theirs; (Jer. ii. 10, 11.) for this they were justly chastised by the Philistines. Or, it may refer to the inroads which the Philistines made upon the south of Judah in the reign of Ahaz, by which it was weakened and impoverished, and which was the beginning of sorrows to them; (2 Chron. xxviii. 18.) but they did not take warning by those judgments, and therefore were justly abandoned to ruin at last. Note, In the account which impenitent sinners shall be called to, they will be told not only of the mercies for which they have been ungrateful, but of the afflictions under which they have been incorrigible, Amos iv. 11.

[3.] They were insatiable in their spiritual whoredom; Thou *couldst not be satisfied*, v. 28. and again, v. 29. When they had multiplied their idols and superstitious usages beyond measure, yet still they were inquiring after new gods and new fashions in worship. They that in sincerity join themselves to the true God, find enough in him for their satisfaction; and though they still desire more of God, yet they never desire more *than* God; but they that forsake this living Fountain for broken cisterns, will find themselves soon surfeited, but never satisfied; they have soon enough of the gods they have, and are still inquiring after more.

[4.] They were at great expense with their idolatry, and laid out a great deal of wealth in purchasing patterns of images and altars, and hiring priests to attend upon them from other countries. Harlots generally had their hires; but this impudent adulteress, instead of being hired to serve idols, hired idols to protect her, and accept her homage. This is much insisted on, (v. 31.—34.) “In this respect the *contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms*: others are courted, but thou makest court to those that do not follow thee; art fond of making leagues and alliances with those heathen nations that despise thee: others have gifts given them, but thou givest thy gifts, the gifts which God had graciously given thee, to thine idols; herein like a wife that commits adultery, not for gain, as harlots do, but entirely for the sin’s sake.” Note, Spiritual lusts, those of the mind, such as theirs after idols were, are often as strong and impetuous as any carnal lusts are. And it is a great aggravation of sin when men are their own tempters, and, instead of proposing to themselves any worldly advantage by it, are at great expense with it; such are *transgressors without cause*, (Ps. xxv. 3.) wicked transgressors indeed.

And now is not Jerusalem in all this made to know her abominations? For what greater abominations could she be guilty of than these? Here we may see with wonder and horror what the corrupt nature of men is when God leaves them to themselves, yea, though they have the greatest advantages to be better and do better. And the way of sin is down-hill. *Nitimur in vetitum—We incline to the forbidden.*

35. Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: 36. Thus saith the Lord God, Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thine abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them: 37. Behold, therefore, I will

gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all *them* that thou hast loved, with all *them* that thou hast hated, I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. 38. And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock, and shed blood, are judged: and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. 39. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. 40. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. 41. And they shall burn thy houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more. 42. So will I make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. 43. Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these *things*; behold, therefore, I also will recompense thy way upon *thy* head, saith the Lord God; and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

Adultery was by the law of Moses made a capital crime; this notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here has sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, v. 35. The prophet, as the judge, in God’s name calls to her, *O harlot, hear the word of the Lord*. Our Saviour preached to harlots for their conversion, to bring them into the kingdom of God, not as the prophet here, to expel them out of it. Note, An apostate church is a harlot; Jerusalem is so if she become idolatrous. *How is the faithful city become a harlot!* Rome is so represented in the Revelation, then when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here; (Rev. xvii. 1.) *Come, and I will show thee the judgments of the great whore*. Those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it, shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord and shall all tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.

I. The crime is repeated, and the articles of the charge are summed up, (v. 36.) and (as is usual) with the attendant aggravations; (v. 43.) for when God speaks in wrath, he will be justified, and clear when he judges, clear when he is judged; and sinners, when they are condemned, shall have their sins so set in order before them, that their mouth shall be stopped, and they shall not have a word to object against the equity of the sentence. The crimes which this harlot stands convicted of, and is now to be condemned for, are, 1. The violation of the two first commandments of the first table, by *idolatry*; which is here called her *whoredoms with her lovers*; so she called them, (Hos. ii. 12.) because she loved them as if they had been indeed her benefactors; that is, with *all the idols of her*

abominations, the abominable idols which she served and worshipped. This was the sin which provoked God to jealousy. 2. The violation of the two first commandments of the second table, by the murder of their own innocent infants; *the blood of thy children which thou didst give unto them.* It is not strange if those that have cast off God and his fear, break through the strongest and most sacred bonds of natural affection.

The sins are aggravated from the consideration, (1.) Of the dishonour they had thereby done to themselves; "*Hereby thy filthiness was poured out; the uncleanness that was in thy heart was hereby discovered and brought to light, and thy nakedness was exposed to view, and thou thereby exposed to contempt.*" God is displeased with his professing people for shaming themselves by their sins. (2.) Their base ingratitude is another aggravation of their sins; "*Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, and the kindness that was done thee then, when otherwise thou hadst perished,*" v. 43. And, (3.) The vexation which their sins gave to God, whom they ought to have pleased; "*Thou hast fretted me in all these things; not only angered me, but grieved me.*" It is a strange expression, and, one would think, enough to melt a heart of stone, that the great God, who cannot admit any uneasiness, is pleased to speak of the sins and follies of his professing people as *fretting to him.* *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.*

II. The sentence is passed in general; *I will judge thee as women that break wedlock, and shed blood, are judged;* (v. 38.) those two crimes were punished with death, with an ignominious death; "*Thou hast shed blood, and therefore I will give thee blood; thou hast broken wedlock, and therefore I will give it thee, not only in justice, but in jealousy, not only as a righteous Judge, but as an injured and incensed Husband, who will not spare in the day of vengeance,*" Prov. vi. 34, 35. He will recompense their way upon their head, v. 43. In all the judgments God executes upon sinners, we must see their own way recompensed upon their head; they are dealt with not only as they deserved, but as they procured; it is the end which their sin, as a way, had a direct tendency to. More particularly,

1. This criminal must be (as is usually done with criminals) exposed to public shame, v. 37. Malefactors are not executed privately, but are made a spectacle to the world; care is here taken to bring spectators together; "*All them whom thou hast loved, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, shall come to be witnesses of the execution, that they may take warning, and prevent their own like ruin; and those also whom thou hast hated, who will insult over thee, and triumph in thy fall.*" Both ways the calamities of Jerusalem will be aggravated, that they will be the grief of her friends and the joy of her foes. These shall not only be gathered around her, but gathered against her; even those with whom she took unlawful pleasure, with whom she contracted unlawful leagues, the Egyptians and Assyrians, shall now contribute to her ruin. As *when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him,* so when a man's ways displease the Lord, he makes even his friends to be at war with him; and justly makes those a scourge and a plague to sinners, and instruments of their destruction, who were their tempters, and with whom they were partakers in wickedness. Those whom they have suffered to strip them of their virtue, shall see them stript, and perhaps help to strip them, of all their other ornaments; to see the nakedness of the land will they come. It is added, to the same purport, (v. 41.) *I will execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women; thou shalt be made an example of, in terrorem—*

*that others may see and fear, and do no more presumptuously.*

2. The criminal is condemned to die, for her sins are such as death is the wages of; (v. 40.) *They shall bring up a company, a company shall be brought up against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords;* so great a death, so many deaths in one, is this adulteress adjudged to. When the walls of Jerusalem were battered down with stones shot against them, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were put to the sword, then this sentence was executed in the letter of it.

3. The estate of the criminal is confiscated, and all that belonged to her destroyed with her; (v. 39.) *They shall throw down thine eminent place; and (v. 41.) they shall burn thine houses,* as the habitations of bad women are destroyed, in detestation of their lewdness. Their high places, erected in honour of their idols, by which they thought to ingratiate themselves with their neighbours, shall be an offence to them, and even they shall break them down. It was long the complaint, even in some of the best reigns of the kings of Judah, that *the high places were not taken away;* but now the army of the Chaldeans, when they lay all waste, shall break them down. If iniquity be not taken away by the justice of the nation, it shall be taken away by the judgments of God upon the nation.

4. Thus both the sin and the sinners shall be abolished together, and an end put to both; *Thou shalt cease from playing the harlot;* there shall be no remainders of idolatry in the land, because the inhabitants shall be wholly extirpated, and they shall give no more hire, because they have no more to give. Some that will not leave their sins, live till their sins leave them. When all that with which they honoured their idols is taken from them, they shall not give hire any more; (v. 41.) "*Then thou shalt not commit this lewdness of sacrificing thy children, which was a crime provoking above all thine abominations, for thy children shall all be cut off by the sword, or carried into captivity, so that thou shalt have none to sacrifice,*" v. 43. Or, it may be meant of the reformation of those of them that escape and survive the punishment; they shall take warning, and shall do no more presumptuously. The captivity in Babylon made the people of Israel to cease for ever from playing the harlot, it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry; and then all shall be well, when this is the fruit, even the taking away of sin; then (v. 42.) *my jealousy shall depart, I will be quiet, and no more angry.* When we begin to be at war with sin, God will be at peace with us; for he continues the affliction no longer than till it has done its work. When sin departs, God's jealousy will soon depart, for he is never jealous but when we give him just cause to be so. Yet some understand this as a threatening of utter ruin, that God will make a full end, and the fire of his anger shall burn as long as there is any fuel for it. *His fury shall rest upon them,* and not remove. Compare this with that doom of unbelievers, (John iii. 36.) *The wrath of God abideth on them.* They shall drink the dregs of the cup, and then God will be no more angry, for he is eased of his adversaries, (Isa. i. 24.) is satisfied in the abandoning of them, and therefore will be no more angry, because there are no more for his anger to fasten upon. They had fretted him, when judgment and mercy were contesting; but now he is quiet, as he will be in the eternal damnation of sinners, wherein he will be glorified, and therefore he will be satisfied.

44. Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, *As is the mother, so is her daughter.* 45.

'Thou *art* thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou *art* the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother *was* a Hittite, and your father an Amorite. 46. And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters. 47. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations; but, as *if that were* a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. 48. *As I live*, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. 49. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, was in her, and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. 51. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. 52. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame, for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou; yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. 53. When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then *will I bring again* the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them; 54. That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. 55. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. 56. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride. 57. Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of *thy* reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all *that are* round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about. 58. Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD. 59. For thus saith the Lord God, I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

The prophet here further shows Jerusalem her

abominations, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and showing that she was worse than any of them; and therefore should, like them, be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are all apt to judge of ourselves by comparison, and to imagine that we are sufficiently good, if we are but as good as such and such, who are thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad, if we are no worse than such and such, who, though bad, are not of the worst. Now God by the prophet shows Jerusalem,

I. That she was as bad as *her mother*, as the accursed, devoted Canaanites that were the possessors of this land before her. They that use proverbs, as most people do, shall apply that proverb to Jerusalem, *As is the mother, so is her daughter*, v. 44. She is even her *mother's own child*; the Jews are as like the Canaanites in temper and inclination as if they had been their own children. The character of the mother was, that she *loathed her husband and her children*, she had all the marks of an adulteress; and that is the character of the daughter, she forsakes the *Guide of her youth*, and is barbarous to the children of her own bowels. When God brought Israel into Canaan, he particularly warned them not to do according to the abominations of *the men of that land, who went before them*, (for which it *had spued them out*, Lev. xviii. 27, 28.) the monuments of whose idolatry, with the remains of the idolaters themselves, would be a continual temptation to them: but they learned their way, and trod in their steps, and were as well affected to the *idols of Canaan* as ever they were, (Ps. cvi. 38.) and thus, in respect of imitation, it might truly be said that *their mother* was a Hittite, and their *father* an Amorite, (v. 45.) for they resembled them more than Abraham and Sarah.

II. That she was worse than her sisters Sodom and Samaria, that were adulteresses too, that *loathed their husbands and their children*, that were weary of the gods of their fathers, and were for introducing new gods, *a-la-mode—quite in style*, that came newly up, and new fashions in religion, and were given to change. On this comparison between Jerusalem and *her sisters* the prophet here enlarges, that he might either shame them into repentance, or justify God in their ruin. Observe,

1. Who Jerusalem's sisters were, v. 45. Samaria and Sodom. Samaria is called the *elder sister*, or, rather, the *greater*, because it was a much larger city and kingdom, richer and more considerable, and more nearly allied to Israel. If Jerusalem look northward, this is partly *on her left hand*, this city of Samaria, and the towns and villages that were as *daughters* to that *mother-city*, these had been lately destroyed for their *spiritual whoredom*; Sodom, and the adjacent towns and villages that were her daughters, dwelt at Jerusalem's *right hand*, and was her *lesser sister*; less than Jerusalem, less than Samaria, and these were of old destroyed for their corporeal whoredom, Jude 7.

2. Wherein Jerusalem's sins resembled her sisters', particularly Sodom's; (v. 49.) *This was the iniquity of Sodom*, (it is implied, and this is *thine iniquity too*,) *pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness*; their *going after strange flesh*, which was Sodom's most flagrant wickedness, is not mentioned, because notoriously known; but those sins which did not look so black, but opened the door and led the way to these more enormous crimes, and began to fill that measure of her sins, which was filled up at length by their unnatural filthiness. Now these initiating sins were, (1.) *Pride*, in which the heart lifts up itself above and against both God and man; pride was the first sin that turned angels into devils, and the *garden of the Lord* into a *hell upon earth*. It was the *pride* of the Sodomites, that they despised *righteous Lot*, and would not bear to



be reproved by him; and this ripened them for ruin. (2.) *Gluttony*, here called *fulness of bread*. It was God's great mercy that they had plenty, but their great sin that they abused it, glutted themselves with it, ate to excess, and drank to excess, and made that the gratification of their lusts, which was given them to be the support of their lives. (3.) *Idleness*, *abundance of idleness*, a dread of labour, and a love of ease. Their country was fruitful, and the abundance they had they came easily by, which was a temptation to them to indulge themselves in sloth, which disposed them to all that abominable filthiness which kindled their flames. Note, Idleness is an inlet to much sin; the men of Sodom, who were idle, were *wicked*, and *sinner before the Lord exceedingly*, Gen. xiii. 13. The standing waters gather filth, and the sitting bird is the fowler's mark. When David *rose from off his bed at evening*, he saw Bathsheba. *Queritur, Egisthus quare sit factus adulter? In promptu causa est; desidiosus erat—What made Egisthus an adulterer? Indolence.* (4.) *Oppression*; neither did she *strengthen the hands of the poor and needy*; probably, it is implied that she *weakened* their hands and *broke* their arms; however, it was bad enough that, when she had so much wealth, and, consequently, power and interest and leisure, she did nothing for the relief of the poor, in providing for whose wants those that themselves are *full of bread* may employ their time well, they need not be so abundantly idle, as too often they are. These were the sins of the Sodomites, and these were Jerusalem's sins; their *pride*, the cause of their sins, is mentioned again; (v. 50.) *they were haughty*; with the horrid effects of their sins, their *abominations* which they *committed before God*. Men arrive gradually at the height of impiety and wickedness; *Nemo repente fit turpissimus—No man reaches the height of vice at once*. But where pride has got the ascendant in a man, he is in the high road to all abominations.

3. How much the sins of Jerusalem exceeded those of Sodom and Samaria: they were more heinous in the sight of God, either in themselves, or by reason of several aggravations: "*Thou hast not only walked after their ways*, and tread in their steps, but *has quite outdone* them in wickedness, v. 47. Thou thoughtest it *a very little thing* to do as they did; didst laugh at them as *sneaking* sinners, and *silly* ones; thou wouldest be more *cunning*, more *daring*, in wickedness; wouldest triumph more boldly over thy convictions, and bid more open defiance to God and religion; if a man will *break*, let him *break for something*; thus *thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways*." Jerusalem was more *polite*; and therefore sinned with more wit, more art and ingenuity, than Sodom and Samaria could. Jerusalem had more wealth and power, and its government was more absolute and arbitrary; and therefore had the more opportunity of oppressing the poor, and shedding malignant influences around her, than Sodom and Samaria had. Jerusalem had the temple, and the ark, and the priesthood, and kings of the house of David; and therefore the wickedness of that holy city, that was so *dignified*, so *near*, so *dear* to God, was more provoking to him than the wickedness of Sodom and Samaria, that had not Jerusalem's privileges and means of grace. Sodom has *not done as thou hast done*, v. 48. This agrees with what Christ says, (Matt. xi. 24.) *it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee*. The kingdom of the ten tribes had been very wicked; and yet *Samaria has not committed half of thy sins*, (v. 51.) has not worshipped half so many idols, nor slain half so many prophets. It was bad enough that they of Jerusalem were guilty of Sodom's sins, sodomy itself not excepted, 1 Kings xiv. 24. 2 Kings xxiii. 7. And

though the *Dead sea*, the standing monument of Sodom's sin and ruin, *bordered upon* their country, (Numb. xxxiv. 12.) and that sulphureous lake was *always under their nose*, (God having *taken away Sodom and her daughters* in such a way and manner as he *saw good*, (as he says here, v. 50.) so that one thing should effectually make their *overthrow an example* to those that *after should live ungodly*; 2 Pet. ii. 6.) yet they did not take warning, but *multiplied their abominations more than they*; and, (1.) By this they *justified Sodom and Samaria*, v. 51. They pretended, in their haughtiness and superciliousness, to *judge them*, and in the days of old, when they retained their integrity, they did judge them, v. 52. But now they *justify them* comparatively; *Sodom and Samaria are more righteous than thou*, less wicked. It will look like some *extenuation* of their sins, that, *bad as they were*, Jerusalem was *worse*, though it was God's own city. Not that it will serve for a plea to justify Sodom, but it condemns Jerusalem, against which Sodom and Samaria will *rise up in judgment*. (2.) For this they ought themselves to be greatly ashamed: "*Thou who hast judged thy sisters*, and cried out shame on them, now *bear thine own shame*, for *thy sins which thou hast committed*, which, though of the same kind with theirs, yet, being committed *by thee*, are *more abominable than theirs*," v. 52. This may be taken either as foretelling their ruin, *Thou shalt bear thy shame*, or as inviting them to repentance, "*Be thou confounded, and bear thy shame*, take the shame to thyself that is due to thee;" it may be hoped that sinners will forsake their sins when they begin to be heartily ashamed of them. And therefore they shall go into captivity, and there they shall lie, that they may be *confounded in all that they have done*; because they had been a comfort and encouragement to Sodom and Samaria, v. 54. Note, There is nothing in sin which we have more reason to be ashamed of than this, that by our sin we have encouraged others in sin, and *comforted* them in that for which they must be *grieved*, or they are *undone*. Another reason why they must *now be ashamed* is, because in the day of their prosperity they had looked with so much disdain upon their neighbours; *Thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thee in the day of thy pride*, v. 56. They thought Sodom not worthy to be named the same day with Jerusalem, little dreaming that Jerusalem would at length lie under a worse and more scandalous character than Sodom herself. Those that are *high* may perhaps come to stand upon a level with those they condemn. Or, "*Sodom was not mentioned*, the warning designed to be given to thee by Sodom's ruin, was not regarded." If the Jews had but talked more frequently and seriously to one another, and to their children, concerning *the wrath of God revealed from heaven against Sodom's ungodliness and unrighteousness*, it might have kept them in awe, and prevented their treading in their steps; but they kept the thought of it at a distance, would not bear the mention of it, and (as the ancients say) put Isaiah to death for putting them in mind of it, when he called them *rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah*, Isa. i. 10. Note, Those are but preparing judgments for themselves, that will not take notice of God's judgments upon others.

4. What desolations God had brought, and was bringing, upon Jerusalem, for these wickednesses wherein they had exceeded Sodom and Samaria. (1.) She has already long ago been disgraced, and has fallen into contempt among her neighbours; (v. 57.) *Before her wickedness was discovered*, before she came to be so grossly and openly flagitious, she bore the just punishment of her secret and more concealed lewdness, when she fell under *the reproach of the daughters of Syria, of the Philis*

times, who were said to *despise her*, and *be ashamed of her*, (v. 27.) and under the reproach of *all that were round about her*; which seems to refer to the descent made upon Judah by the Syrians in the days of Ahaz, and soon after another by the Philistines, 2 Chron. xxviii. 5, 18. Note, Those that disgrace themselves by yielding to their lusts, will justly be brought into *disgrace* by being made to yield to their enemies; and it is observable, that before God brought potent enemies upon them, for *their destruction*, he brought enemies upon them that were less formidable, *for their reproach*; if lesser judgments would do the work, God would not send greater. In this *thou hast borne thy lewdness*, v. 58. Those that will not cast off their sins by repentance and reformation, shall be made to bear their sins to their confusion. (2.) She is now in *captivity*, or hastening into captivity, and therein is reckoned with, not only for her *lewdness*, (v. 58.) but for her *perfidiousness* and *covenant-breaking*; (v. 59.) "*I will deal with thee as thou hast done*; I will forsake thee as thou hast forsaken me, and cast thee off as thou hast cast me off, for thou hast *despised the oath, in breaking the covenant*." This seems to be meant of the covenant God made with their fathers, at mount Sinai, whereby he took them and theirs to be a peculiar people to himself. They flattered themselves with a conceit, that because God had hitherto continued his favour to them, notwithstanding their provocations, he would do so still. "No," says God, "you have *broken covenant with me*, have *despised* both the promises of the covenant, and the obligations of it, and therefore *I will deal with thee as thou hast done*." Note, Those that will not adhere to God as *their God*, have no reason to expect that he should continue to own them as *his people*. (3.) The captivity of the wicked Jews, and their ruin, shall be as *irrevocable* as that of *Sodom and Samaria*. In this sense, as a threatening, most interpreters take v. 53, 55. *When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they shall return to their former estate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them*, and as it were for their sakes, and under their shadow and protection, because they are *more righteous than thou*, and *then thou shalt return to thy former estate*. But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former estate, and therefore let not Jerusalem expect it, that is, those who now remained there, whom God would *deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt*, Jer. xxiv. 9, 10. Sooner shall the Sodomites arise out of the salt sea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Assyria, than they enjoy their peace and prosperity again; for, to their shame be it spoken, it is a *comfort* to those of the ten tribes, who are dispersed and in captivity, to see those of the two tribes, who had been as bad as they, or worse, in like manner dispersed and in captivity; and therefore they shall live and die, shall stand and fall, together; the bad ones of both shall perish together, the good ones of both shall return together. Note, Those who do as the worst of sinners do, must expect to *fare as they fare*. *Let mine enemy be as the wicked*.

60. Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. 61. Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. 62.

And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I *am* the Lord. 63. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.

Here, in the close of the chapter, after a most shameful conviction of sin, and a most dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved, for those who shall come after, as was when God swore in his wrath concerning those who came out of Egypt, that they should not enter into Canaan; "Yet" (says God) "your little ones shall;" so here. And some think that what is said of the return of Sodom and Samaria, (v. 53, 55.) and of Jerusalem with them, is a promise; it may be understood so, if by Sodom we understand (as Grotius and some of the Jewish writers do) the Moabites and Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, who once dwelt in Sodom; their captivity was returned, (Jer. xlviii. 47.—xlix. 6.) as was that of many of the ten tribes, and Judah's with them. But these closing verses are, without doubt, a precious promise, which was in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but was to have its full accomplishment in gospel-times, and in that *repentance* and that *remission of sins* which should then be *preached with success to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*. Now observe here,

1. From whence this mercy should take rise; from *God himself*, and his *remembering of his covenant* with them; (v. 60.) *Nevertheless*, though they had been so provoking, and God has been so provoked, to that degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet "*I will remember my covenant with thee*, that covenant which I made with thee *in the days of thy youth*, and will revive it again. Though thou hast *broken the covenant*, (v. 59.) I will *remember* it, and it shall flourish again." See how much it is our comfort and advantage that God is pleased to deal with us in a *covenant-way*, for thus the mercies of it come to be *sure mercies and everlasting*, (Isa. lv. 3.) and while this root stands firm in the ground, there is *hope of the tree*, though it be *cut down*, that *through the scent of water it will bud again*. We do not find that they put him in mind of the covenant, but *ex mero motu*—from his own mere good pleasure, he *remembers* it as he had promised; (Lev. xxvi. 42.) *Then will I remember my covenant, and will remember the land*. He that bids us to be ever mindful of the covenant, no doubt will himself be *ever mindful of it*, the word *which he commanded* (and what he commands stands fast for ever) to a *thousand generations*.

2. How they should be prepared and qualified for this mercy; (v. 61.) "*Thou shalt remember thy ways*, thine evil ways; God will put thee in mind of them, will set them in order before thee, that thou mayest be *ashamed of them*." Note, God's good work in us commences and keeps pace with his good will towards us. When he remembers his covenant *for us*, that he may not remember our sins *against us*, he puts us upon remembering of our sins *against ourselves*. And if we will but be brought to *remember our ways*, how crooked and perverse they have been, and how we have *walked contrary to God* in them, we cannot but be ashamed; and when we are so, we are best prepared to receive the honour and comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

3. What the mercy is, that God has in reserve for them. (1.) He will take them into covenant

with himself; (v. 60.) *I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant*; and again, (v. 62.) *I will establish, re-establish, and establish more firmly than ever, my covenant with thee*. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to all true penitents, that the covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things, that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, for that is inviolable. (2.) He will bring the Gentiles into church-communion with them; (v. 61.) *“Thou shalt receive thy sisters, the Gentile nations that are round about thee, thine elder and thy younger, greater than thou art, and lesser, ancient nations and modern, and I will give them unto thee for daughters, they shall be founded, nursed, taught, and educated, by that gospel, that word of the Lord, which shall go forth from Zion and from Jerusalem; so that all the neighbours shall call Jerusalem mother, while the church continues there, and shall acknowledge the Jerusalem which is from above, and which is free, to be the mother of us all, Gal. iv. 26. They shall be thy daughters, but not by thy covenant, not by the covenant of peculiarity, not as being proselytes to the Jewish religion, and subjects to the yoke of the ceremonial law, but as being converts with thee to the Christian religion.”* Or, *Not by thy covenant*, may mean, “not upon such terms as thou shalt think fit to impose upon them as conquered nations, as captives and homagers to whom thou mayest give law at pleasure;” (such a dominion as that the carnal Jews hope to have over the nations;) “no, they shall be thy daughters *by my covenant*, the covenant of grace made with thee and them in concert, as an indenture tripartite. I will be a Father, a common Father, both to Jews and Gentiles, and so they shall become sisters to one another. And when thou shalt receive them, thou shalt be ashamed of thine own evil ways wherein thou wast conformed to them. Thou shalt blush to look a Gentile in the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thine apostasy.”

4. What the fruit and effect of this will be.

(1.) God will hereby be glorified; (v. 62.) *Thou shalt know that I am the Lord*. It shall hereby be known that the God of Israel is Jehovah, a God of power, and faithful to his covenant; and *thou shalt know it*, who hast hitherto lived as if thou didst not know or believe it. It had often been said in wrath, *Ye shall know that I am the Lord*, shall know it to your cost; here it is said in mercy, *Ye shall know it to your comfort*; and it is one of the most precious promises of the new covenant which God has made with us, that *all shall know him from the least to the greatest*.

(2.) They shall hereby be more humbled and abased for sin; (v. 63.) *“That thou mayest be the more confounded at the remembrance of all that thou hast done amiss, mayest reproach thyself for it, and call thyself a thousand times unwise, undutiful, ungrateful, and unlike what thou wast, and mayest never open thy mouth any more in contradiction to God, reflection on him, or complaints of him, but mayest be for ever silent and submissive because of thy shame.”* Note, Those that rightly remember their sins, will be truly ashamed of them; and those that are truly ashamed of their sins, will see great reason to be patient under their afflictions; to be dumb, and not open their mouths against what God does. But that which is most observable, is, that all this shall be *when I am pacified toward thee, saith the Lord God*. Note, It is the gracious ingenuousness of true penitents, that, the clearer evidences and the fuller instances they have of God’s being reconciled to them, the more grieved and ashamed they are that ever they have offended. God is in Jesus Christ *pacified toward us*; he is our Peace, and it is by his cross that we are reconciled,

and in his gospel that God is reconciling the world to himself: now the consideration of this should be powerful to melt our hearts into a godly sorrow for sin. This is repenting because *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The prodigal, after he had received the kiss which assured him that his father was *pacified toward him*, was ashamed and confounded, and said, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee*. And the more our shame for sin is increased by the sense of pardoning mercy, the more will our comfort in God be increased.

## CHAP. XVII.

God was, in the foregoing chapter, reckoning with the people of Judah and bringing ruin upon them, for their treachery in breaking covenant with him; in this chapter he is reckoning with the king of Judah, for his treachery in breaking covenant with the king of Babylon; for when God came to contend with them, he found many grounds of his controversy. The thing was now in doing; Zedekiah was practising with the king of Egypt underhand for assistance in a treacherous project he had formed to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and violate the homage and fealty he had sworn to him. For this, God by the prophet here, 1. Threatens the ruin of him and his kingdom, by a parable of two eagles and a vine, (v. 1. . 10.) and the explanation of that parable, v. 11. . 21. But, in the close, 11. He promises hereafter to raise the royal family of Judah again, the house of David, in the Messiah and his kingdom, v. 22. . 24.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: 4. He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants. 5. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow-tree; 6. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. 7. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers; and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. 8. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. 9. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord God, Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power, or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. 10. Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew. 11. Moreover, the word of

the LORD came unto me, saying, 12. Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these *things mean?* tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon: 13. And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land: 14. That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, *but* that by keeping of his covenant it might stand. 15. But he rebelled against him, in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such *things*? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? 16. *As I live*, saith the Lord God, surely in the place *where* the king *dwelleth* that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, *even* with him, in the midst of Babylon, he shall die. 17. Neither shall Pharaoh with *his* mighty army and great company, make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons: 18. Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these *things*, he shall not escape. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, *As I live*, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. 20. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. 21. And all his fugitives, with all his bands, shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered towards all winds; and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it*.

We must take all these verses together, that we may have the parable and the explanation of it at one view before us, because they will illustrate one another.

I. The prophet is appointed to *put forth a riddle to the house of Israel*; (v. 2.) not to puzzle them, as Samson's riddle was put forth to the Philistines, not to hide the mind of God from them in obscurity, or to leave them in uncertainty about it, one advancing one conjecture and another another, as is usual in expounding riddles; no, he is immediately to tell them the meaning of it. *Let him that speaks in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret*, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. But he must deliver his message in a riddle or parable, that they might take the more notice of it, might be the more affected with it themselves, and might the better remember it, and tell it to others. For these reasons God often used similitudes by his servants the prophets, and Christ himself *opened his mouth in parables*. Riddles and parables are used for an amusement to ourselves,

and an entertainment to our friends; the prophet must make use of these, to see if in *this dress* the things of God might find acceptance, and *insinuate* themselves into the minds of a careless people. Note, Ministers should study to find out acceptable words, and try various methods to do good; and, as far as they have reason to think will be for edification, should both bring that which is familiar into their preaching, and their preaching too into their familiar discourse; that there may not be so vast a dissimilitude as with some there is between what they say in the pulpit and what they say out.

II. He is appointed to expound this riddle to the *rebellious house*; (v. 12.) though, being *rebellious*, they might justly have been left in ignorance, to see and hear, and not perceive, yet the thing shall be explained to them; *Know ye not what these things mean?* They that knew the story, and what was now in agitation, might make a shrewd guess at the meaning of this riddle, but, that they might be left *without excuse*, he is to give it them in plain terms, stripped of the metaphor. But the enigma was first propounded for them to study on awhile, and to send to their friends at Jerusalem, that they might inquire after and expect the solution of it some time after.

Let us now see what the matter of this message is:

1. Nebuchadnezzar had some time ago carried off Jehoiachin, the same that was called *Jeconiah*, when he was but eighteen years of age, and had reigned in Jerusalem but *three months*, him and his princes and great men, and had brought them captives to Babylon, 2 Kings xxiv. 12. This in the parable is represented by an eagle's cropping the top and tender branch of a cedar, and carrying it into a *land of traffic*, a *city of merchants*, (v. 3, 4.) which is explained, v. 12. The king of Babylon took the king of Jerusalem, who was no more able to resist him than a young twig of a tree is to contend with the strongest bird of prey, that easily crops it off, perhaps toward the making of *her nest*. Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel's vision, is a *lion*, the king of beasts; (Dan. vii. 4.) there he has *eagle's wings*, so swift were his motions, so speedy were his conquests. Here, in this parable, he is an *eagle*, the king of birds; a *great eagle*, that lives upon spoil and rapine, whose young ones *suck up blood*, Job xxxix. 30. His dominion extends itself far and wide, like the *great and long wings* of an eagle; the people are numerous, for it is *full of feathers*; the court splendid, for it has *divers colours*, which look like *embroidering*, as the word is. Jerusalem is Lebanon, a forest of houses, and very pleasant; the royal family is the *cedar*, Jehoiachin is the *top branch*, the *top of the young twigs*, which he crops off; Babylon is the *land of traffic*, and *city of merchants* where it is set. And the king of Judah, being of the house of David, will think himself much degraded and disgraced to be lodged among tradesmen; but he must make the best of it.

2. When he carried him to Babylon, he made his uncle Zedekiah king in his room, v. 5, 6. His name was *Mattaniah—the gift of the Lord*, which Nebuchadnezzar changed into *Zedekiah—the justice of the Lord*, to remind him to be *just like the God* he called *his*, for fear of his justice. This was *one of the seed of the land*, a native, not a foreigner, not one of his Babylonian princes; he was *planted in a fruitful field*, for so Jerusalem as yet was; he *placed it by great waters*, where it would be likely to grow, like a *willow-tree*, which grows quick, and grows best in moist ground, but is never designed or expected to be a stately tree. He *set it with care and circumspection*; (so some read it;) he wisely provided that it might grow, but that it might not grow too big. He *took of the king's seed*, (so it is explained, v. 13.) and *made a covenant with him*, that

he should have the kingdom, and enjoy the regal power and dignity, provided he held it as his vassal, dependent on him, and accountable to him. He *took an oath of him*, made him swear allegiance to him, swear by his own God, the God of Israel, that he would be a faithful tributary to him, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13. He also *took away the mighty of the land*, the chief of the men of war, partly as hostages for the performance of the covenant, and partly that, the land being thereby weakened, the king might be the less able, and therefore the less in temptation, to break his league. What he designed we are told, v. 14. *That the kingdom might be base*, in respect both of honour and strength, might neither be a rival with its *powerful* neighbours, nor a terror to its *feeble* ones, as it had been, that *it might not lift up itself* to vie with the kingdom of Babylon, or to bear down any of the petty states that were in subjection to it. But yet he designed that *by keeping of this covenant it might stand*, and continue a kingdom. Hereby the pride and ambition of that haughty potentate would be gratified, who aimed to be *like the Most High*, (Isa. xiv. 14.) to have all about him subject to him. Now see here, (1.) How sad a change sin made with the royal family of Judah; time was when all the nations about were tributaries to that, now that has not only lost its dominion over other nations, but is itself become a tributary. *How is the gold become dim!* Nations by sin sell their liberty, and princes their dignity, and *profane their crowns by casting them to the ground*. (2.) How wisely Zedekiah did for himself in accepting these terms, though they were dishonourable, when necessity brought him to it. A man may live very comfortably and contentedly, though he cannot bear a part, and make a figure, as formerly. A kingdom may stand firm and safe, though it do not stand so high as it has sometimes done; and so may a family.

3. Zedekiah, while he continued faithful to the king of Babylon, did very well, and if he would but have reformed his kingdom, and returned to God and his duty, he had done better, and by that means might soon have recovered his former dignity, v. 6. This plant grew, and though it was *set as a willow-tree*, and little account was made of it, yet it became a *spreading vine of low stature*, a great blessing to his own country, and his fruits *making glad their hearts*; and it is better to be a spreading vine of low stature than a lofty cedar of no use. Nebuchadnezzar was pleased, for *the branches turned toward him*, and rested on him as the vine on the wall, and he had his share of the fruits of this vine; *the roots thereof* too were *under him*, and at his disposal. The Jews had reason to be pleased, for they sat under their own vine, which *brought forth branches*, and *shot forth sprigs*, and looked pleasant and promising. See how gradually the judgments of God came upon this provoking people; how God gave them respite, and so gave them space to repent. He made *their kingdom base*, to try if that would humble them, before he made it no kingdom; yet left it *easy* for them, to try if that would win upon them to return to him, that the troubles threatened might be prevented.

4. Zedekiah knew not when he was well off, but grew impatient of the disgrace of being a tributary to the king of Babylon, and, to get clear of it, entered into a private league with the king of Egypt. He had no reason to complain that the king of Babylon put any new hardships upon him, or improved his advantages against him, that he oppressed or impoverished his country, for, as the prophet had said before, (v. 6.) to aggravate his treachery, he shows again, (v. 8.) what a fair way he was in to be considerable; *He was planted in a good soil by great waters*, his family was likely enough to be

built up, and his exchequer to be filled, in a little time, so that, if he had dealt faithfully, he might have been a *goodly vine*. But there was *another great eagle* that he had an affection for, and put a confidence in, and that was the *king of Egypt*, v. 7. Those two great potentates, the kings of Babylon and Egypt, were but two eagles, *birds of prey*. This great eagle of Egypt is said to have *great wings*, but not to be *long-winged* as the king of Babylon, because, though the kingdom of Egypt was strong, yet it was not of such a vast extent as that of Babylon was. The great eagle is said to have *many feathers*, much wealth, and many soldiers, which he depended upon as a substantial defence, but which really were no more than so *many feathers*. Zedekiah, promising himself liberty, made himself a vassal to the king of Egypt, foolishly expecting ease by changing his master. Now *this vine* did secretly and underhand *bend her roots toward* the king of Egypt, that great eagle, and after a while did openly *shoot forth her branches toward him*, gave him an intimation how much she coveted an alliance with him, *that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation*, whereas it was *planted by great waters*, and did not need any assistance from him. This is expounded, v. 15. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon in *sending his ambassadors into Egypt*, that they might *give him horses and much people*, to enable him to contend with the king of Babylon. See what a change sin had made with the people of God! God promised that they should be a numerous people, as the sand of the sea; yet now, if their king had occasion for *much people*, he must send to Egypt for them, they being for sin *minished and brought low*, Ps. cvii. 39. See also the folly of fretful, discontented spirits, that *ruin themselves* by striving to *mend themselves*, whereas they might be easy and happy enough if they would but *make the best of that which is*.

5. God here threatens Zedekiah with the utter destruction of him and his kingdom, and, in displeasure against him, passes that doom upon him for his treacherous revolt from the king of Babylon. This is represented in the parable, (v. 9, 10.) by the *plucking up of this vine by the roots*, the *cutting off the fruit*, and the *withering of the leaves*, the leaves of *her spring*, when they are in their greenness, (Job viii. 12.) before they begin in autumn to wither of themselves. The project shall be blasted, it shall *utterly wither*, the affairs of this perfidious prince shall be ruined past retrieve; as a vine when the east wind blasts it, so that it shall be fit for nothing but the fire, (as we had it in that parable, ch. xv. 4.) it shall wither even in the *furrows where it grew*, though they were ever so well watered. It shall be destroyed *without great power or many people to pluck it up*; for what need is there of raising the militia to pluck up a vine? Note, God can bring great things to pass without ado; he needs not *great power and many people* to effect his purposes, a handful will serve if he pleases. He can without any difficulty ruin a sinful king and kingdom, and make no more of it than we do of rooting up a tree that cumbers the ground.

In the explanation of the parable the sentence is very largely recorded; *Shall he prosper?* (v. 15.) Can he expect to do ill, and fare well? Nay, shall he that does such wicked things *escape*? Shall he *break the covenant*, and be delivered from that vengeance which is the just punishment of his treachery? No, can he expect to do ill, and not suffer ill? Let him hear his doom:

(1.) It is ratified by the oath of God; (v. 16.) *As I live, saith the Lord God, he shall die* for it. This intimates how highly God resented the crime, and how sure and severe the punishment of it would be.

God swears in his wrath, as he did, Ps. xcvi. 11. Note, As God's promises are confirmed with an oath, for comfort to the saints, so are his threatenings, for terror to the wicked. As sure as God lives, and is happy, I may add, and as long, so sure, so long, shall impenitent sinners die, and be miserable.

(2.) It is justified by the heinousness of the crime he had been guilty of. [1.] He had been very *ungrateful* to his benefactor, who had *made him king*, and undertook to protect him, had made him a *prince*, when he might as easily have made him a *prisoner*. Note, It is a sin against God to be unkind to our friends, and to lift up the heel against those that have helped to raise us. [2.] He had been very *false* to him whom he had covenanted with; this is mostly insisted on. He *despised the oath*; when his conscience or friends reminded him of it, he made a jest of it, put on a daring resolution and *broke it*, v. 15, 16, 18, 19. He broke through it, and took a pride in making nothing of it, as a great tyrant in our own day, whose maxim (they say) it is, *That princes ought not to be slaves to their word any further than is for their interest*. That which aggravated Zedekiah's perfidiousness was, that the oath by which he had bound himself to the king of Babylon, was, *First, A solemn oath*; an emphasis is laid upon this, (v. 18.) *When, lo, he had given his hand*, as a confederate with the king of Babylon, not only as his *subject*, but as his *friend*; the joining of hands being a token of the joining of hearts. *Secondly, A sacred oath*. God says, (v. 19.) It is *mine oath* that he has despised, and *my covenant that he has broken*. In every *solemn oath* God is appealed to as a Witness of the sincerity of him that swears, and invoked as a Judge and Revenger of his treachery if he now swear falsely, or at any time hereafter break his oath. But the oath of allegiance to a prince is particularly called *the oath of God*, (Eccl. viii. 2.) as if that had something in it more sacred than another oath; for princes are *ministers of God to us for good*, Rom. xiii. 4. Now Zedekiah's breaking this oath and covenant is the sin which God will *recompense upon his own head*, (v. 19.) *the trespass which he has trespassed against God*, for which God will *plead with him*, v. 20. Note, Perjury is a heinous sin, and highly provoking to the God of heaven. It would not serve for an excuse, 1. That he who took this oath was a *king*, a king of the house of David, whose liberty and dignity might surely set him above the obligation of oaths; no, though kings are gods to us, they are men to God, and not exempt from his law and judgment. The prince is doubtless as firmly bound before God to the people by his coronation-oath, as the people to the prince by the oath of allegiance. 2. Nor that this oath was sworn to the king of Babylon, a heathen prince, worse than a heretic, with whom the church of Rome says, *No faith is to be kept*; no, though Nebuchadnezzar was a worshipper of false gods, yet the true God will avenge this quarrel when one of his worshippers breaks his league with him; for truth is a debt owing to *all men*; and if the professors of the true religion deal perfidiously with those of a false religion, their profession will be so far from excusing, much less justifying, them, that it aggravates their sin, and God will the more surely and severely punish it, because by it they give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; as that Mahometan prince, who, when the Christians broke their league with him, cried out, *O Jesus, are these thy Christians?* 3. Nor would it justify him, that the oath was extorted from him by a conqueror, for the covenant was *made upon a valuable consideration*. He held his life and crown upon this condition, that he should be faithful and bear true allegiance to the king of Babylon; and if he enjoy the benefit of his bargain, it is very unjust

if he do not observe the terms. Let him know then that, having *despised the oath*, and *broken the covenant*, he *shall not escape*. And if the contempt and violation of such an oath, such a covenant as this, would be so punished, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who break covenant with God, (when *lo, they had given their hand upon it* that they would be faithful,) who *tread under foot the blood* of that covenant as an unholy thing? Betwixt the covenants there is no comparison.

(3.) It is particularized in divers instances, wherein the *punishment* is made to *answer the sin*. [1.] He had rebelled against the king of Babylon, and the king of Babylon should be his *effectual conqueror*; in the place where that king *dwells*, whose *covenant he broke*, even *with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die*, v. 16. He thinks to get out of his hands, but he shall fall, more than before, *into his hands*. God himself will now take part with the king of Babylon against him; *I will spread my net upon him*, v. 20. God has a net for those who deal perfidiously, and think to escape his righteous judgments, in which they shall be taken and held, who would not be held by the bond of an oath and covenant. Zedekiah dreaded Babylon; "Thither will I bring him," says God, "and *plead with him there*." Men will justly be *forced upon* that calamity which they endeavour by sin to *flee from*. [2.] He had *relied upon the king of Egypt*, and the king of Egypt should be his ineffectual helper. *Pharaoh with his mighty army shall not make for him in the war*, (v. 17.) shall do him no service, nor give any check to the progress of the Chaldean forces; he shall not assist him in the *siege* by *casting up mounts and building forts*, nor in battle by *cutting off many persons*. Note, Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and he commonly weakens and withers that *arm of flesh* which we trust in, and stay ourselves upon. Now was again fulfilled what was spoken on a former like occasion, (Isa. xxx. 7.) *The Egyptians shall help in vain*. They did so; for, though upon the approach of the Egyptian army, the Chaldeans withdrew from the siege of Jerusalem, upon their retreat they returned to it again, and took it. It should seem, the Egyptians were not hearty, had strength enough, but no good will to help Zedekiah. Note, Those who deal treacherously with those who put confidence in them, will justly be dealt treacherously with by those they put a confidence in. Yet the Egyptians were not the only states Zedekiah stayed himself upon; he had *bands* of his own to stand by him; but those *bands*, though we may suppose they were veteran troops, and the best soldiers his kingdom afforded, shall become *fugitives*, shall quit their posts, and make the best of their way, and shall *fall by the sword* of the enemy; and the *remains of them shall be scattered*, v. 21. This was fulfilled *when the city was broken up*, and *all the men of war fled*, Jer. lii. 7. Then ye shall know that *I the Lord have spoken it*. Note, Sooner or later, God's word will prove itself; and those who will not believe, shall find by experience the reality and weight of it.

22. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent: 23. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing;



in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. 24. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken, and have done it.

When the royal family of Judah was brought to desolation by the captivity of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, it might be asked, "What is now become of the covenant of royalty made with David, that *his children should sit upon his throne for evermore?* Do the *sure mercies* of David prove thus *unsure?*" To which it is sufficient, for the silencing of the objectors, to answer, that the promise was conditional; *If they will keep my covenant*, then they shall continue, Ps. cxxxii. 12. But David's posterity broke the condition, and so forfeited the promise. But the unbelief of man shall not invalidate the promise of God. He will find out another *Seed of David*, in which it shall be accomplished; and that is promised in these verses.

1. The house of David shall again be *magnified*, and out of its ashes another phoenix shall arise. The metaphor of a tree, which was made use of in the threatening, is here presented in the promise, v. 22, 23. This promise had its accomplishment in part, when Zerubbabel, a branch of the house of David, was raised up to *head* the Jews in their return out of captivity, and to rebuild the city and temple, and re-establish their church and state; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, who was a Root out of a dry ground, and to whom God, according to promise, gave *the throne of his father David*, Luke i. 32.

1. God himself undertakes the reviving and restoring of the house of David. Nebuchadnezzar was the *great eagle* that had attempted the re-establishing of the house of David, in a dependence upon him, v. 5. But the attempt miscarried; his plantation withered, and was plucked up; "Well," says God, "the next shall be of my planting, *I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and I will set it.*" Note, As men have *their* designs, God also has *his* designs; but *his* will prosper when *theirs* are blasted. Nebuchadnezzar prided himself in setting up kingdoms at his pleasure, Dan. v. 19. But those kingdoms soon had an end, whereas the *God of heaven sets up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed*, Dan. ii. 44.

2. The house of David is revived in a *tender one* *cropped from the top of his young twigs*; Zerubbabel was so; that which was hopeful in him, was but the *day of small things*, (Zech. iv. 10.) yet before him *great mountains were made plain*. Our Lord Jesus was the *highest Branch of the high cedar*, the *furthest* of all from the *root*; for, soon after he appeared, the *house of David* was all cut off and extinguished, but the nearest of all to heaven, for his kingdom was not of this world. He was *taken from the top of the young twigs*, for he is the *Man, the Branch, a tender Plant, and a Root out of a dry ground*, (Isa. liii. 2.) but a *Branch of righteousness*, the *planting of the Lord*, that he may be glorified.

3. This branch is planted in a *high mountain*, (v. 22.) in the *mountain of the height of Israel*; (v. 23.) thither he brought Zerubbabel in triumph, there he raised up his son Jesus, sent him to gather the *lost sheep of the house of Israel* that were scattered upon the mountains, set him his *King* upon his *holy hill of Zion*, sent forth the gospel from *mount Zion*, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; there, in the *height of Israel*, a nation which all its neighbours had an eye upon as *conspicuous* and *illustrious*, was the Christian church first planted;

the churches of Judea were the most primitive churches. The unbelieving Jews did what they could to prevent its being planted there; but who can pluck up what God will plant?

4. From thence it spreads far and wide. The Jewish state, though it began very low in Zerubbabel's time, was set as a tender branch, which might easily be plucked up, yet took root, spread strangely, and after some time became very considerable; those of other nations, *fowl of every wing*, put themselves under the protection of it. The Christian church was at first like a grain of mustard seed, but became like this tender branch here, a great tree; its beginning small, but its latter end increasing to admiration. When the Gentiles flocked into the church, then did the *fowl of every wing* (even the birds of prey, which those preyed upon, as the *wolf and the lamb* feeding together, Isa. xii. 6.) come and dwell under the shadow of this goodly cedar. See Dan. iv. 21.

II. God himself will herein be glorified, v. 24. The setting up of the Messiah's kingdom in the world shall discover more clearly than ever to the children of men that *God is the King of all the earth*, Ps. xlvii. 7. Never was there a more full conviction given of this truth, that all things are governed by an infinitely wise and mighty Providence, than that which was given by the exaltation of Christ, and the establishment of his kingdom among men; for by that it appeared that God has all hearts in his hand, and the sovereign disposal of all affairs. *All the trees of the field shall know*, 1. That the tree which God will have to be *brought down, and dried up*, shall be so, though it be ever so *high* and stately, ever so *green* and flourishing. Neither honour nor wealth, neither external advancements nor internal endowments, will secure men from humbling, withering providences. 2. That the trees which God will have to be *exalted* and to *flourish*, shall so be, shall so do, though ever so *low*, and ever so *dry*. The house of Nebuchadnezzar, that now makes so great a figure, shall be extirpated, and the house of David, that now makes so mean a figure, shall become famous again; and the Jewish nation, that is now despicable, shall be considerable. The kingdom of Satan, that has borne so long, so large a sway, shall be broken, and the kingdom of Christ, that was looked upon with contempt, shall be established. The Jews, who, in respect of church-privileges, had been *high and green*, shall be thrown out, and the Gentiles, who had been low and dry trees, shall be taken in their room, Isa. liv. 1. All the enemies of Christ shall be abased, and made his footstool, and his interests shall be confirmed and advanced; *I the Lord have spoken*, it is the decree, the declared decree, that Christ must be exalted, must be the Head-Stone of the corner, and *I have done it*, I will do it in due time, but it is as sure to be done as if it were done already. With men *saying and doing are two things*, but they are not so with God. What he *has spoken* we may be sure that he *will do*, nor shall one iota or tittle of his word fall to the ground, for he is not a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent either of his threatenings or of his promises.

## CHAP. XVIII.

Perhaps, in reading some of the chapters foregoing, we may have been tempted to think ourselves not much concerned in them; (though they also were written for our learning;) but this chapter, at first view, appears highly and nearly to concern us all—very highly, very nearly; for without particular reference to Judah and Jerusalem, it lays down the rule of judgment according to which God will deal with the children of men in determining them to their everlasting state; and it agrees with that very ancient rule laid down, Gen. iv. 7. *If thou dost*

*well, shalt thou not be accepted? But, if not, sin, the punishment of sin, lies at the door.* Here is, 1. The corrupt proverb used by the profane Jews, which gave occasion to the message here sent them, and made it necessary for the justifying of God in his dealings with them, v. 1. . 3. 2. The reply given to this proverb, in which God asserts in general his own sovereignty and justice, v. 4. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with them, v. 4, 20. But say to the righteous, It shall be well with them, v. 5. . 9. In particular, as to the case complained of, he assures us, 1. That it shall be ill with a wicked man, though he had a good father, v. 10. . 13. 2. That it shall be well with a good man, though he had a wicked father, v. 14. . 18. And therefore, in this, God is righteous, v. 19, 20. 3. That it shall be well with penitents, though they began ever so ill, (v. 21. . 23.) and again, v. 27, 28. 4. That it shall be ill with apostates, though they began ever so well, v. 24, 26. And the use of all this is, (1.) To justify God, and clear the equity of all his proceedings, v. 25, 29. (2.) To engage and encourage us to repent of our sins, and turn to God, v. 30. . 32. And these are things which *belong to our everlasting peace.* O that we may understand and regard them before they be *hid from our eyes!*

1. **AND** the word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 2. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? 3. *As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.* 4. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. 5. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, 6. *And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,* 7. And hath not oppressed any, *but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;* 8. *He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,* 9. *Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God.*

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; and in like manner sometimes unjust reflections occasion just vindications; evil proverbs beget good prophecies. Here is,

1. An *evil proverb* commonly used by the Jews in their captivity. We had one before, (ch. xii. 22.) and a reply to it; here we have another. That sets God's justice at defiance, *The days are prolonged, and every vision fails.* The threatenings are a jest. This charges him with injustice, as if the judgments executed were a *wrong*; "You use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, now that it is laid waste by the judgments of God, saying, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;*" we are punished for the sins of our ancestors, which is as great an absurdity in the divine regimen, as if the children should have

their teeth set on edge, or stupified, by the fathers' eating sour grapes, whereas, in the order of natural causes, if men eat or drink any thing amiss, they only themselves shall suffer by it. Now, 1. It must be owned that there was some occasion given for this proverb. God had often said that he would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, intending thereby to express the evils of sin, or of that sin, his detestation of it, and just indignation against it, and the heavy punishments he would bring upon idolaters, and that parents might be restrained from sin by their affection to their children, and that children might not be drawn to sin by their reverence for their parents. He had likewise often declared by his prophets, that in bringing the present ruin upon Judah and Jerusalem he had an eye to the sins of Manasseh and other preceding kings; for looking upon the nation as a body politic, and punishing them with national judgments for national sins, and admitting the maxim in our law, that a corporation never dies, reckoning with them now for the iniquities of former ages, was but like making a man, when he is old, to possess the iniquities of his youth, Job xiii. 26. And there is no unrighteousness with God in doing so. But, 2. They intended it as a reflection upon God, and an impeachment of his equity in his proceedings against them. Thus far that is right, which is implied in this proverbial saying, That they who are guilty of wilful sin, eat sour grapes, they do that which they will feel from, sooner or later. The grapes may look well enough in the temptation, but they will be bitter as bitterness itself in the reflection. They will set the sinner's teeth on edge; when conscience is awake, and sets the sin in order before them, it will spoil the relish of their comforts as when the teeth are set on edge. But they suggest it as unreasonable that the children should smart for the father's folly, and feel the pain of that which they never tasted the pleasure of, and that God was unrighteous in thus taking vengeance, and could not justify it. See how *wicked* the reflection is, how daring the impudence; yet see how *witty* it is, and how *sly* the comparison. Many that are *impious* in their jeers, are ingenious in their jests; and thus the malice of hell against God and religion is insinuated and propagated. It is here put into a proverb, and that proverb used, commonly used, they had it up ever and anon. And though it had plainly a blasphemous meaning, yet they sheltered themselves under the similitude from the imputation of downright blasphemy. Now by this it appears that they were *unhumbled* under the rod, for, instead of condemning themselves and justifying God, they condemned him and justified themselves; but *wo to him that thus strives with his Maker.*

1. A just reproof of, and reply to, this proverb; *What mean ye to use it? That is the reproof;* "Do you intend hereby to try it out with God? Or can you think any other than that you will hereby provoke him to be angry with you till he has consumed you? Is this the way to reconcile yourselves to him, and make your peace with him?" The reply follows, in which God tells them,

1. That the use of the proverb should be taken away. This is said, it is sworn; (v. 3.) *Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb;* or, as it may be read, *Ye shall not have the use of this parable.* The taking away of this parable is made the matter of a promise; Jer. xxxi. 29. Here it is made the matter of a threatening; there it intimates that God will return to them in ways of mercy; here it intimates that God would proceed against them in ways of judgment. He will so punish them for this impudent saying, that they shall not dare to use it any more; as in another case Jer. xxiii. 34,

36. God will find out effectual ways to silence those cavillers. Or, God will so manifest both to themselves and others that they have wickedness of their own enough to bring all these desolating judgments upon them, that they shall no longer for shame lay it upon the sins of their fathers that they were thus dealt with; "Your own consciences shall tell you, and all your neighbours shall confirm it, that you yourselves have eaten the same *sour grapes* that your fathers ate before you, or else *your teeth* had not been *set on edge*."

2. That really the saying itself was *unjust*, and a causeless reflection upon God's government. For, (1.) God does not punish the children for their fathers' sins, unless they tread in their steps, and *fill up the measure of their iniquity*, (Matth. xxiii. 32.) and then they have no reason to complain, for, whatever they suffer, it is less than their *own sin* has deserved. And when God speaks of *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*, that is so far from putting any hardship upon children, to whom he only renders *according to their works*, that it accounts for God's patience with the parents, whom he therefore does not punish immediately, because he *lays up their iniquity for their children*, Job xxi. 19. (2.) It is only in temporal calamities that children (and sometimes innocent ones) fare the worse for their parents' wickedness, and God can alter the property of those calamities, and make them work for good to those that are visited with them; but as to spiritual and eternal misery, (and that is the death here spoken of,) the children shall by no means smart for the parents' sins. This is here showed at large; and it is a wonderful piece of condescension, that the great God is pleased to *reason the case* with such *wicked and unreasonable men*, that he did not immediately strike them dumb or dead, but vouchsafed to state the matter before them, that he may be *clear when he is judged*. Now, in his reply,

[1.] He asserts and maintains his own absolute and uncontested sovereignty; *Behold, all souls are mine*, v. 4. God here claims a property in all the souls of the children of men, one as well as another; *First, Souls are his*. He that is the Maker of *all things*, is in a particular manner the *Father of spirits*, for his image is stamped on the souls of men; it was so in their creation, it is so in their renovation. He *forms the spirit of man within him*, and is therefore called the *God of the spirits of all flesh*, of embodied spirits. *Secondly, All souls are his*, all created by him and for him, and accountable to him. *As the soul of the father, so the soul of the son, is mine*. Our earthly parents are only the *fathers of our flesh*, our souls are not *theirs*, God challenges them. Now from hence it follows, for the clearing of this matter, 1. That *God may certainly do what he pleases* both with fathers and children, and none may say unto him, *What dost thou!* He that gave us our being does us no wrong if he takes it away again, much less when he only takes away some of the supports and comforts of it; it is as absurd to quarrel with him as for the thing *formed to say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* 2. That God as certainly *bears a good will* both to father and son, and will put no hardship upon either. We are sure that God hates nothing that he has made, and therefore (speaking of the adult who are capable of acting for themselves) he has such a kindness for *all souls*, that none die but through their own default. *All souls are his*, and therefore he is not partial in his judgment of them. Let us subscribe to 'his interest in us, and dominion over us. He says, *All souls are mine*; let us answer, "Lord, my soul is thine, I devote it to thee to be employed for thee, and made happy in thee." It is with good reason that God says, "*My son, give me thy heart*, for it is

my own;" to which we must yield; "*Father, take my heart*, it is thy own."

[2.] Though God might justify himself, by insisting upon his sovereignty, yet he waves that, and lays down the equitable and unexceptionable rule of judgment, by which he will proceed as to particular persons; and it is this,

*First*, The sinner that persists in sin *shall certainly die*, his iniquity shall be his ruin. *The soul that sins, it shall die*, shall die as a soul can die, shall be excluded from the favour of God, which is the life and bliss of the soul, and shall lie for ever under his wrath, which is its death and misery. Sin is the act of the *soul*, the body is but the *instrument of unrighteousness*, it is called the *sin of the soul*, Mic. vi. 7. And therefore the punishment of sin is the *tribulation and anguish of the soul*, Rom. ii. 9.

*Secondly*, The *righteous man* that perseveres in his righteousness, *shall certainly live*. *If a man be just*, have a good principle, a good spirit and disposition, and, as an evidence of that, *do judgment and justice*, (v. 5.) *he shall surely live*, saith the Lord God, v. 9. He that makes conscience of conforming himself in every thing to the will of God, that makes it his business to serve God, and his aim to glorify God, he shall without fail be happy here, and for ever in the love and favour of God; and wherein he comes short of his duty, it shall be forgiven him, through a Mediator.

Now here is part of the character of this just man.

1. He is careful to keep himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and at a distance from all the appearances of evil.

(1.) From sins against the *second commandment*. In the matters of God's worship he is jealous, for he knows God is so. He has not only not *sacrificed* in the high places to the images there set up, but he has not so much as *eaten upon the mountains*, not had any communion with idolaters by *eating things sacrificed to idols*, 1 Cor. x. 20. He would not only not kneel with them at their altars, but not sit with them at their tables in their high places. He detests not only the idols of the heathen, but *the idols of the house of Israel*, which were not only allowed of, but generally applauded and adored, by those that were accounted the professing people of God. He has not only not worshipped those idols, but he has not so much as *lifted up his eyes* to them; he has not given them a favourable look, has had no regard at all to them, neither desired their favour, nor dreaded their frowns. He has observed so many bewitched by them, that he has not dared so much as to look at them, lest he should be taken in the snare. The eyes of idolaters are said to *go a whoring*, Ezek. vi. 9. See Deut. iv. 19.

(2.) From sins against the *seventh commandment*. He is careful to possess his vessel in *sanctification and honour*, and not in the *lusts of uncleanness*; and therefore he has not dared to *defile his neighbour's wife*, nor said or done any thing which had the least tendency to corrupt or debauch her, no, nor will he make any undue approaches to his own wife when she is *put apart for her uncleanness*, for it was forbidden by the law, Lev. xviii. 19.—xx. 18. Note, It is an essential branch of wisdom and justice to keep the appetite of the body always in subjection to reason and virtue.

(3.) From sins against the *eighth commandment*. He is a *just man*, who has not, by fraud and under colour of law and right, *oppressed any*, and who has not with force and arms *spoiled any by violence*; not spoiled them of their goods or estates, much less of their liberties and lives, v. 7. Oppression and violence were the sins of the old world, that brought the deluge, and are sins of which still God is, and will be, the Avenger. Nay, he is one that

has not lent his money *upon usury*, nor taken *increase*, (v. 8.) though, being done by contract, it may seem free from injustice, (*Volenti non fit injuria*—*What is done to a person with his own consent, is no injury to him*,) yet, as far as it is forbidden by the law, he dares not do it. A moderate usury they were allowed to receive from strangers, but not from their brethren. A just man will not take advantage of his neighbour's necessity to make a prey of him, nor indulge himself in ease and idleness, to live upon the sweat and toil of others, and therefore will not *take increase* from those who cannot *make increase* of what he lends them; nor be rigorous in exacting what was agreed for from those who by the act of God are disabled to pay it; but he is willing to share in loss as well as profit; *Qui sentit commodum, sentire debet et onus*—*He who enjoys the benefit, should bear the burthen*.

2. He makes conscience of doing the duties of his place. He has *restored the pledge* to the poor debtor, according to the law, (Exod. xxii. 26.) "*If thou take thy neighbour's raiment for a pawn, the raiment that is for necessary use, thou shalt deliver it to him again, that he may sleep in his own bed-clothes*." Nay, he has not only restored to the poor that which was their own, but has *given his bread to the hungry*. Observe, It is called *his bread*, because it is honestly come by; that which is given to some, is not unjustly taken from others; for God has said, *I hate robbery for burnt-offerings*. Worldly men insist upon it, that their bread is *their own*, as Nabal, who therefore would not give of it to David; (1 Sam. xxv. 11.) yet let them know that it is not so their own but that they are bound to do good to others with it. Clothes are necessary as well as food, and therefore this *just man* is so charitable as to *cover the naked also with a garment*, v. 7. The coats which Dorcas had made for the poor were produced as witnesses of her charity, Acts ix. 39. This just man has *withdrawn his hands from iniquity*; (v. 8.) if at any time he has been drawn in through inadvertency to that which afterward has appeared to him to be a wrong thing, he does not persist in it, because he has begun it, but *withdraws his hand* from that which he now perceives to be *iniquity*; for he *executes true judgment between man and man*, according as his opportunity is of doing it; as a judge, as a witness, as a jurymen, as a referee, and in all commerce, is concerned that justice be done, that no man be wronged, that he who is wronged be righted, and that every man have his own, and is ready to interpose himself, and do any good office, in order hereunto. This is his character toward his neighbour; yet it will not suffice that he be just and true to his *brother*, to complete his character, he must be so to his *God* likewise, v. 9. *He has walked in my statutes*, those which relate to the duties of his immediate worship, *he has kept* those and all his other *judgments*, has had respect to them all, has made it his constant care and endeavour to *conform* and *come up* to them all, to deal truly, that so he may approve himself faithful to his covenant with God, and, having joined himself to God, may not treacherously *depart from him*, or *dissemble with him*; this is a just man, and *living he shall live*; he shall certainly live, shall have life, and shall have it more abundantly; shall live truly, live comfortably, live eternally. *Keep the commandments*, and thou shalt *enter into life*, Matth. xix. 17.

10. If he beget a son *that is* a robber, a shedder of blood, and *that* doeth the like to *any* one of these *things*, 11. And that doeth not any of those *duties*, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neigh-

bour's wife, 12. Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, 13. Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him. 14. Now, lo, *if* he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, 15. *That* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, 16. Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, *but* hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, 17. *That* hath taken off his hand from the poor, *that* hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. 18. *As for* his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which *is* not good among his people, *lo*, even he shall die in his iniquity. 19. Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, *and* hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

God, having laid down by the prophet the general rule of judgment, that he will render eternal life to them that *patiently continue in well-doing*, but indignation and wrath to them that do not *obey the truth*, but *obey unrighteousness*, (Rom. ii. 7, 8.) comes, in these verses, to show that men's parentage and relation shall not alter the case either one way or other.

I. He applies it largely, and particularly, both ways. As it was in the royal line of the Kings of Judah, so it often happens in private families, that godly parents have wicked children, and wicked parents have godly children. Now here he shows,

1. That a *wicked* man shall certainly *perish in his iniquity*, though he was the son of a *pius* father. If that righteous man before described *beget a son* whose character is the reverse of his father's, his condition will certainly be so too. (1.) It is supposed, as no uncommon case, but a very melancholy one, that the child of a very godly father, notwithstanding all the instructions given him, the good education he has had, and the needful rebukes that have been given him, and the restraints he has been laid under, after all the pains taken with him, and prayers put up for him, may yet prove notoriously wicked and vile, the grief of his father, the shame

of his family, and the curse and plague of his generation. He is here supposed to allow himself in all these enormities which his good father dreaded and carefully avoided, and to shake off all those good duties which his father made conscience of and took satisfaction in; he undoes all that his father did, and goes counter to his example in every thing. He is here described to be a highwayman, *a robber, and a shedder of blood*; an idolater, *he has eaten upon the mountains*, (v. 11.) and has *lifted up his eyes to the idols*, which his good father never did, and has come at length not only to feast with the idolaters, but to sacrifice with them, which is here called *committing abomination*, for the way of sin is downhill. He is an adulterer, *he has defiled his neighbour's wife*; an oppressor even of *the poor and needy*, he robs the spital, and squeezes those who, he knows, cannot right themselves, and takes a pride and pleasure in trampling upon the weak, and impoverishing those that are poor already. He *takes away from those to whom he should give*. He has *spoiled by violence* and open force, he has *given forth upon usury*, and so spoiled by contract; and *has not restored the pledge*, but unjustly detained it, even when the debt was paid. Let those good parents that have wicked children, not look upon their case as singular; it is a case put here; and by it we see that grace does not run in the blood, nor always attend the means of grace; nor is the race always to the swift, or the battle to the strong, for then the children that are well taught would do well, but God will let us know that his grace is his own, and his Spirit a free Agent, and that though we are tied to give our children a good education, he is not tied to bless it. In this, as much as any thing, appear the power of original sin and the necessity of special grace. (2.) We are here assured that this wicked man shall perish for ever in his iniquity, notwithstanding his being the son of a good father. He may perhaps prosper awhile in the world, for the sake of the piety of his ancestors, but, having *committed all these abominations*, and never repented of them, *he shall not live*, he shall not be happy in the favour of God; though he may escape the sword of men, he shall not escape the curse of God, *he shall surely die*, he shall be for ever miserable; *his blood shall be upon him*, he may thank himself, he is his own destroyer; and his relation to a good father will be so far from standing him in stead, that it will aggravate his sin and his condemnation. It made his sin the more heinous, nay, it made him really the more vile and profligate, and, consequently, will make his misery hereafter the more intolerable.

2. That a righteous man shall be *certainly happy*, though he is the son of a *wicked father*. Though the father did *eat the sour grapes*, if the children do not meddle with them, they shall fare never the worse for that. Here,

(1.) It is supposed, and, blessed be God, it is sometimes a case in fact, that the son of an ungodly father may be godly; that, observing how fatal his father's errors were, he may be so wise as to *take warning*, and not tread in his father's steps, v. 14. Ordinarily, children partake of the parents' temper, and are drawn in to imitate their example; but here the son, instead of *seeing his father's sins*, and, as is usual, doing the like, sees them, and dreads doing the like. Men indeed do not *gather grapes of thorns*, but God sometimes does; takes a branch from a wild olive, and grafts it into a good one. Wicked Ahiz begets a good Hezekiah, who *sees all his father's sins which he has done*, and though he will not, like Ham, proclaim his father's shame, or make the worst of it, yet he loathes it, and blushes at it, and thinks the worse of sin because it was the reproach and ruin of his own father. *He considers,*

*and does not such like*; he considers how ill it became his father to do such things, what offence it was to God and all good men, what a wound and dishonour he got by it, and what calamities he brought into his family, and therefore *he does not such like*. Note, If we did but duly *consider the ways* of wicked men, we should all dread being associates with them, and followers of them. The particulars are here again enumerated almost in the same words with that character given of the just man, (v. 6, &c.) to show how good men *walk in the same spirit and in the same steps*. This just man here, when he took care to avoid his father's sins, took care to imitate his grandfather's virtues; and if we look back, we shall find some examples for our imitation, as well as others for our admonition. This just man cannot only say, as the Pharisee, *I am no adulterer, no extortioner*, no oppressor, no usurer, no idolater; but he has *given his bread to the hungry*, and *covered the naked*; he has *taken off his hand from the poor*; where he found his father had put hardships upon poor servants, tenants, neighbours, he eased their burthen; he did not say, "What my father has done I will abide by, and if it was a fault it was his, and not mine;" as Rehoboam, who continued the taxes his father had imposed; no, he *takes his hand off from the poor*, and restores them to their rights and liberties again, v. 15.—17. Thus he has *executed God's judgments*, and *walked in his statutes*, not only done his duty for once, but gone on in a course and way of obedience.

(2.) We are assured that the *gracious father* alone shall die in his iniquity, but his *gracious son* shall fare never the worse for it. As for his father, (v. 18.) because he was a *cruel oppressor*, and *did hurt*, nay, because, though he had wealth and power, he did not with it *do good among his people*; lo, *even he*, great as he is, *shall die in his iniquity*, and be undone for ever; but he that kept his integrity *shall surely live*, shall be easy and happy, and he shall not *die for the iniquity of his father*. Perhaps his father's wickedness has lessened his estate, and weakened his interest, but it shall be no prejudice at all to his acceptance with God and his eternal welfare.

II. He appeals to themselves then, whether they did not wrong God with their proverb. Thus plain the case is, and *yet ye say, Does not the son bear the iniquity of the father?* No, he does not; he shall not if he will himself *do that which is lawful and right*, v. 19. But this people that bare the iniquity of their fathers, had not done that which is lawful and right, and therefore justly suffered for *their own sin*, and had no reason to complain of God's proceedings against them as at all *unjust*, though they had reason to complain of the bad example their fathers had left them as very *unkind*. *Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquity*, Lam. v. 7. It is true that there is a curse entailed upon wicked families, but it is as true that the *entail* may be *cut off* by repentance and reformation; let the impenitent and unreformed therefore thank themselves if they fall under it. The settled rule of judgment is therefore repeated; (v. 20.) *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*, and not another for it. What direction God has given to earthly judges, (Deut. xxiv. 16.) he will himself pursue; *The son shall not die, nor die eternally, for the iniquity of the father*, if he do not tread in the steps of it, nor the father for the *iniquity of the son*, if he endeavour to do his duty for the preventing of it. In the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, which is now clouded and eclipsed, the *righteousness of the righteous* shall appear before all the world, to be *upon him* to his everlasting comfort and honour, upon him as a robe, upon him as a crown; and *the wickedness of*

*ne wicked upon him*, to his everlasting confusion, upon him as a chain, upon him as a load, as a mountain of lead to sink him to the bottomless pit.

21. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 22. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. 23. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live? 24. But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass, that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. 25. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 26. When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die. 27. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. 28. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

We have here another rule of judgment which God will go by in dealing with us, by which is further demonstrated the equity of his government. The former showed that God will reward or punish according to the change made in the family or succession, for the better or for the worse; here he shows that he will reward or punish according to the change made in the person himself, whether for the better or the worse. While we are in this world, we are in a state of probation; the time of trial lasts as long as the time of life, and according as we are *found at last*, it will be with us to eternity. Now see here,

I. The case fairly stated, much of it had been before; (*ch. iii. 18, &c.*) and here it is laid down once, *v. 21.—24.* and again, *v. 26.—28.* because it is a matter of vast importance, a matter of life and death, of life and death eternal. Here we have,

1. A fair invitation given to *wicked* people, to *turn from their wickedness*. Assurance is here given us, that *if the wicked will turn*, he shall surely live, *v. 21, 27.*

Observe, (1.) What is required to denominate a man a *true convert*; how he must be qualified, that he may be entitled to this act of indemnity. [1.] The first step toward conversion is consideration;

(*v. 28.*) *Because he considers, and turns.* The reason why sinners go on in their evil ways is, because they do not *consider* what will be in the end thereof; but if the prodigal once come to himself, if he sit down, and *consider* a little how bad his state is, and how easily it may be bettered, he will soon return to his father, (*Luke xv. 17.*) and the adulteress to her first husband, when she considers that *then it was better with her than now*, (*Hos. ii. 7.*) [2.] This consideration must produce an aversion to sin. When he considers he must *turn away from his wickedness*, that denotes a change in the heart; he must turn from *his sins and his transgressions*, that denotes a change in the life; he must break off from all his evil courses, and, wherein he has done iniquity, must resolve to do so no more, and this from a principle of hatred to sin. *What have I to do any more with idols?* [3.] This aversion to sin must be *universal*; he must turn from *all his sins and all his transgressions*, without a reserve for any Delilah, any house of Rimmon. We do not *rightly* turn from sin, unless we *truly* hate it, and we do not truly hate sin, *as sin*, if we do not hate *all sin*. [4.] This must be accompanied with a conversion to God and duty; he must *keep all God's statutes*, (for the obedience, if it be *sincere*, will be *universal*;) and must do that which is *lawful and right*, which agrees with the word and will of God, which he must take for his rule, and not the wills of the flesh, and the way of the world.

(2.) What is promised to those that do thus *turn from sin* to God. [1.] They shall *save their souls alive*, *v. 27.* They shall *surely live*, they shall *not die*, (*v. 21.*) and again, (*v. 28.*) whereas it was said, *The soul that sins it shall die*, yet let not those that have sinned despair but the threatened death may be prevented, if they will but turn and repent in time. When David penitently acknowledges, *I have sinned*, he is immediately assured of his pardon; "*The Lord has taken away the sin, thou shalt not die*, (*2 Sam. xii. 13.*) then shalt not die eternally." He shall *surely live*; he shall be restored to the favour of God, which is the life of the soul, and shall not lie under *his wrath*, which is as *messengers of death* to the soul. [2.] The sins they have repented of, and forsaken, shall not rise up in judgment against them, nor shall they be so much as upbraided with them; *All his transgressions that he has committed*, though numerous, though heinous, though very provoking to God, and redounding very much to his dishonour, yet *they shall not be mentioned unto him*, (*v. 22.*) not mentioned against him; not only they shall not be *imputed* to him to *ruin him*, but in the great day they shall not be *remembered against him* to grieve or shame him; they shall be *covered*, shall be sought for, and not found. This speaks the fulness of pardoning mercy; when sin is forgiven, it is *blotted out*, it is *remembered no more*. [3.] In their righteousness they shall live; not for their righteousness, as if that were the purchase of their pardon and bliss, and an atonement for their sins, but *in* their righteousness, which qualifies them for all the blessings purchased by the Mediator, and is itself one of those blessings.

(3.) What encouragement a repenting, returning sinner has to hope for pardon and life according to this promise. He is conscious to himself that his obedience for the future can never be a valuable compensation for his former disobedience; but he has this to support himself with, that God's nature, property, and delight, is to have mercy and to forgive, for he has said, (*v. 23.*) "*Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?* No, by no means, you never had any cause given you to think so." It is true, God has determined to punish sinners, his justice calls for it, and, pursuant to that,



impenitent sinners will lie for ever under his wrath and curse; that is the will of his decree, his consequent will, but it is not his antecedent will, the will of his delight; though the righteousness of his government requires that sinners die, yet the goodness of his nature objects against it; *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* It is spoken here comparatively; he has not pleasure in the ruin of sinners, for he would rather they should *turn from their ways and live*; he is better pleased when his mercy is glorified in their salvation, than when his justice is glorified in their damnation.

2. A fair warning given to *righteous people*, not to turn from their righteousness, v. 24.—26. Here is, (1.) The character of an apostate, that *turns away from his righteousness*: he never was in sincerity a *righteous man*, (as appears by that of the apostle, (1 John ii. 19.) *If they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us*), but he passed for a righteous man, had the denomination and all the external marks of a righteous man, he thought himself one, and others thought him one, but he throws off his profession, leaves his first love, disowns and forsakes the truth and ways of God, and so *turns away from his righteousness* as one sick of it, and now shows, what he always had, a secret aversion to it; and, having *turned away from his righteousness*, he *commits iniquity*, grows loose, and profane, and sensual, intemperate, unjust, and, in short, *does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does*; for when the unclean spirit recovers his possession of the heart, he *brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there*, Luke xi. 26. (2.) The doom of an apostate; *Shall he live because he was once a righteous man?* No, *Factum non dicitur quod non perseverat—That which does not abide, is not said to be done.* In his trespass, (v. 24.) and for his iniquity, (that is the meritorious cause of his ruin,) for the iniquity that he has done, he shall die, shall die eternally, v. 26. *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.* But will not his former professions and performances stand him in some stead—will they not avail at least to mitigate his punishment? No, *All his righteousness that he has done*, though ever so much applauded by men, *shall not be mentioned* so as to be either a credit or a comfort to him; the righteousness of an apostate is forgotten, as the wickedness of a penitent is. Under the law, if a Nazarite were polluted he lost all his foregoing days of his separation, (Numb. vi. 12.) so those that have *begun in the spirit and end in the flesh*, may reckon all their past services and sufferings in vain; (Gal. iii. 3, 4.) unless we persevere we *lose what we have gained*, 2 John viii.

II. An appeal to the consciences even of the house of Israel, though very corrupt, concerning God's equity in all these proceedings; for he will be justified, as well as sinners judged, out of their own mouths. 1. The charge they drew up against God is blasphemous, v. 25, 29. *The house of Israel has the impudence to say, The way of the Lord is not equal*; than which nothing could be more absurd as well as impious. *He that formed the eye, shall he not see?* Can his ways be unequal, whose will is the eternal rule of good and evil, right and wrong? *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* No doubt, he shall; he cannot do otherwise. 2. God's reasonings with them are very gracious and condescending, for even these blasphemers God would rather have convinced and saved than condemned. One would have expected that God should have immediately vindicated the honour of his justice by making those that impeached it eternal monuments of it. Must those he suffered to draw another breath, that have once breathed out such wicked-

ness as this? Shall that tongue ever speak again anywhere but in hell, that has once said, *The ways of the Lord are not equal?* Yes, because this is the day of God's patience, he vouchsafes to argue with them; and he requires them to own it, for it is so plain, that they cannot deny, (1.) The equity of his ways; *Are not my ways equal?* No doubt they are. He never lays upon man more than is right. In the present punishments of sinners and the afflictions of his own people, yea, and in the eternal damnation of the impenitent, *the ways of the Lord are equal.* (2.) The iniquity of their ways; *Are not your ways unequal?* It is plain that they are, and the troubles you are in you have brought upon your own heads. God does you no wrong, but you have wronged yourselves. *The foolishness of man perverts his way*, makes that unequal, and then *his heart frets against the Lord*, as if his ways were unequal, Prov. xix. 3. In all our disputes with God, and in all his controversies with us, it will be found that *his ways are equal*, but *ours are unequal*, that he is in the right, and we are in the wrong.

30. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. 31. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 32. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

We have here the conclusion and application of this whole matter. After a fair trial at the bar of right reason, the verdict is brought in on God's side, it appears that *his ways are equal*; judgment therefore is next to be given; and one would think it should be a judgment of condemnation, nothing short of *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*; but behold a miracle of mercy; the day of grace and divine patience is yet lengthened out; and therefore, though God will at last judge *every one according to his ways*, yet he waits to be gracious, and closes all with a call to repentance, and a promise of pardon upon repentance.

1. Here are four necessary duties that we are called to; all amounting to the same. (1.) We must *repent*; we must change our mind, and change our ways; we must be sorry for what we have done amiss, and ashamed of it, and go as far as we can toward the undoing of it again. (2.) We must *turn ourselves from all our transgressions*, (v. 30.) and again, v. 32. *Turn yourselves, face about; turn from sin, nay, turn against it as the enemy you loathe, turn to God as the Friend you love.* (3.) We must *cast away from us all our transgressions*, we must abandon and forsake them with a resolution never to return to them again; give sin a bill of divorce, break all the leagues we have made with it, throw it overboard, as the mariners did Jonah, for it has raised the storm; cast it out of the soul, and crucify it, as a malefactor. (4.) We must *make us a new heart, and a new spirit.* This was the matter of a promise, ch. xi. 19. here it is the matter of a precept; we must do our endeavour, and then God will not be wanting to us to give us his grace. St. Austin well explains this precept; *Deus non jubet impossibilia, sed jubendo monet et facere quod possis, et petere quod non possis—God does not enjoin impossibilities, but by his commands admonishes*

as to *do* what is in our power, and to *pay* for what is not.

2. Here are four good arguments used to enforce these calls to repentance. (1.) It is the only way, and it is a sure way, to prevent the ruin which our sins have a direct tendency to; *So iniquity shall not be your ruin*; which implies that, if we do not repent, iniquity will be our ruin here and for ever, but that if we do we are safe, we are snatched as brands from the burning. (2.) If we repent not, we certainly perish, and our blood will be upon our own heads. *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* What an absurd thing it is for you to choose death and damnation rather than life and salvation. Note, The reason why sinners die is, because they *will die*, they will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered; herein sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, are most unreasonable, and act most unaccountably. (3.) The God of heaven has no delight in our ruin, but desires our welfare; (*v. 32.*) *I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies*, which implies that he has pleasure in the recovery of those that repent; which is both an engagement and an encouragement to us to repent. (4.) We are made for ever, if we repent; *Turn yourselves and live ye*. He that says to us, *Repent*, thereby says to us, *Live*, yea, he says to us, *Live*; so that life and death are here set before us.

## CHAP. XIX.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the 17th, to foretell and lament the ruin of the house of David, the royal family of Judah, in the calamitous exit of the four sons and grandsons of Josiah-Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, in whom that illustrious line of kings was cut off, which the prophet is here ordered to lament, *v. 1.* And he does it by similitudes. I. The kingdom of Judah and house of David are here compared to a lioness, and those princes to lions that were fierce and ravenous, but were hunted down, and taken in nets, *v. 2. . 9.* II. That kingdom and that house are here compared to a vine, and these princes to branches, which had been strong and flourishing, but were now broken off and burnt, *v. 10. . 14.* This ruin of that monarchy was now in the doing, and this lamentation of it was intended to affect the people with it, that they might not flatter themselves with vain hopes of the lengthening out of their tranquillity.

1. **M**OREOVER, take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, 2. And say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions. 3. And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men. 4. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt. 5. Now, when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. 6. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men. 7. And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring. 8. Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. 9. And

they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

Here are,

I. Orders given to the prophet to bewail the fall of the royal family, which had long made so great a figure by virtue of a covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, so that the eclipsing and extinguishing of it are justly lamented by all who know what value to put upon the *covenant of our God*: as we find, after a very large account of that covenant with David, (*Ps. lxxxix. 3, 20, &c.*) a sad lamentation for the decays and desolations of his family; (*v. 38, 39.*) *But thou hast cast off and abhorred, hast made void the covenant of thy servant, and profaned his crown, &c.* The kings of Judah are here called *princes of Israel*; for their glory was diminished, and they were become but as *princes*; and their purity was lost, they were become corrupt and idolatrous as the *kings of Israel*, whose ways they had learned. The prophet must take up a lamentation for them; he must describe their lamentable fall, as one that did himself lay it to heart, and desired that those he preached and wrote to might do so too. And how can we expect that others should be affected with that which we ourselves are not affected with? Ministers, when they boldly foretell, must yet bitterly lament, the destruction of sinners, as those that have not desired the woful day. He is not directed to give advice to the princes of Israel, (that had been long and often done in vain,) but, the decree being gone forth, he must take up a lamentation for them.

II. Instructions given him what to say.

1. He must compare the kingdom of Judah to a lioness; so wretchedly degenerated was it from what it had been formerly, when it sat as a queen among the nations, *v. 2.* *What is thy mother?* Thine, O king? We read of Solomon's crown wherewith his mother crowned him, his people, Cant. iii. 11. Thine, O Judah? The royal family is as a mother to the kingdom, a nursing-mother. She is a lioness, fierce, and cruel, and ravenous. When they had left their divinity, they soon lost their humanity too; and when they feared not God, neither did they regard man. She lay down among lions; God had said, *The people shall dwell alone, but they mingled themselves with the nations, and learned their works.* She nourished her whelps among young lions, taught the young princes the way of tyrants, which was then used by the arbitrary kings of the east, filled their heads betimes with notions of their absolute, despotic power, and possessed them with a belief that they had a right to enslave their subjects, that their liberty and property lay at their mercy: thus she nourished her whelps among young lions.

2. He must compare the kings of Judah to lions' whelps, *v. 3.* Jacob had compared Judah, and especially the house of David, to a lion's whelp, for its being strong and formidable to its enemies abroad; (*Gen. xlix. 9.*) *He is an old lion, who shall stir him up?* And if they had adhered to the divine law and promise, God had preserved to them the might, and majesty, and dominion of a lion; and does it in Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah; but these lions' whelps were so to their own subjects, were cruel and oppressive to them, preyed upon their estates and liberties; and when they thus by their tyranny made themselves a terror to those whom they ought to have protected, it was just with God to make those a terror to them, whom otherwise they might have subdued. Here is lamented,

(1.) The sin and fall of Jehoahaz, one of the whelps of this lioness. He became a young lion,

v. 3.) he was made king, and thought he was made so that he might do what he pleased, and gratify his own ambition, covetousness, and revenge, as he had a mind; and so he was soon master of all the arts of tyranny, he *learned to catch the prey, and devoured men*; when he got power in his hand, all that had before in any thing disobliged him were made to feel his resentments, and become a sacrifice to his rage. But what came of it? He did not prosper long in his tyranny: *the nations heard of him*, (v. 4.) heard how furiously he drove, at his first coming to the crown, how he trampled upon all that is just and sacred, and violated all his engagements, so that they looked upon him as a dangerous neighbour, and prosecuted him accordingly, *as a multitude of shepherds is called forth against a lion roaring on his prey*, Isa. xxxi. 4. And he was taken, as a beast of prey, *in their pit*. His own subjects durst not stand up in defence of their own liberties, but God raised up a foreign power that soon put an end to his tyranny, and brought him in chains to the land of Egypt. Thither Jehoahaz was carried captive, and never heard of more.

(2.) The like sin and fall of his successor Jehoakim. The kingdom of Judah for some time expected the return of Jehoahaz out of Egypt, but at length despaired of it, and then took another of the lion's whelps, and made him a young lion, v. 5. And he, instead of taking warning by his brother's fate to use his power with equity and moderation, and to seek the good of his people, trod in his brother's steps; *he went up and down among the lions*, v. 6. He consulted and conversed with those that were fierce and furious like himself, and took his measures from them, as Rehoboam took the advice of the rash and hot-headed young men; and he soon learned to catch the prey, and he devoured men, (v. 6.) he seized his subjects' estates, fined and imprisoned them, filled his treasury by rapine and injustice, sequestrations and confiscations, fines and forfeitures, and swallowed up all that stood in his way; he had got the art of discovering what effects men had, that lay concealed, and where the treasures were, which they had hoarded up; he knew their desolate places, (v. 7.) where they hid their money, and sometimes hid themselves; he knew where to find both out; and by his oppression he laid waste their cities, depopulated them by forcing the inhabitants to remove their families to some place of safety. The land was desolate, and the country villages were deserted; and though there was great plenty, and a fulness of all good things, yet people quitted it all for fear of the noise of his roaring. He took a pride in making all his subjects afraid of him, as the lion makes all the beasts of the field to tremble, (Amos iii. 8.) and by his terrible roaring so astonished them, that they fell down for fear, and, having not spirit to make their escape, became an easy prey to him, as they say the lions do. He hectorated, and threatened, and talked big, and bullied people out of what they had. Thus he thought to have established his own power, but it had a contrary effect, it did but hasten his own ruin; (v. 8.) *The nations set against him on every side*, to restrain and reduce his exorbitant power, which they joined in confederacy to do for their common safety; and they spread their net over him, formed designs against him. God brought against Jehoakim bands of the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, with the Chaldees, (2 Kings xxiv. 2.) and he was taken in their pit. Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6. They put this lion within grates, bound him in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon, v. 9. What became of him we know not, but his voice was no where heard roaring upon the mountains of Israel. There was an end of his

tyranny; he was buried with the burial of an ass (Jer. xxii. 19.) though he had been as a lion, the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. Note, The righteousness of God is to be acknowledged when those who have terrified and enslaved others are themselves terrified and enslaved; when those who by the abuse of their power to destruction which was given them for edification, make themselves as wild beasts, as roaring lions and ranging bears, (for such, Solomon says, wicked rulers are over the poor people, Prov. xxviii. 15.) are treated as such; when those who, like Ishmael, have their hand against every man, come at last to have every man's hand against them. It was long since observed that bloody tyrants seldom die in peace, but have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

Ad generum Cereris sine corde et sanguine pauci  
Descendunt reges et sicca morte tyranni—

How few of all the boastful men, that reign,  
Descend in peace to Pluto's dark domain! Jev.

10. Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful, and full of branches, by reason of many waters.

11. And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches. 12. But she was plucked up in fury, she was east down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit; her strong rods were broken and withered, the fire consumed them. 13. And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. 14. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Jerusalem, the mother-city, is here represented by another similitude; she is a vine, and the princes are her branches. This comparison we had before, ch. xv.

1. Jerusalem is as a vine; the Jewish nation is so; like a vine in thy blood, (v. 10.) the blood royal; like a vine set in blood, and watered with blood, which contributes very much to the flourishing and fruitfulness of vines, as if the blood which had been shed had been designed for the fattening and improving of the soil; in such plenty was it shed: and for a time it seemed to have that effect, for she was fruitful and full of branches, by reason of the waters, the many waters near which she was planted. Places of great wickedness may prosper for awhile: and a vine set in blood may be full of branches. Jerusalem was full of able magistrates, men of sense, men of learning and experience, that were strong rods, branches of this vine, of uncommon bulk and strength; or, poles for the support of this vine; for such magistrates are. The boughs of this vine were grown to such maturity, that they were fit to make white staves of, for the sceptres of them that bare rule, v. 11. And they are strong rods only that are fit for sceptres, men of strong judgments and strong resolutions, that are fit for magistrates. When the royal family of Judah was numerous, and the courts of justice filled with men of sense and probity, then Jerusalem's stature was exalted among thick branches; when the government is in good, able hands, a nation is thereby made considerable. Then she was not taken for a weak and lowly vine, but she appeared in her height, a distinguished city, with the multitude of her

*branches; Tanquam lenta solent inter viburna cupressi—Midst humble withies thus the cypress soars. In thy quietness; so some read that, v. 10.* which we translate, *in thy blood*, thou wast such a vine as this. When Zedekiah was quiet and easy under the king of Babylon's yoke, his kingdom flourished thus. See how slow God is to anger, how he defers his judgments, and waits to be gracious.

2. This *vine* is now quite destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar, being highly provoked by Zedekiah's treachery, *plucked it up in fury*, (v. 12.) ruined the city and kingdom, and cut off all the branches of the royal family that fell in his way. The vine was *cut off close to the ground*, though not plucked up by the roots; the *east-wind dried up the fruit* that was blasted, the young people fell by the sword, or were carried into captivity. The aspect of it had nothing that was *pleasing*, the prospect nothing that was *promising*. Her *strong rods were broken and withered*, her great men were cut off, judges and magistrates deposed; *the vine itself is planted in the wilderness*, v. 13. Babylon was as a *wilderness* to those of the people that were carried captives thither; the land of Judah was as a *wilderness* to Jerusalem, now that the whole country was ravaged and laid waste by the Chaldean army; a *fruitful land turned into barrenness*. It is *burnt with fire*, (Ps. lxxx. 16.) and that fire is *gone out of a rod of her branches*; (v. 14.) the king himself, by rebelling against the king of Babylon, has given occasion to all this mischief: she may thank herself for the fire that consumes her; she has by her wickedness made herself like tinder to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel for her own consumption; in them the fire is kindled, which *devoured the fruit*, the sins of the elder being the judgments which destroy the younger; her *fruit* is burned with her own branches, so that she has *no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule*; none to be found now that are fit for the government, or dare take *this ruin under their hand*, as the complaint is; (Isa. iii. 6, 7.) none of the house of David left, that have a right to rule, no wise men, or men of sense, that are able to rule. It goes ill with any state, and is like to go worse, when it is thus deprived of the blessings of government, and has *no strong rods for sceptres*. *Wo unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child*, for it is as well to have no rod, as not a strong rod. Those strong rods, we have reason to fear, had been instruments of oppression, assistant to the king in *catching the prey, and devouring men*, and now they are destroyed with him. Tyranny is the inlet to anarchy; and when the rod of government is turned into the serpent of oppression, it is just with God to say, "There shall be no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule; but let men be as *are the fishes of the sea*, where the greater devour the lesser." Note, *This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation*. The prophet was bidden, (v. 1.) *to take up a lamentation*; and having done so, he leaves it to be made use of by others. "It is a *lamentation* to us of this age, and, the desolations continuing long, it shall be for a *lamentation* to those that shall come after us; the child unborn will rue the destruction made of Judah and Jerusalem by the present judgments. They were a great while in coming, the bow was long in the drawing; but now that they are come, they will continue, and the sad effects of them will be entailed upon posterity." Note, Those who fill up the measure of their fathers' sins, are laying up in store for their children's sorrows, and furnishing them with matter for lamentation; and nothing is more so than the overthrow of government.

## CHAP. XX.

In this chapter, I. The prophet is consulted by some of the elders of Israel, v. 1. II. He is instructed by his

God what answer to give them. He must, 1. Signify God's displeasure against them, v. 2, 3. And, 2. He must show them what just cause he had for that displeasure; by giving them a history of God's grateful dealings with their fathers, and their treacherous dealings with God. (1.) In Egypt, v. 5.. 9. (2.) In the wilderness, v. 10.. 26. (3.) In Canaan, v. 27.. 32. (4.) He must denounce the judgments of God against them, v. 33.. 36. (5.) He must tell them likewise what mercy God had in store for them, when he would bring a remnant of them to repentance, re-establish them in their own land, and set up his sanctuary among them again, v. 37.. 44. (6.) Here is another word dropped toward Jerusalem, which is explained and enlarged upon in the next chapter, v. 45.. 49.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me. 2. Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying. 3. Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Are ye come to inquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. 4. Wilt thou judge them, son of man? wilt thou judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers.

Here is, 1. The occasion of the message which we have in this chapter. That sermon which we had, *ch. xviii.* was occasioned by their presumptuous reflections upon God; this was occasioned by their hypocritical inquiries after him. Each shall have his own. This prophecy is exactly dated in the *seventh year of the captivity*, about two years after Ezekiel began to prophesy. God would have them to keep count how long their captivity lasted, that they might see how the years went on toward their deliverance, though very slowly. *Certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord*, not stately, (as those, *ch. viii.* 1.) but, as it should seem, occasionally, and upon a particular emergency. Whether they were of those that were now in captivity, or elders lately come from Jerusalem upon business to Babylon, is not certain; but by what the prophet says to them, (v. 32.) it should seem, their inquiry was, whether now that they were captives in Babylon, at a distance from their own country, where they had not only no temple, but no synagogue, for the worship of God, it was not lawful for them, that they might ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters, to join with them in their worship, and do as the families of these countries do, that serve wood and stone. This matter was palliated as well as it would bear, like Naaman's indenting with Elisha for leave to bow in the house of Rimmon, in compliment to the king; but we have reason to suspect that their inquiry drove at this. Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened which ask God leave to go on in sin, and that when they are suffering for it. They came and sat very demurely, and with a show of devotion, before the prophet, *ch. xxxiii.* 31.

2. The purport of this message.

(1.) They must be made to know that *God is angry with them*; he takes it as an affront that they are come to inquire of him, when they are resolved to go on still in their trespasses: *As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you*, v. 3. Their shows of devotion shall be neither acceptable to God nor advantageous to themselves. God will not take notice of their inquiries, nor give them any satisfactory answers. Note, A hypocritical attendance on God and his ordinances is so far from being pleasing to him, that it is provoking.

(2.) They must be made to know that God is justly angry with them; (v. 4.) "*Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them?* Thou art a prophet, surely thou wilt not *plead for them*, as an intercessor *with God*; but surely thou wilt *pass sentence on them as a judge for God*. See, *I have set thee over the nation*; wilt thou not declare to them the judgments of the Lord? Cause them therefore *to know the abominations of their fathers*." So the orders run now, as before, ch. xvi. 2. He must cause them to *know their own abominations*. Though their own abominations were sufficient to justify God in the severest of his proceedings against them, yet it would be of use for them to know the *abominations of their fathers*; that they might see what a righteous thing it was with God now at last to cut them off from being a people, who from the first were such a provoking people.

5. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up my hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up my hand unto them, saying, *I am the Lord your God*; 6. In the day that I lifted up my hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; 7. Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: *I am the Lord your God*. 8. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. 9. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they *were*, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

The history of the ingratitude and rebellion of the people of Israel here begins as early as their beginning; so does the history of man's apostacy from his Maker. No sooner have we read the story of our first parents' creation, than we immediately meet with that of their rebellion; so we see here it was with Israel; a people designed to represent the body of mankind, both in their dealings with God, and his with them. Here is,

1. The gracious purposes of God's law concerning Israel in Egypt, where they were bond-slaves to Pharaoh. Be it spoken, be it written, to the immortal honour of free grace, that then and there, (1.) He chose Israel to be a peculiar people to himself, though their condition was bad, and their character worse, that he might have the honour of mending both. He therefore chose them, because they were the *seed of the house of Jacob*, the posterity of that prince with God, that he might keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers, Dent. vii. 7, 8. (2.) He made himself known to them, by his name *Jehovah*, (a new name, Exod. vi. 3.) when by reason of their servitude they had

almost lost the knowledge of that name by which he was known to their fathers, *God Almighty*. Note, As the foundation of our blessedness is laid in God's choosing us, so the first step towards it is God's *making himself known to us*. And whatever distance we are at, whatever distress we are in, he that made himself known to Israel even in the *land of Egypt*, can find us out, and follow us with the gracious discoveries and manifestations of his favour. (3.) He made over himself to them as their God in covenant; *I lifted up my hand unto them*, saying it, and confirming it with an oath, "*I am the Lord your God*, to whom you are to pay your homage, and from whom and in whom you are to expect your bliss." (4.) He promised to bring them out of Egypt; and made good what he promised. He *lifted up his hand*, that is, he swore unto them, that he would deliver them; and they being very unworthy, and their deliverance very unlikely, it was requisite that the promise of it should be confirmed by an oath. Or, He *lifted up his hand*, that is, he put forth his almighty power to do it; he did it with an *outstretched arm*, Ps. cxxxvi. 12. (5.) He assured them that he would put them in possession of the land of Canaan. He therefore brought them out of Egypt, that he might bring them into a land that he had *spied out for them*; a second garden of Eden, which was the *glory of all lands*; so he found it, the climate temperate, the soil fruitful, the situation pleasant, and every thing agreeable, Deut. viii. 7.—xi. 12. However, so he made it, by setting up his sanctuary in it.

2. The reasonable commands he gave them, and the easy conditions of his covenant with them at that time; having told them what they might expect from him, he next tells them what was all he expected from them; it was no more than this, (v. 7.) *Cast ye away every man his images that he uses for worship, that are the adorations, but should be the abominations, of his eyes*. Let him abominate them, and put them out of his sight, and *defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt*. Of these, it seems, many of them were fond; the golden calf was one of them. It was just, and what might reasonably be expected, that, being delivered from the Egyptian slavery, they would quit the Egyptian idolatry; especially when God, at bringing them out, *executed judgment upon the gods of Egypt*, (Numb. xxxiii. 4.) and thereby showed himself above them. And whatever other idols they might have an inclination to, one would think they should have a rooted aversion to the gods of Egypt for Egypt's sake, which had been to them a house of bondage. Yet, it seems, they needed this caution, and it is backed with a good reason, *I am the Lord your God*, who neither need an assistant, nor will admit a rival.

3. Their unreasonable disobedience to these commands, for which God might justly have cut them off as soon as ever they were formed into a people; (v. 8.) *They rebelled against God*; not only refused to comply with his particular precepts, but shook off their allegiance, and in effect told him that they would be at liberty to worship what god they pleased. And even then when God came down to deliver them, and sent Moses for that purpose, yet they would not *forsake the idols of Egypt*; which perhaps made them speak so affectionately of the *onions of Egypt*, (Numb. xi. 5.) for among other things the Egyptians worshipped an onion. It was strange that all the plagues of Egypt would not prevail to cure them of their affection to the *idols of Egypt*. For this, God said he would *pour out his fury upon them*, even while they were yet in the midst of the land of Egypt. Justly might he have said, "Let them die with the Egyptians." This magnifies the riches of God's goodness, that he was pleased to

work so great a salvation for them, even then when he saw them *ripe for ruin*. Well might Moses tell them, It is *not for your righteousness*, Deut. ix. 4, 5.

4. The wonderful deliverance which God wrought for them, notwithstanding. Though they forfeited the favour while it was in the bestowing, and when God *would have healed them*, then their *iniquity was discovered*, (Hos. vii. 1.) yet *mercy rejoiced against judgment*, and God did what he designed, purely *for his own name's sake*, v. 9. When nothing in us will furnish him with a reason for his favours, he furnishes himself with one. God *made himself known to them in the sight of the heathen*, when he ordered Moses publicly to say to Pharaoh, Israel is *my son, my first-born*, let them go, *that they may serve me*. Now if he should have left them to perish for their wickedness as they deserved, the Egyptians would have reflected upon him for it, and his name would have been polluted, which ought to be sanctified, and shall be so. Note, The church is secured, even when it is corrupt, because God will secure his own honour.

10. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness: 11. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which *if a man do, he shall even live in them*. 12. Moreover also, I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that *I am the LORD* that sanctify them. 13. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which *if a man do, he shall even live in them*; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. 14. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. 15. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is the glory of all lands*; 16. Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. 17. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. 18. But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols. 19. *I am the LORD* your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; 20. And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that *I am the LORD* your God. 21. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my sta-

tutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which *if a man do, he shall even live in them*; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them in the wilderness. 22. Nevertheless I withdrew my hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. 23. I lifted up my hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; 24. Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. 25. Wherefore I gave them also statutes *that were not good*, and judgments whereby they should not live: 26. And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through *the fire* all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that *I am the LORD*.

The history of the struggle between the sins of Israel, by which they endeavoured to ruin themselves, and the mercies of God, by which he endeavoured to save them and make them happy, is here continued: and the instances of that struggle in these verses have reference to what passed between God and them in the wilderness, in which God *honoured himself*, and they *shamed themselves*. The story of Israel in the wilderness is referred to in the New Testament, (1 Cor. x. and Heb. iii.) as well as often in the Old, for warning to us Christians; and therefore we are particularly concerned in these verses. Observe,

1. The great things God did for them, which he puts them in mind of, not as grudging them his favours, but to show how ungrateful they had been. And we say, If you call a man ungrateful, you can call him no worse. It was a great favour, (1.) That God *brought them forth out of Egypt*; (v. 10.) though, as it follows, he *brought them into the wilderness*, and not into Canaan immediately. It is better to be at liberty in a wilderness than bond-slaves in a land of plenty; to enjoy God and ourselves in solitude, than to lose both in a crowd: yet there were many of them who had such base, servile spirits as not to understand this, but, when they met with the difficulties of a desert, wished themselves in Egypt again. (2.) That he gave them the law upon mount Sinai; (v. 11.) not only *instructed them* concerning good and evil, but by his authority *bound them* from the evil and to the good. He *gave them his statutes*, and a valuable gift it was. *Moses commanded them a law that was the inheritance of the congregation of Israel*, Deut. xxxiii. 4. God *made them to know his judgments*; not only enacted laws for them, but showed them the reasonableness and equity of those laws; with what judgment they were formed. The laws he gave them they were encouraged to observe and obey; for *if a man do them, he shall even live in them*; in keeping of God's commandments there is abundance of comfort, and a great reward. Christ says, *If thou wilt enter into life, and enjoy it, keep the commandments*. Though they who are the most strict in their obedience, are thus far unprofitable servants, that they do no more than is their duty to do, yet it is thus richly recom-



pensed; *This do, and thou shalt live.* The Chaldee says, *He shall live an eternal life in them.* St. Paul quotes this, (Gal. iii. 12.) to show that *the law is not of faith*, but proposes life upon condition of perfect obedience, which we are not capable to perform, and therefore must have recourse to the grace of the gospel, without which we are all undone. (3.) That he revived the ancient institution of the sabbath-day, which was lost and forgotten while they were bond-slaves in Egypt: for their taskmasters there would by no means allow them to rest one day in seven. In the wilderness indeed every day was a day of rest; for what need had they to labour, who lived upon manna, and whose raiment waxed not old? But one day in seven must be a holy rest; (v. 12.) *I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them.* The institution of the sabbath was a sign of God's good will to them, and their observance of it a sign of their regard to him; *that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.* By this God made it to appear that he had distinguished them from the rest of the world, and designed to model them for a peculiar people to himself; and by their attendance on God in solemn assemblies on sabbath-days they were made to increase in the knowledge of God, in an experimental knowledge of the powers and pleasures of his sanctifying grace. Note, [1.] Sabbaths are privileges, and are so to be accounted; the church acknowledges it as a great favour, in that chapter which is parallel to this, and seems to have a reference to this; (Neh. ix. 14.) *Thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbaths.* [2.] Sabbaths are signs; it is a sign that men have a sense of religion, and that there is some good correspondence between them and God, while they make conscience of keeping holy the sabbath-day. [3.] Sabbaths, if duly sanctified, are the means of our sanctification; if we do the duty of the day, we shall find, to our comfort, *it is the Lord that sanctifies us*, makes us *holy*, that is, truly *happy*, here, and prepares us to be *happy*, that is, perfectly *holy*, hereafter.

2. Their disobedient, undutiful conduct toward God, for which he might justly have thrown them out of covenant as soon as he had taken them into covenant; (v. 13.) *They rebelled in the wilderness.* There where they received so much mercy from God, and had such a dependence upon him, and were in their way to Canaan, yet there they broke out in many open rebellions against the God that led them and fed them. They did not only *walk in God's statutes*, but they *despised his judgments* as not worth observing; instead of *sanctifying* the sabbaths, they *polluted* them, greatly polluted them; one gathered sticks, many went out to gather manna, on this day. Hereupon God was ready sometimes to cut them off; he said, more than once, that he would *consume them in the wilderness*; but Moses interceded, so did God's own mercy more powerfully, and most of all a concern for his own glory, that *his name might not be polluted and profaned among the heathen*, (v. 14.) that the Egyptians might not say, either that for mischief he brought them thus far, or that he was not able to bring them any further, or that he had no such good land as was talked of to bring them to, Exod. xxxii. 12. Numb. xiv. 13, &c. Note, God's strongest reasons for his sparing mercy are those which are fetched from his own glory.

3. God's determination to cut off that generation of them in the wilderness. He who *lifted up his hand* for them, (v. 6.) now *lifts up his hand against them*; he who then by an oath confirmed his promise to bring them out of Egypt, now by an oath confirmed his threatenings that he would not bring them into Canaan; (v. 15, 16.) *I lifted up my hand unto them*, saying, *As truly as I live, these men*

*which have tempted me these ten times, shall never see the land which I swear unto their fathers.* Numb. xiv. 22, 23. Ps. xcvi. 11. By their contempt of God's laws, and particularly of his sabbaths, they put a bar in their own door; and that which was at the bottom of their disobedience to God, and their neglect of his institutions, was, a secret affection to the gods of Egypt; *Their heart went after their idols.* Note, The bias of the mind toward the world and the flesh, the money and the belly, those two great objects of spiritual idolatry, is the root of bitterness, from which springs all disobedience to the divine law: the heart that goes after those idols despises God's judgments.

4. The reservation of a seed that should be admitted upon a new trial, and the instructions given to that seed, v. 17. Though they thus deserved ruin, and were doomed to it, yet *mine eye spared them.* When he looked upon them he had compassion on them, and did not *make an end of them*, but reprieved them till a new generation was reared. Note, It is owing purely to the mercy of God, that he has not long ago *made an end of us.* This new generation is well educated; Moses in Deuteronomy reported and enforced the laws which had been given to those that came out of Egypt, that their children might have them as it were sounding in their ears afresh when they entered Canaan; (v. 18.) *"I said unto their children in the wilderness, in the plains of Moab, Walk in the statutes of your God, and walk not in the statutes of your fathers; do not imitate their superstitious usages, nor retain their foolish, wicked customs; away with their vain conversation, which has nothing else to say for itself, but that it was received by the tradition of your fathers,"* 1 Pet. i. 18. *Defile not yourselves with their idols*, for you see how odious they rendered themselves to God by them. But *keep my judgments, and hallow my sabbaths,"* v. 19, 20. Note, If parents be careless, and do not give their children good instructions as they ought, the children ought to make up the want by studying the word of God so much the more carefully and diligently themselves when they grow up. And the bad examples of parents must be made use of by their children for admonition, and not for imitation.

5. The revolt of the next generation from God, by which they also made themselves obnoxious to the wrath of God; (v. 21.) *The children rebelled against me too.* And the same that was said of the fathers' rebellion is here said of the children's, for they were a seed of evil-doers; Moses told them that he *knew their rebellion and their stiff neck*, Deut. xxxi. 27. And Deut. ix. 24. *You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They walked not in my statutes,* v. 21. Nay, *They despised my statutes,* v. 24. They who disobey God's statutes, despise them, they show that they have a mean opinion of them, and of him whose statutes they are. *They polluted God's sabbaths*, as their fathers. Note, The profanation of the sabbath-day is an inlet to all impiety; those who pollute holy time will keep nothing pure. It was said of the fathers, (v. 16.) that *their heart went after their idols*; they worshipped idols because they had an affection for them. It is said of the children, (v. 24.) that *their eyes went after their fathers' idols*; they were grown atheistical, and had no affection for any gods at all, but they worshipped *their fathers' idols* because they were *their fathers'*, and they had them before their eyes; they were used to them: and if they must have gods, they would have such as they could see, such as they could manage. And that which aggravated their disobedience to God's statutes was, that *if they had done them they might have lived in them*, (v. 21.) might have been a happy, thriving people. Note, They that go

contrary to their duty, go contrary to their interest; they will not obey, will not come to Christ, that they may have life, John v. 40. And it is therefore just that they who will not live and flourish as they might in their obedience, should die and perish in their disobedience. Now the great instance of that generation's rebellion and inclination to idolatry, was the *iniquity of Peor*, as that of their fathers was the *golden calf*; then the *anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*, Numb. xxv. 3. Then there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, which, if it had not been seasonably stayed by Phinehas's zeal, had cut them all off; and yet they owned, in Joshua's time, *We are not cleansed from that iniquity unto this day*, Josh. xxii. 17. Ps. cvi. 29. Then it was that God said he would *pour out his fury upon them*, (v. 21.) that he *lifted up his hand unto them in the wilderness*, when they were a second time just ready to enter Canaan, *that he would scatter them among the heathen*. This very thing he said to them by Moses in his parting song, Deut. xxxii. 20. Because they *provoked him to jealousy with strange gods*, he said, *I will hide my face from them*; and, v. 26, 27. he said, *I would scatter them into corners, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy*; which explains this, (v. 21, 22.) *I said I would pour out my fury upon them, but I withdrew my hand for my name's sake*. Note, When the corruptions of the visible church are such, and so provoking, that we have reason to fear its total extirpation, yet then we may be confident of this, to our comfort, that God will secure his own honour, by making good his purpose, that while the world stands he will have a church in it.

6. The judgments of God upon them for their rebellion. They would not regard the *statutes and judgments* by which God prescribed them their duty, but *despised* them, and therefore God *gave them statutes and judgments which were not good, and by which they should not live*, v. 25. By which we may understand the several ways by which God punished them while they were in the wilderness—the plague that broke in upon them, the fiery serpents, and the like; which, in allusion to the law they had broken, are called *judgments*, because inflicted by the justice of God, and *statutes*, because he gave orders concerning them, and *commanded* desolations, as sometimes he had *commanded* deliverances, and *appointed Israel's plagues*, as he had done the plagues of Egypt. When God said, *I will consume them in a moment*, (Numb. xvi. 21.) when he said, *Take the heads of the people, and hang them up*, (Numb. xxv. 4.) when he threatened them with the curse, and obliged them to say *Amen* to every curse, (Deut. xxvii. 28.) then he gave them judgments by which they should not live; more is implied than is expressed; they are judgments by which they should die. Those that will not be bound by the precepts of the law, shall be bound by the sentence of it; for one way or other the word of God will take hold of men, Zech. i. 6.

Spiritual judgments are the most dreadful; and these God punished them with; the *statutes and judgments* which the heathen observed in the worship of their idols, were *not good*, and in practising them they could not live; and God *gave them up* to those; he made their sin to be their punishment; gave them up to a *reprobate mind*, as he did the Gentile idolaters, (Rom. i. 24, 26.) gave them up to their own hearts' lust, (Ps. lxxxi. 12.) punished them for those superstitious customs which were against the written law, by giving them up to those which were against the very light and law of nature; he left them to themselves to be guilty of the most impure idolatries, as in the worship of Baal-peor; (he *polluted them*, he permitted them to pollute themselves, *in their own gifts*, v. 26.) and of the

most barbarous idolatries, as in the worship of Moloch, when they *caused their children*, especially the first-born, (which God challenged a particular property in, *The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me*;) to pass through the fire, to be sacrificed to their idols; that thus he might *make them desolate*, not only that he might justly do it, but that he might do it by their own hands; for this must needs be a great weakening to their families, and a diminution of the honour and strength of their country. Note, God sometimes makes sin to be its own punishment, and yet is not the Author of sin; and there needs no more to make men miserable than to give them up to their own vile appetites and passions. Let them be put into the hand of their own counsels, and they will ruin themselves, and *make themselves desolate*. And thus God makes them know that he is the Lord, and that he is a *righteous* God, which they themselves will be compelled to own, when they see how much their wilful transgressions contribute to their own desolations. Note, Those who will not acknowledge God as the Lord their Ruler, shall be made to acknowledge him as the Lord their Judge when it is too late.

27. Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. 28. For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up my hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink-offerings. 29. Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. 30. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? 31. For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. 32. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

Here the prophet goes on with the story of their rebellions, for their further humiliation, and shows,

1. That they had persisted in them after they were settled in the land of Canaan. Though God had so many times testified his displeasure against their wicked courses, Yet in this, in the very same thing, *your fathers have blasphemed me*, continued to affront me, that they also have *trespassed a trespass against me*, v. 27. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin, when men will not take warning by the mischievous consequences of sin in those that have gone before them: this is *blaspheming God*, it is speaking reproachfully of his judgments, as if

they were of no significance, and were not worth regarding.

(1.) God had made good his promise; *I brought them into the land that I had sworn to give them.* Though their unbelief and disobedience had made the performance slow, and much retarded it, yet it did not *make the promise of no effect.* They were often very near being cut off in the wilderness, but a step between them and ruin, and yet they came to Canaan at last. Note, Even God's Israel get to heaven by hell-gates; so many are their transgressions, and so strong their corruptions, that it is a miracle of mercy they are happy at last; as hypocrites go to hell by heaven-gates. *The righteous scarcely are saved. Per tot discrimina rerum tendimus ad cælum—Ten thousand dangers fill the road to heaven.*

(2.) They had broken his precept by their abominable idolatries. God had appointed them to destroy all the monuments of idolatry, that they might not be tempted to desert his sanctuary; but, instead of defacing them, they fell in love with them, and when they *saw every high hill* whence they had the most delightful prospects, and all the *thick trees* where they had the most delightful shades, the former to show forth their pompous idolatries, the latter to conceal their shameful ones, *there they offered their sacrifices, and made their sweet savour,* which should have been presented upon God's altar only. *There they presented the provocation of their offering,* (v. 28.) their offerings, which, instead of pacifying God, or pleasing him, were highly provoking; *sacrifices,* which, though costly, yet, being *misplaced,* were an *abomination to the Lord.*

(3.) They obstinately persisted herein, notwithstanding all the admonitions that were given them; (v. 29.) "*Then I told them, by my servants the prophets, told them where the high place was, to which they went;* nay, I put them upon considering it, and asking their own consciences concerning it, by putting this question to them, *Which is the high place wherunto you go?* What do you find there so inviting, that you will leave God's altars, where he requires your attendance, to frequent such places as he has forbidden you to worship in? Do you not know that those high places are of a heathenish extraction, and that the things which the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to devils, and not to God? Did not Moses tell you so? Deut. xxxii. 17. *And will you have fellowship with devils? What is that high place to which you go when you turn your back on God's altars? O foolish Israelites, who or what has bewitched you,* that you will forsake the Fountain of life for broken cisterns, that worship which God appoints, and will accept, for that which he forbids, which he abhors, and which he will punish?" And yet *the name is called Bamah unto this day;* they will have their way, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary; they are wedded to their *high places;* even in the best reigns those were not taken away; you could not prevail to take away the name of Bamah, the *high place,* out of their mouths, but still they would have that in the place of their worship. The sin and the sinner are with difficulty parted.

2. That this generation, after they were unsettled, continued under the dominion of the same corrupt inclinations to idolatry, v. 30. He must say to the present *house of Israel,* some of whose elders were now sitting before him, "*Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers?* After all that God has said against you by a succession of prophets, and done against you by a series of judgments, yet will you take no warning? Will you still be as bad as your fathers were, and *commit the same abominations* that they committed? I see you will; you are bent upon returning to the old abominations; you

*offer your gifts in the high places, and you make your sons to pass through the fire,* either you actually do it, or you do it in purpose and imagination, and so you continue idolaters *to this day.*" These elders seem now to have been projecting a coalition with the heathen; their hearts they will reserve for the God of Israel, but their knees they will be at liberty to bow to the gods of the nations among whom they live, that they may have the more respect and the fairer quarter among them. Now the prophet is here ordered to tell those who were forming this scheme, and were for compounding the matter between God and Bael, that they should have no comfort nor benefit from either. (1.) They should have no benefit by their *consulting in private* with the prophets of the Lord; for, because they were hearkening after idols, God would have nothing to do with them; (v. 31.) *As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you;* what he had said before, (v. 3.) having largely showed how just it was, he here repeats, as that which he would abide by. Let them not think that they honoured him by their inquiries, nor expect an answer of peace from him, as long as they continued in love and league with their idols. Note, Those reap no benefit by their religion, that are not entire and sincere in it; nor can we have any comfortable communion with God in ordinances of worship, unless we be inward and upright with him therein. We make nothing of our profession, if it be but a profession. Nay, (2.) They should have no benefit from their *conforming in public* to the practice of their neighbours; (v. 32.) "*That which comes into your mind* as a piece of refined politics in the present difficult juncture, and which you would be advised to for your own preservation, and that you may not by being singular expose yourselves to abuses, it *shall not be at all,* it shall turn to no account to you. You say, *We will be as the heathen,* we will join with them in worshipping their gods, though at the same time we do not believe them to be gods, but *wood and stone,* and then we should be taken *as the families of the countries,* they will not know, or in a little while will have forgotten, that we are Jews, and will allow us the same privileges with their own countrymen." "Tell them," says God, "that this project shall *never prosper.* Either their neighbours will not admit them to join with them in their worship, or, if they do, will think never the better, but the worse, of them for it, and will look upon them as dissemblers, and not fit to be trusted, who are thus false to their God, and put a cheat upon their neighbours." Note, There is nothing got by sinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites will stand them in no stead. It is only integrity and uprightness that will preserve men, and recommend them to God and man.

33. *As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you;* 34. *And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out;* 35. *And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.* 36. *Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God.* 37. *And I will cause you to pass under the*

rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: 38. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 39. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter *also*, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. 40. For in my holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. 41. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. 42. And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country *for* the which I lifted up my hand to give it to your fathers. 43. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed. 44. And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

The design which was now on foot among the elders of Israel was, that the people of Israel, being scattered among the nations, should *lay aside* all their peculiarities, and *conform* to those among whom they lived; but God had told them that the design should not take effect, v. 32. Now, in these verses, he shows particularly how it should be frustrated. They aimed at the *mingling* of the families of *Israel with the families of the countries*; but it will prove in the issue,

That the wicked Israelites, notwithstanding their compliances, shall not mingle with them in their prosperity; but shall be distinguished from them for destruction; for idolatrous Israelites, that are apostates from God, shall be sooner and more sorely punished than idolatrous Babylonians that never knew the way of righteousness. Read and tremble at the doom here passed upon them; it is backed with an oath not to be reversed; *As I live, saith the Lord God*, thus and thus will I deal with you. They think to make both Jerusalem and Babylon their friends by halting between two; but God threatens that neither of them shall serve for a rest or refuge for them.

I. Babylon shall not protect them, nor any of the countries of the heathen; for God will cast them out of his protection; and then what prince, what people, what place, can serve to be a sanctuary to them? God was Israel's King of old, and had they

continued his loyal subjects, he would have *ruled over them* with care and tenderness for their good, but now *with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over them*, v. 33. That power which should have been exerted for their protection, shall be exerted for their destruction. Note, There is no shaking off God's dominion, rule he will, either with the golden sceptre or with the iron rod; and they that will not yield to the power of his grace, shall be made to sink under the power of his wrath. Now when God is angry with them, though they may think that they shall be lost in the crowd of the heathen among whom they are scattered, they will be disappointed; for (v. 34.) *I will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered*; as when the rebels are dispersed in battle, those that have escaped the *sword of war*, are pursued, and brought together out of all the places whither they were scattered, to be punished by the *sword of justice*. They shall be brought *into the wilderness of the people*, (v. 35.) either into Babylon, which is called a *wilderness*, (ch. xix. 13.) and the *desert of the sea*, (Isa. xxi. 1.) or into some place, which, though full of people, shall be to them as the wilderness was to Israel after they came out of Egypt, a place where God will *plead with them face to face*, as he *pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt*; (v. 36.) where their carcasses shall fall, and where he will swear concerning them, that they shall never return to Canaan, as he swore concerning their fathers, that they should never come into Canaan; where he will avenge the breach of his law with as much terror as he gave it in the wilderness of Sinai. Note, God has a good action against apostates, and will find not only time, but a proper place to plead with them in upon that action, a *wilderness* even in the midst of the people for that purpose.

II. Israel shall be no more able to protect them than Babylon could; nor shall their relation to God's people stand them in any more stead for the other world, than their compliance with idolaters shall for this world; nor shall they stand in the *congregation of the righteous* any more than in the congregation of evil-doers; for there will come a *distinguishing day*, when God will separate between the precious and the vile; he will *cause them*, as the shepherd causes his sheep, to *pass under the rod*, when he thistles them, (Lev. xxvii. 32.) that he may mark which is for God. God will take particular notice of each of them, one by one, as sheep are counted, and *he will bring them into the bond of the covenant*, (v. 37.) he will try them, and judge of them, according to the tenour of the covenant, and the difference made between some and others by the blessings and curses of the covenant. Or, it may refer to those among them that repented and reformed; he will cause them to pass under the rod of affliction, and, having done them good by it, he will bring them again *into the bond of the covenant*, will be to them a God in covenant, and use them again as *heirs of promise*.

1. He will separate the wicked from among them; (v. 38.) *"I will purge out from among you the rebels, who have been a grief and scandal to you, and who have by their rebellions brought all these calamities upon you."* The judgments of God shall find them out, and their naming of the name of Israel shall be no shelter to them. They shall be *brought out of the countries where they sojourn*, and shall not have that rest in them which they promised themselves. But they shall not enter into the *land of Israel*, nor enjoy the benefit of that rest which God has promised to his people. Note, Though godly people may share with wicked in the calamities of the world, yet wicked people shall have no share with the godly in the heavenly Ca-

naan; but it shall be part of the blessedness of that world, that they shall be *purged out from among them*, the tares from the wheat, the chaff from the corn, *ch. xiii. 9.* But wherever these idolaters of the house of Israel were contriving to worship both God and their idols, thinking to please both, God here protests against it, (*v. 39.*) as Elijah had done in his name; "*If the Lord be God, then follow him, but if Baal, then follow him*; if you will serve your idols, do, and take what comes of it; but then do not pretend relation to God, and a religious observance of him, nor *pollute his holy name with your gifts* at his altar." Spiritual judgments are the sorest judgments: two of that kind of judgments are threatened in this verse against those that were for dividing between the God of Israel and the gods of the nations. (1.) That they should be *given up to the service of their idols*. To them he spake ironically, "*Since ye will not hearken unto me, go ye, serve every one his idols*, now that you think it will be for your interest, and hereafter also. You shall go on in it. *Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone*, let him take his course, and see what he will get by it at last." Note, They who think to *serve themselves by sin*, will find in the end that they have but *enslaved themselves to sin*. (2.) That they should be cut off from the service of God, and communion with God; "*You shall not pollute my holy name with your vain oblations*, *Isa. i. 11.* You bring your gifts in your hands, wherewith you pretend to honour me, but at the same time you bring your idols in your hearts, and therefore you do but *pollute me*; which I will not suffer any more," *Amos v. 21, 22.* Note, Those are justly forbidden God's house, that profane his house.

2. He will separate them to himself again. (1.) He will gather them in mercy out of the countries whither they were scattered, to be monuments of mercy, as the incorrigible were gathered to be vessels of wrath, *v. 41.* Not one of God's jewels shall be lost in the lumber of this world. (2.) He will bring them to the land of Israel, which he had promised to give to their fathers; and the discontinuance of their possession shall be no defacement of their right; it is the land of Israel still, and thither God will bring them safe again, *v. 42.* (3.) He will re-establish his ordinances among them, will set up his sanctuary in his holy mountain, which is here called the mountain of the height of Israel, for though the mount Zion was none of the highest mountains, yet the temple there was one of the highest honours, of Israel. It is promised, that they who preserved their integrity, and would not serve idols in other lands, shall return to their prosperity, and shall serve the true God in their own land; *All of them in the land shall serve me.* Note, It is the true happiness of a people, and a sure token for good to them, when there is a prevailing disposition in them to serve God. Whereas God had forbidden the idolaters to bring their gifts to his altar, of these he will require offerings and first-fruits, and will accept them, *v. 40.* What he does not require he will not accept, but what is done with a regard to his precepts he will be well pleased with. He will accept them with their sweet savour, or savour of rest, (*v. 41.*) as being very grateful to him, and what he takes a complacency in; whereas to hypocritical worshippers, he says, *I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.* (4.) He will give them true repentance for their sins, *v. 43.* When they find how gracious God is to them, they will be overcome with his kindness, and blush to think of their bad behaviour toward so good a God; "There, in my holy mountain, when you come to enjoy the privileges of that again, there shall ye remember your doings wherein ye have been defiled." Note, The more conversant we are with God's holiness,

the more we shall see of the odious nature of sin. There ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight. Note, Ingenious evangelical repentance makes people loathe themselves for their sins, as *Job xlii. 5, 6.* (5.) He will give them the knowledge of himself; *They shall know by experience, that he is the Lord*; that he is a God of almighty power and in exhaustible goodness; kind to his people, and faithful to his covenant with them. Note, All the favours we receive from God should lead us into a more intimate acquaintance with him. (6.) He will do all this for his own name's sake, notwithstanding their undeservings and ill-deservings; (*v. 44.*) he has wrought with them, wrought for them, wrought in favour of them, wrought in concurrence with them, they doing their endeavour, he has wrought with them purely for his name's sake. His reasons were all fetched from himself. Had he dealt with them according to their wicked ways and their corrupt doings, though they were the better and sounder part of the house of Israel, he had left them to be scattered and lost with the rest; but he recovered and restored them for the sake of his own name, not only that it might not be polluted, (*v. 14.*) but that he might be sanctified in them before the heathen, (*v. 41.*) that he might sanctify himself; so the word is; for it is God's work to glorify his own name. He will do well for his people, that he may have the glory of it; that he may manifest himself to be a God pardoning sin, and so keeping promise; that his people may praise him, and that their neighbours may likewise take notice of him, as they did when God turned again their captivity, *Ps. cxxvi. 3.* Then said they among the heathen, *The Lord has done great things for them.*

45. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 46. Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field; 47. And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the LORD, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein. 48. And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it: it shall not be quenched. 49. Then said I, Ah Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?

We have here a prophecy of wrath against Judah and Jerusalem, which should more fitly have begun the next chapter, than have concluded this; for it has no dependence on what goes before, but that which follows in the beginning of the next chapter is the explication of it, when the people complained that this was a parable which they understood not. In this parable,

1. It is a forest that is prophesied against, the forest of the south field, Judah and Jerusalem. These lay south from Babylon, where Ezekiel now was, and therefore he is directed to set his face toward the south, (*v. 46.*) to intimate to them that God had set his face against them, was displeased with them, and determined to destroy them. But though it be a message of wrath which he has to deliver, he must deliver it with mildness and tenderness, he must drop his word toward the south: his doctrine must distil as the rain, (*Dent. xxxii. 2.*) that people's hearts might be softened by it, as

the earth by the *river of God*, which *droops upon the pastures of the wilderness*, (Ps. lxx. 12.) and which a *south land* more especially calls for, Josh. xv. 19. Judah and Jerusalem are called *forests*, not only because they had been full of people, as a wood of trees, but because they had been empty of fruit, for fruit-trees grow not in a forest; and a *forest* is put in opposition to a *fruitful field*, Isa. xxxii. 15. They that should have been as the garden of the Lord, and his vineyard, were become like a forest, all overgrown with *briers and thorns*; and those that are so, that bring not forth the fruits of righteousness, God's word prophesies against.

2. It is a fire kindled in his forest, that is prophesied of, v. 47. All those judgments which wasted and consumed both the city and the country, sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity, are signified by this *fire*. (1.) It is a fire of God's own kindling; *I will kindle a fire in thee, the breath of the Lord is not as a drop, but as a stream of brimstone* to set it on fire, Isa. xxx. 33. He that had been himself a protecting Fire about Jerusalem, is now a Consuming Fire in it. *All flesh shall see by the fury of this fire, and the desolations it shall make*, especially when they compare it with the sins which had made them fuel for this fire, that it is the *Lord that has kindled it*, (v. 48.) as a just Avenger of his own injured honour. (2.) This conflagration shall be general; all orders and degrees of men shall be devoured by it; young and old, rich and poor, high and low; even *green trees*, which the fire does not easily fasten upon, shall be devoured by this fire; even good people shall some of them be involved in these calamities; and *if this be done in the green trees, what shall be done in the dry?* The *dry trees* shall be as tinder and touch-wood to this fire. *All faces*, all that covers the face of the earth *from the south of Canaan to the north, from Beersheba to Dan*, shall be burnt therein. (3.) The *fire shall not be quenched*, no attempts to give check to the dissolution shall prevail. When God will ruin a nation, who or what can save it?

Now observe, [1.] The people's reflection upon the prophet, on occasion of this discourse. They said, *Doth he not speak parables?* This was the language either of their ignorance or infidelity, (the plainest truths were as parables to them,) or of their malice and ill will to the prophet. Note, It is common for those who will not be wrought upon by the word, to pick quarrels with it; it is either too plain, or too obscure; too fine, or too homely; too common, or too singular; something or other is amiss in it. [2.] The prophet's complaint to God; *Ah Lord God! they say so and so of me*. Note, It is a comfort to us, when people speak ill of us unjustly, that we have a God to complain to.

## CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter, we have, I. An explication of the prophecy in the close of the foregoing chapter concerning the fire in the forest, which the people complained they could not understand, (v. 1..5.) with directions to the prophet to show himself deeply affected with it, v. 6, 7. II. A further prediction of the sword that was coming upon the land, by which all shall be laid waste; and this expressed very emphatically, v. 8..17. III. A prospect given of the king of Babylon's approach to Jerusalem, to which he was determined by divination, v. 18..24. IV. Sentence passed upon Zedekiah king of Judah, v. 25..27. V. The destruction of the Ammonites by the sword foretold, v. 28..32. Thus is this chapter all threatening.

1. **AND** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel, 3. And

say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. 4. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north; 5. That all flesh may know that I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more. 6. Sigh, therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes. 7. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings, because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the LORD God.

The prophet had faithfully delivered the message he was intrusted with in the close of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it, not daring to add his own comment upon it; but when he complained that the people found fault with him for *speaking parables*, the word of the Lord came to him again, and gave him a key to that figurative discourse, that with it he might let the people into the meaning of it, and so silence that objection. For all men shall be rendered inexcusable at God's bar, and every mouth shall be stopped. Note, He that *speaks with tongues*, should *pray that he may interpret*, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. When we speak to people about their souls, we should study plainness, and express ourselves as we may be best understood. Christ *expounded his parables to his disciples*, Mark iv. 34.

1. The prophet is here more plainly directed against whom to level the arrow of this prophecy. He must *drop his word toward the holy places*, (v. 2.) toward Canaan the holy land, Jerusalem the holy city, the temple, the holy house. These were highly dignified above other places; but when they *polluted* them, that word which used to drop in the holy places, shall now drop against them; *Prophesy against the land of Israel*. It was the honour of Israel, that it had prophets and prophecy; but these, being despised by them, are turned against them. And justly is Zion battered with her own artillery, which used to be employed against her adversaries, seeing she knew not how to value it.

2. He is instructed, and is to instruct the people in the meaning of the *fire* that was threatened to consume the *forest of the south*; it signified a *sword drawn*, the sword of war which should make the land desolate; (v. 3.) *Behold, I am against thee, O land of Israel*. There needs no more to make a people miserable than to have God against them; for as, if he be *for us*, we need not fear, whoever are against us; so, if he be against us, we cannot hope, whoever are for us. And God's professing people, when they revolt from him, set him against them, who used to be for them. Was the *fire* there of *God's kindling*? The sword here is his *sword*, which he has prepared, and which he will give commission to; it is he that will *draw it out of its sheath*, where it had lain quiet, and threatened no harm. Note, When the sword is unsheathed among the



nations, God's hand must be eyed and owned in it. Did the fire devour *every green tree and every dry tree*? The sword in like manner shall cut off the *righteous and the wicked*; good and bad were involved in the common calamities of the nation; the righteous were cut off from the land of Israel, when they were sent *captives* in Babylon, though perhaps few or none of them were cut off from the land of the living; and it was a threatening omen to the land of Israel, that in the beginning of its troubles such excellent men as Daniel and his fellows, and Ezekiel, were cut off from it, and conveyed to Babylon. But though the sword cut off the *righteous and the wicked*, (for it devours one as well as another, 2 Sam. xi. 25.) yet far be it from us to think that the *righteous are as the wicked*, Gen. xviii. 25. No, God's graces and comforts make a great difference when his providence seem to make none. The *good figs* are sent into Babylon for their good, Jer. xxiv. 5, 6. It is only in outward appearance that there is one event to the *righteous and to the wicked*, Eccl. ix. 2. But it speaks the greatness of God's displeasure against the land of Israel. Well might it be said, *His eye shall not spare*, when it shall not spare, no, not the *righteous* in it. Since there are not righteous men sufficient to save the land, to make the justice of God the more illustrious, the few that are, shall suffer with it, and God's mercy shall make it up to them some other way. Did the fire burn up all the faces from the south to the north? The sword shall go forth against all flesh from the south to the north; shall go forth, as God's sword, with a commission that cannot be contested, with a force that cannot be resisted. Were all flesh made to know that God kindled the fire? They shall be made to know that he has drawn forth the sword, v. 5. And, lastly, Shall the fire that is kindled never be quenched? So when this sword of the Lord is drawn against Judah and Jerusalem, the scabbard is thrown away, and it shall never be sheathed; it shall not return any more, till it has made a full end.

3. The prophet is ordered, by expressions of his own grief and concern for these calamities that were coming on, to try to make impressions of the like upon the people. When he has delivered his message, he must sigh, (v. 6.) must fetch many deep sighs, *with the breaking of his loins*; he must sigh as if his heart would burst, *sigh with bitterness*, with other expressions of bitter sorrow, and this publicly, *in the sight* of those to whom he delivered the foregoing message, that this might be a sermon to their eyes, as that was to their ears; and it was well if both would work upon them. The prophet must sigh, though it was painful to himself, and made his breast sore; and though it is probable that the profane among the people would ridicule him for it, and call him a whining, canting preacher. But if we be beside ourselves, it is to God; and if this be to be vile, we will be yet more so. Note, Ministers, if they would affect others with the things they speak of, must show that they are themselves in the greatest sincerity affected with them; and must submit to that which may create uneasiness to themselves, so that it will promote the ends of their ministry. The people, observing the prophet to sigh so much, and seeing no visible occasion for it, would ask, "Wherefore sighest thou? These sighs have some mystical meaning, let us know what it is;" and he must answer them, (v. 7.) "It is for the tidings, the heavy tidings, that we shall hear shortly; the tidings come, the judgments come, which we hear the tidings of, they come apace; and then you will all sigh: nay, that will not serve, *every heart shall melt, and every spirit fail*; your courage will all be gone, and you will have no animating considerations to support yourselves with: and when

heart and spirit fail, it will follow of course, that all hands will be feeble and unable to fight, and all knees will be weak as water and unable to flee, or to stand their ground." Those who have God for them, when flesh and heart fail, have him to be the Strength of their heart; but those who have God against them, have no cordial for a fainting spirit, but are as Belshazzar when his thoughts trouble him, Dan. v. 6. But some people are worse frightened than hurt; may not the case be so here, and the event prove better than likely? No, behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass. It is not a bugbear that they are frightened with, but according to the fear so is the wrath, and more grievous than is feared.

3. Again, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD: Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: 10. It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter: it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree. 11. And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. 12. Cry and howl, son of man; for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel: terrors, by reason of the sword, shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon thy thigh. 13. Because it is a trial, and what if the sword condemn even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord God. 14. Thou, therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thy hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers. 15. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied. Ah! it is made bright, it is wrapt up for the slaughter. 16. Go thee one way or other, either on the right hand, or on the left, whithersoever thy face is set. 17. I will also smite my hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said it.

Here is another prophecy of the sword, which is delivered in a very affecting manner; the expressions here used are somewhat intricate, and perplex interpreters. The sword was unsheathed in the foregoing verses, here it is fitted up to do execution, which the prophet is commanded to lament.

Observe, 1. How the sword is here described. (1.) It is sharpened, that it may cut and wound and make a sore slaughter. The wrath of God will put an edge upon it; and whatever instruments God shall please to make use of in executing his judgments, he will fill them with strength, courage, and fury, according to the service they are employed in. Out of the mouth of Christ goes a sharp sword, Rev. xix. 15. (2.) It is furbished, that it may glitter, to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It shall be a kind of flaming sword. If it have rusted in the scabbard for want of use, it shall be rubbed and brightened; for

though the glory of God's justice may seem to have been eclipsed for awhile, during the day of his patience, and the delay of his judgments, yet it will shine out again, and be made to glitter. (3.) It is a victorious sword, nothing shall stand before it; (v. 10.) *It contemneth the rod of my son as every tree.* Israel, said God once, *is my son, my first-born.* The government of that people was called a *rod*, a *strong rod*; we read, (ch. xix. 11.) of the *strong rods* they had for *sceptres*; but when the sword of God's justice is drawn, it *contemns this rod*, makes nothing of it, though it be a *strong rod*, and the *rod of his son*; it is no more than *any other tree*. When God's professing people are revolted from him, and in rebellion against him, his sword *lespises* them. What are they to him more than another people? The marginal reading gives another notion of this sword; *It is the rod of my son*; and we know of whom God has said, (Ps. ii. 7.) *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, and (v. 9.) *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.* This sword is that *rod of iron*, which *contemns every tree*, and will bear it down. Or, This sword is the *rod of my Son*, a correcting rod, for the chastening of the transgression of God's people, (2 Sam. vii. 14.) not to cut them off from being a people. It is a sword to others, a *rod to my son*.

2. How the sword is here put into the hand of the executioners; It is *the rod of my Son*, and he has given it that it may be handled, (v. 11.) that it may be made use of for the end for which it was drawn. *It is given into the hand*, not of the fencer to be played with, but of the *slayer* to do execution with. The sword of war my Son makes use of as a sword of justice, and to him *all judgment is committed*. It is *made bright*, (v. 15.) it is *wrapped up*, that it may be kept safe, and clean, and sharp for the slaughter, not as Goliath's sword was wrapped up in a cloth, only for a memorial, 1 Sam. xxi. 9.

3. How the sword is directed, and against whom it is sent; (v. 12.) *It shall be upon my people*; they shall fall by this sword; it is repeated again, as that which is scarcely credible, that *the sword of the heathen shall be upon God's own people*. Nay, it shall be *upon all the princes of Israel*; their dignity and power as *princes* shall be no more their security than their profession of religion as *princes of Israel*. But if the sword be at any time upon God's people, have they not comfort within sufficient to arm them against every thing in it that is frightful? Yes, they have, while they conduct themselves as becomes his people; but these had not done so, and therefore *terrors, by reason of the sword*, shall be upon those that call themselves *my people*. Note, While good men are quiet, not only *from evil*, but *from the fear of it*, wicked men are disturbed not only with the sword, but with the *terrors of it*, arising from a consciousness of their own guilt. This sword is directed particularly *against the great men*, for they had been the greatest sinners among them; they had *altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds*, (Jer. v. 5.) and therefore with them in a special manner God's controversy is, who had been the ringleaders in sin. *The sword of the slain is the sword of the great men that are slain*, v. 14. Though they have furnished themselves with places of retirement, places of concealment, where they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall be safe, they will find that the sword will *enter into their privy chambers*, and find them out there, as the *frogs*, when they were one of Egypt's plagues, found admission into the *chambers of their kings*. The sword, the *point of this sword*, is directed *against their gates*, against *all their gates*, (v. 15.) against all those things with which they thought to keep it out, and fortify themselves against it. Note, The strongest gates, though they be *gates of brass*,

ever so well barred, ever so well guarded, are no fence against the point of the sword of God's judgments. But when that is *pointed* against sinners, (1.) They are ready to fear the worst; *their hearts faint*, so that they are not able to make any resistance. (2.) The worst comes; whatever resistance they make, it is to no purpose, but they are ruined, and *their ruins are multiplied*. But what need have we to observe the particular directions of this sword, when it has a general commission, is sent with a running warrant? (v. 16.) "*Go ther, one way or other, which way thou wilt, turn to the right hand, or to the left, thou wilt find those that are obnoxious, for there are none free from guilt; and thou hast authority against them, for there are none exempt from punishment; and therefore, whithersoever thy face is set, that way do thou proceed, and, like Jonathan's sword, from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, thou shalt never return empty.*" 2 Sam. i. 22. Note, So full is the world of wicked people, that, which way soever God's judgments go forth, they will find work, will find matter to work upon. That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel. And such various methods God has of *meeting with sinners*, that the sword of his justice is still as it was at first, when it flamed in the hand of the cherubims, it *turns every way*, Gen. iii. 24.

4. What is the nature of this sword, and what are the intentions and limitations of it as to the people of God, v. 13. It is a correction; it is designed to be so; the sword to others is a rod to them. This is a comfortable word which comes in in the midst of these terrible ones, though it be expressed somewhat obscurely. (1.) The people of God begin to be afraid that *the sword will condemn even the rod*; that the sword will go on with such fury, that it will *despise* its commission to be a *rod* only, will forget its bounds, and become a *sword* indeed, even to God's own people. They fear lest the Chaldeans' sword, which is the rod of God's anger, *contemn* its being called a *rod*, and become as the *axe* that *boasts itself against him that heareth therewith, or the staff that lifts up itself as if it were no wood*, Isa. x. 15. Or, "*What if the sword contemn even the rod?* What if this sword make the former rods, as that of Sennacherib, to be contemned as nothing to this? What if this should prove not a correcting rod, but a destroying sword, to make a full end of our church and nation?" This is that which the *thinking*, but *timorous* few, are apprehensive of. Note, When threatening judgments are abroad, it is good to suppose the worst that may be the consequences of them, that we may provide accordingly. *What if the sword contemn the tribe or sceptre?* that of Judah and the house of David, so some think Shebet here signifies; what if it should aim at the ruin of our government? If it do, the *Lord is righteous, and will be gracious* notwithstanding. But, (2.) These fears are silenced with an assurance that it is not so, the sword shall not forget itself, nor the errand on which it is sent; *It is a trial*, and it is *no more than a trial*. He that sends it, makes what use of it, and sets what bounds to it, he pleases. Here shall its proud waves be stayed. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when his judgments are abroad, and they are ready to tremble for fear of them, that, whatever they are to others, to them they are but *trials*; and *when they are tried, they shall come forth as gold*, and the *proving* of their faith shall be the *improving* of it.

5. Here the prophet and the people must show themselves affected with these judgments threatened.

(1.) The prophet must be very serious in denouncing these judgments. He must say, *A sword, a sword*, v. 9. Let him not study for fine words, and a variety of quaint expressions; when the town

is on fire, people do not so give notice of it, but cry, with a frightful, doleful voice, *Fire, fire*. So must the prophet cry, *A sword, a sword*; and, (v. 14.) *Let the sword be doubled the third time in thy preaching*. God speaks once, yea, twice, yea, thrice; it were well if men, after all, would perceive and regard it: it shall be *doubled the third time*, in God's providence; for it was Nebuchadnezzar's third descent upon Jerusalem, that *made a full end of it*. Ruin comes gradually, but at last comes effectually, upon a provoking people. Yet this is not all, the prophet is not only as a herald-at-arms to proclaim war, and to cry, *A sword, a sword*, once and again, and a third time, but, as a person nearly concerned, he must *cry and howl*, (v. 12.) must sadly lament the desolations that the sword would make, as one that did himself not only sympathize with the sufferers, but feel from the sufferings. Again, (v. 14.) *Prophesy, and smite thy hands together*, wring *thy hands*, as lamenting the desolation; or, *Clap thy hands*, as by thy prophecy instigating and encouraging those that were to be the instruments of it; or as one standing amazed at the suddenness and severity of the judgment. The prophet must *smite his hands together*; for (says God) *I will also smite mine hands together*, v. 17. God is in earnest in pronouncing this sentence upon them, and therefore the prophet must show himself in earnest in publishing it. God's *smiting his hands together*, as well as the prophet's, is in token of a holy indignation at their wickedness, which was really very astonishing. When Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, he *smote his hands together*, Num. xxiv. 10. Note, God and his ministers are justly *angry* at those who *might be saved*, and yet *will be ruined*. Some make it an expression of triumph and exultation, agreeing with that, (Isa. i. 24.) *Th, I will ease me of mine adversaries*; and that, (Prov. i. 26.) *I also will laugh at their calamity*. And so it follows here. *I will cause my fury to rest*; not only it shall be *perfected*, but it shall be *pleased*. And observe with what solemnity, with what authority, this sentence is ratified; "*I the Lord have said it*, who can and will make good what I have said. *I have said it*, and will never unsay it. *I have said it*, and who can gainsay it?"

(2.) The people must be very serious in the prospect of these judgments. An intimation of this comes in in a parenthesis, v. 10. *Should we then make mirth?* Seeing God has drawn the sword, and the prophet sighs and cries, *should we then make mirth?* The prophet seems to give this as a reason why he sighs, as Neh. ii. 3. *Why should not my countenance be sad*, when Jerusalem lies waste? Note, Before we allow ourselves to be merry, we ought to consider whether we should be merry or no. Should we make mirth, we, who are sentenced to the sword, who lie under the wrath and curse of God? Shall we make mirth at other people, who have gone a *whoring from our God?* Hos. ix. 1. Should we now make mirth, when the hand of God is gone out against us, when God's judgments are abroad in the land, and he by them *calls to weeping and mourning?* Isa. xxii. 11, 13. Shall we now make mirth as the king and Haman, when the church is in perplexity, (Esther iii. 15.) when we should be *grieving for the affliction of Joseph?* Amos vi. 6.

13. The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 19. Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land; and choose thou a place, choose *it* at the head of the way to the city. 20. Appoint a way, that

the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defended. 21. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made *his* arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. 22. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint *battering* rams against the gates, to cast a mount, *and* to build a fort. 23. And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. 24. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, *I say*, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand. 25. And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity *shall have* an end; 26. Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this *shall not be* the same: exalt *him that is low*, and abase *him that is high*. 27. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it *him*.

The prophet, in the verses before, had showed them the sword coming; he here shows them that sword coming against them, that they might not flatter themselves that by some means or other it should be diverted a contrary way.

I. He must see and show the Chaldean army coming against Jerusalem, and determined by a supreme power so to do. The prophet must *appoint him two ways*, he must upon a paper draw out two roads, (v. 19.) as sometimes is done in maps; and he must bring the king of Babylon's army to the place where the roads part, for there they will make a stand. They both *come out of the same land*, but when they come to the place where one road leads to Rabbah, the head city of the Ammonites, and the other to Jerusalem, he makes a pause; for though he is resolved to be the ruin of both, yet he is not determined which to attack *first*; here his politics and his politicians leave him at a loss. The sword must go either to Rabbah, or to Judah in Jerusalem. Many of the inhabitants of Judah had now taken shelter in Jerusalem, and all the interests of the country were bound up in the safety of the city, and therefore it is called *Judah in Jerusalem the defended*; so strongly fortified was it, both by nature and art, that it was thought impregnable, Lam. iv. 12. The prophet must describe this dilemma that the king of Babylon is at; (v. 21.) for the king of Babylon stood; he shall stand considering what course to take, at the head of the two ways. Though he was a prince of great foresight and great resolution, yet, it seems, he knew neither his own interest nor his own mind. Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom nor the mighty man in his arbitrary power, for even those that may do what they will, seldom know what to do for the best. Now observe, 1. The method he took to come to a resolution; he

used divination, applied himself to a higher and invisible power, perhaps to the determination of Providence by a lot, in order to which he made his arrows bright, that were to be drawn for the lots, in honour of the solemnity. Perhaps Jerusalem was written on one arrow, and *Rabbah* on the other, and that which was first drawn out of the quiver he determined to attack first. Or, he applied himself to the direction of some pretended oracle; he consulted with images or *Teraphim*, expecting to receive audible answers from them. Or, to the observations which the augurs made upon the entrails of the sacrifices, he looked in the liver, whether the position of that portended good or ill luck. Note, It is a mortification to the pride of the wise men of the earth, that in difficult cases they have been glad to make their court to heaven for direction; as it is an instance of their folly, that they have taken such ridiculous ways of doing it; when in cases proper for an appeal to Providence, it is sufficient that the lot be cast into the lap, with that prayer, *Give a perfect lot*, and a firm belief that the disposal thereof is not fortuitous, but of the Lord, Prov. xvi. 33. 2. The resolution he was hereby brought to. Even by these sinful practices God served his own purposes, and directed him to go to Jerusalem, v. 22. The divination for Jerusalem happened to be at his right hand, which, according to the rules of divination, determined him that way. Note, What services God designs men for, he will be sure in his providence to lead them to, though perhaps they themselves are not aware what guidance they are under. Well, Jerusalem being the mark set up, the campaign is presently opened with the siege of that important place. Captains are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the siege, who must open the mouth in the slaughter, must give directions to the soldiers what to do, and make speeches to animate them. Orders are given to provide every thing necessary for carrying on the siege with vigour; battering-rams must be prepared, and forts built. O what pains, what cost, are men at to destroy one another!

II. He must show both the people and the prince that they bring this destruction upon themselves by their own sin.

1. The people do so, v. 23, 24. They slight the notices that are given them of the judgment coming. Ezekiel's prophecy is to them a false divination; they are not moved or awakened to repentance by it. When they hear that Nebuchadnezzar by his divinations is directed to Jerusalem, and assured of success in that enterprize, they laugh at it, and continue secure, calling it a false divination; because they have sworn oaths, they have joined in a solemn league with the Egyptians, and they depend upon the promise they have made them to raise the siege, or upon the assurance which the false prophets have given them that it shall be raised. Or, it may refer to the oaths of allegiance they had sworn to the king of Babylon, but had violated; for which treachery of their God had given them up to a judicial blindness, so that the fairest warnings given them were slighted by them as false divinations. Note, It is not strange if those who make a jest of the most sacred oaths, can make a jest likewise of the most sacred oracles: for where will a profane mind stop? But shall their unbelief invalidate the counsel of God? Are they safe because they are secure? By no means; nay, the contempt they put upon divine warnings is a sin that brings to remembrance their other sins, and they may thank themselves if they be now remembered against them. (1.) Their present wickedness is discovered. Now that God is contending with them, so perverse and obstinate are they, that, whatever they offer in their own defence, does but add to their offence; they never conducted themselves so ill as they did now that they had the

loudest call given them to repent and reform; so that in all your doings your sins do appear. Turn you which way you will you show a black side. This is too true of every one of us; for not only there is none that lives and sins not, but there is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not. Our best services have such allays of weakness, and filly, and imperfection, and so much evil is present with us even when we would do good, that we may say, with sorrow and shame, In all our doings, and in all our sayings too, our sins do appear, and witness against us, so that if we were under the law we were undone. (2.) This brings to mind their former wickedness; "You have made your iniquity to be remembered, not by yourselves that it might be repented of, but by the justice of God that it might be reckoned for. Your own sins make the sins of your fathers to be remembered against you, which otherwise you should never have smarted for." Note, God remembers former iniquities against those only who by the present discoveries of their wickedness show that they do not repent of them. (3.) That they may suffer for all together, they are turned over to the destroyer, that they may be taken; (v. 23.) "Ye shall be taken with the hand that God had appointed to seize you and to hold you, and out of which you cannot escape." Men are said to be God's hand, when they are made use of as the ministers of his justice, Ps. xviii. 4. Note, Those who will not be taken with the word of God's grace, shall at last be taken by the hand of his wrath.

2. The prince likewise brings his ruin upon himself. Zedekiah is the prince of Israel, to whom the prophet here, in God's name, addresses himself; and if he had not spoken in God's name, he would not have spoken so boldly, so bluntly; for is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked?

(1.) He gives him his character, v. 25. Thou profane and wicked prince of Israel! He was not so bad as some of his predecessors, and yet bad enough to merit this character. He was himself profane, lost to every thing that is virtuous and sacred. And he was wicked, as he promoted sin among his people; he sinned, and made Israel to sin. Note, Profaneness and wickedness are bad in any, but worst of all in a prince, a prince of Israel; who, as an Israelite, should know better himself, and, as a prince, give a better example, and have a better influence on these about him.

(2.) He reads him his doom. His iniquity has an end, the measure of it is full, and therefore his day is come, the day of his punishment, the day of divine vengeance. Note, Though they who are wicked and profane may flourish awhile, yet their day will come to fall. The sentence here passed is, [1.] That Zedekiah shall be deposed; he has forfeited his crown, and he shall no longer wear it; he has by his profaneness profaned his crown, and it shall be cast to the ground; (v. 26.) Remove the diadem. Crowns and diadems are loseable things; it is only in the other world that there is a crown of glory that fades not away; a kingdom that cannot be moved. The Chaldee Paraphrase expounds it thus, Take away the diadem from Seraiah the chief priest, and I will take away the crown from Zedekiah the king; neither this nor that shall abide in his place, but shall be removed. This shall not be the same; not the same he has been; this not this; so the word is. Profane and wicked perhaps he is as he has been, but not prince of Israel as he has been. Note, Men lose their dignity by their iniquity. Their profaneness and wickedness remove their diadem, and take off their crown, and make them the reverse of what they were. [2.] That great confusion and disorder in the state shall follow hereupon; every thing shall be turned upside down. The conqueror shall take a pride in exalting him that is low, and abasing

him that is high, preserving some, and degrading others, at his pleasure, without any regard either to right or merit. [3.] Attempts to re-establish the government shall be blasted, and come to nothing; Gedaliah's particularly, and Ishmael's, who was of the seed-royal, (to which the Chaldee Paraphrase refers this,) neither of them shall be able to make any thing of it. *I will overturn, overturn, overturn, first one project, and then another; for who can build up what God will throw down?* [4.] This monarchy will never be restored, till it is fixed for perpetuity in the hands of the Messiah. There shall be no more kings of the house of David after Zedekiah, till Christ comes, *whose right the kingdom is*, who is that Seed of David in whom the promise was to have its full accomplishment, and *I will give it him*. He shall have the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. Immediately before the coming of Christ there was a long eclipse of the royal dignity, as there was also a failing of the spirit of prophecy, that his shining forth in the fulness of time both as King and Prophet might appear the more illustrious. Note, Christ has an incontestable title to the dominion and sovereignty both in the church and in the world; the kingdom is *his right*. And having the right, he shall in due time have the possession; *I will give it him*; and there shall be a general overturning of all, rather than he shall come short of his right; and a certain overturning of all the opposition that stands in his way, to make room for him, Dan. ii. 45. 1 Cor. xv. 25. This is mentioned here for the comfort of those who feared that the promise made in David would fail for evermore. "No," says God, "that promise is sure, for the Messiah's kingdom shall last for ever."

23. And thou, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn; for the slaughter it is furnished, to consume because of the glittering; 29. While they see vanity unto thee, while they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end. 30. Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. 31. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee; I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and skillful to destroy. 32. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered; for I the Lord have spoken it.

The prediction of the destruction of the Ammonites, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, seems to come in here upon occasion of the king of Babylon's diverting his design against Rabbah, when he turned it upon Jerusalem; upon this the Ammonites grew very insolent, and triumphed over Jerusalem; but the prophet must let them know that forbearance is no acquittance; the reprieve is not a pardon; their day also is at hand; their turn comes next, and it will be but a poor satisfaction to them, that they are to be devoured last, to be last executed.

1. The sin of the Ammonites is here intimated; it is *their reproach*, v. 28. (1.) The reproach they

put upon themselves when they hearkened to their false prophets, (for such it seems there were among them as well as among the Jews,) who pretended to foretell their perpetual safety in the midst of the desolations that were made of the countries round about them; "They see vanity unto thee, and divine a lie, v. 29. They flatter thee with promises of peace, and thou art such a fool as to suffer thyself to be imposed upon by them, and to encourage them therein by giving credit to them." Note, Those that feed themselves with a self-conceit in the day of their prosperity, prepare matter for a self-reproach in the day of their calamity. (2.) The reproach they put upon the Israel of God, when they triumphed in their afflictions, and thereby added affliction to them, which was very barbarous and inhuman. Their divines, by puffing them up with a conceit that they were a better people than Israel, being spared when they were cut off, and with a confidence that their prosperity should always continue, made them so very haughty and insolent, that they did even tread on the necks of the Israelites that were slain, slain by the wicked Chaldeans, who had commission to execute God's judgments upon them when their iniquity had an end, when the measure of it was full; we shall meet with this again, ch. xxv. 3, &c. Note, Those are ripening apace for misery, who trample upon the people of God in their distress, whereas they ought to tremble when judgment begins at the house of God.

2. The utter destruction of the Ammonites is threatened. For the reproach cast on the church by her neighbours will be returned into their own bosom, Ps. lxxix. 12. Let us see how terrible the threatening is, and the destruction will be. (1.) It shall come from the wrath of God, who resents the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself; (v. 31.) *I will pour out my indignation as a shower of fire and brimstone upon thee*; the least drop of divine indignation and wrath will create tribulation and anguish enough to the soul of man that does evil; what then would a full stream of that indignation and wrath do? "I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath; I will blow up the fire of my wrath against thee, it shall burn with the utmost vehemence." Thou shalt be for fuel to this fire, v. 32. Note, Wicked men make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath; they are consumed by it, and it is inflamed by them. (2.) It shall be effected by the sword of war; to them he must cry, as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow, *The sword, the sword is drawn*; v. 28. (compare v. 9, 10.) it is drawn to consume because of the glittering, because it is brandished and glitters, and is fit to be made use of. Gods executions will answer his preparations. This sword, when it is drawn, shall not return into its sheath (v. 30.) till it has done the work for which it was drawn. When the sword is drawn, it does not return till God causes it to return, and he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Who can change his purpose? (3.) The persons employed in it are brutish men, and skillful to destroy. Men of such a bad character as this, who have the wit of men to do the work of wild beasts; human reason, which makes them skillful, but no human compassion, which makes them skillful only to destroy; though they are the scandal of mankind, yet sometimes they are made use of to serve God's purposes; God delivers the Ammonites into the hands of such, and justly, for they themselves were brutish, and delighted in the destruction of God's Israel. We have reason to pray, as Paul desired to be prayed for, that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, (2 Thess. iii. 2.) men that seem made for doing mischief. (4.) The place where they should thus be reckoned with; "I will judge thee there where thou wast created, where thou wast

first formed into a people, and where thou hast been settled ever since, and therefore where thou seemest to have taken root; *the land of thy nativity* shall be the land of thy destruction." Note, God can bring ruin upon us there where we are most secure; and turn us out of that land which we thought we had a title to not to be disputed, and a possession of not to be disturbed; *Thy blood shall be shed* not only in thy borders, but *in the midst of thy land*. Lastly, It shall be an irreparable ruin; "Though thou mayest think to recover thyself, it is in vain to think of it, thou *shalt be no more remembered* with any respect," Ps. ix. 6. Justly is their name blotted out, who would have Israel's name for ever lost.

## CHAP. XXII.

Here are three several messages which God intrusts the prophet to deliver concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and all to the same purport, to show them their sins, and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins. I. Here is a catalogue of their sins, by which they had exposed themselves to shame, and for which God would bring them to ruin, v. 1. . 16. II. They are here compared to dross, and are condemned as dross to the fire, v. 17. . 22. III. All orders and degrees of men among them are here found guilty of the neglect of the duty of their place, and of having contributed to the national guilt, which therefore, since none appeared as intercessors, they must all expect to share in the punishment of, v. 23. . 31.

1. **M**OREOVER, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city! yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations. 3. Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come; and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. 4. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come *even* unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. 5. *Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed.* 6. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. 7. In thee have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger; in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. 8. Thou hast despised my holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. 9. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood; and in thee they eat upon the mountains; in the midst of thee they commit lewdness; 10. In thee have they discovered their father's nakedness; in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. 11. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. 12. In thee

have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD. 13. Behold, therefore, I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. 14. Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken *it*, and will do *it*. 15. And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. 16. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

In these verses, the prophet by a commission from Heaven is set as a judge upon the bench, and Jerusalem is made to hold up her hand as a prisoner at the bar; and if prophets were set over other nations, much more over God's nation, Jer. i. 10. This prophet is authorized to *judge the bloody city; the city of bloods*. Jerusalem is so called, not only because she had been guilty of the particular sin of bloodshed, but because her crimes in general were *bloody crimes*, (*ch. vii. 23.*) such as polluted her in her blood, and for which she deserved to have blood given her to drink. Now the business of a judge with a malefactor is to convict him of his crimes, and then to pass sentence upon him for them. These two things Ezekiel is to do here.

1. He is to find Jerusalem guilty of many heinous crimes here enumerated in a long bill of indictment, and it is *billā vera*—*a true bill*; so he writes upon it, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. He must *show her all her abominations*, (*v. 2.*) that God may be justified in all the desolations brought upon her. Let us take a view of all the particular sins which Jerusalem here stands charged with; and they are all exceeding sinful.

1. Murder; *The city sheds blood*, not only in the suburbs, where the strangers dwell, but *in the midst of it*, where, one would think, the magistrates would, if any where, be vigilant. Even there people were murdered either in duels or by secret assassinations and poisonings, or in the courts of justice under colour of law, and there was no care taken to discover and punish the murderers, according to the law, (*Gen. ix. 6.*) no, nor so much as the ceremony used to expiate an uncertain murder, (*Deut. xxi. 1.*) and so the guilt and pollution remains upon the city. *Thus thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed*, v. 4. This crime is insisted most upon, for it was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin more than any other; it is said to be that *which the Lord would not pardon*, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. (1.) The *princes of Israel*, who should have been the protectors of injured innocence, *every one were to their power to shed blood*, v. 6. They thirsted for it, and delighted in it, and whoever came within their power were sure to *feel it*; whoever lay at their mercy were sure to *find none*. (2.) There were those who *carried tales to shed blood*, v. 9. They told lies of men to the princes, to whom they knew it would be pleasing, to incense them against them; or betrayed what passed in private conversation, to make mischief among neighbours, and set them together by the ears, to bite, and devour, and worry one another, even to death. Note, Those who, by giving invidious characters, and telling ill-natured stories of their neighbours, sow



discord among brethren, will be accountable for all the mischief that follows upon it; as he that kindles a fire will be for all the hurt it does. (3.) There were those who *took gifts to shed blood*, (v. 12.) who would be hired with money to swear a man out of his life, or, if they were upon a jury, would be bribed to find an innocent man guilty. When so much barbarous, bloody work of this kind was done in Jerusalem, we may well conclude, [1.] That men's consciences were become wretchedly profligate and seared, and their hearts hardened; for *they* would stick at no wickedness, who would not stick at this. [2.] That abundance of quiet, harmless, good people were made away with, whereby as the guilt of the city was increased, so the number of those that should have stood in the gap, to turn away the wrath of God, was diminished.

2. Idolatry; *She makes idols against herself to destroy herself*, v. 3. And again, (v. 4.) *Thou hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made*. Note, Those who make idols for themselves will be found to have made them against themselves, for idolaters put a cheat upon themselves, and prepare destruction for themselves; besides that thereby they pollute themselves, they render themselves odious in the eyes of the just and jealous God, and even their mind and conscience are defiled, so that to them *nothing is pure*. Those who did not make idols themselves, were not found guilty of *eating upon the mountains*, or high places, (v. 9.) in honour of the idols, and in communion with idolaters.

3. Disobedience to parents; (v. 7.) *In thee have the children set light by their father and mother*, mocked them, cursed them, and despised to obey them, which was a sign of a more than ordinary corruption of nature as well as manners, and a disposition to all manner of disorder, Isa. iii. 5. They that set light by their parents, are in the high way to all wickedness. God had made many wholesome laws for the support of the paternal authority, but no care was taken to put them in execution; nay, the Pharisees in their day taught children, under pretence of respect to the Corban, to set light by their parents, and refuse to maintain them, Matth. xv. 5.

4. Oppression and extortion. To enrich themselves, they wronged the poor; (v. 7.) *They dealt by oppression and deceit with the stranger*, taking advantage of his necessities, and his ignorance of the laws and customs of the country. In Jerusalem, that should have been a sanctuary to the oppressed, they vexed the fatherless and widows by unreasonable demands and inquisitions, or troublesome law-suits, in which might prevail against right; *"Thou hast taken usury and increase"*, (v. 12.) not only there are those in thee that do it, but *thou hast done it*." It was an act of the city or community; the public money, which should have been employed in public charity, is put out to usury, with extortion. *Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by violence and wrong*. For neighbours to gain by one another in a way of fair trading is well, but those who are *greedy of gain* will not be held within the rules of equity.

5. Profanation of the sabbath and other holy things. This commonly goes along with the other sins for which they here stand indicted; (v. 8.) *Thou hast despised mine holy things*, holy oracles, holy ordinances; the rites which God appointed were thought too plain, too ordinary, they despised them, and therefore were fond of the customs of the heathen. Note, Immorality and dishonesty are commonly attended with a contempt of religion and the worship of God; *Thou hast profaned my sabbaths*. There was not in Jerusalem that face of sabbath-sanctification that one would have expected in the holy city. Sabbath-breaking is an iniquity

that is an inlet to all iniquity. Many have owned it to contribute as much to their own ruin as any thing.

6. Uncleaness and all manner of seventh-commandment sins, fruits of those vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gives men up, to punish them for their idolatry and profanation of holy things. Jerusalem had been famous for its purity, but now *in the midst of thee they commit lewdness*; (v. 9.) it goes barefaced, though in the most scandalous instances; as that of a man's having his father's wife, which is the *discovery of the father's nakedness*, (v. 10.) and is a sin not to be named among Christians without the utmost detestation, (1 Cor. v. 1.) and was made a capital crime by the law of Moses, Lev. xx. 11. The time *to refrain from embracing* has not been observed, Eccl. iii. 6. *For they have humbled her that was set apart for her pollution*. They made nothing of committing lewdness with a neighbour's wife, with a daughter-in-law, or a sister, v. 11. And shall not God visit for these things?

7. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness; (v. 12.) *"Thou hast forgotten me, else thou wouldest not have done thus."* Note, Sinners do that which provokes God, because they forget him; they forget their descent from him, dependence on him, and obligations to him; they forget how valuable his favour is, which they make themselves unfit for; and how formidable his wrath, which they make themselves obnoxious to. They that *pervert their ways, forget the Lord their God*, Jer. iii. 21.

II. He is to pass sentence upon Jerusalem for these crimes.

1. Let her know that she has filled up the measure of her iniquity, and that her sins are such as forbid delays, and call for speedy vengeance. She has made *her time to come*, (v. 3.) *her days to draw near*; and she is come to her years of maturity for punishment, (v. 4.) as an heir that is come to age, and is ready for his inheritance. God would have been longer with them, but they were arrived at such a pitch of impudence in sin, that God could not in honour give them a further day. Note, Abused patience will at last be weary of forbearing. And when sinners (as Solomon speaks) grow *overmuch wicked*, they die before their time, (Eccl. vii. 17.) and shorten their reprieves.

2. Let her know that she has exposed herself, and therefore God has justly exposed her, to the contempt and scorn of all her neighbours; (v. 4.) *I have made thee a reproach to the heathen*, both those who are near, who are eye-witnesses of Jerusalem's apostasy and degeneracy; and those afar off, who, though at a distance, will think it worth taking notice of, (v. 5.) they shall all mock thee. While they were reproached by their neighbours for their adherence to God, it was their honour, and they might be sure that God would roll away their reproach. But now that they are laughed at for their revolt from God, they must lie down in their shame, and must say, *The Lord is righteous*. They make a mock at Jerusalem, both because her sins had been very scandalous, she is infamous, polluted in name, and has quite lost her credit; and because her punishment is very grievous, she is much vexed, and frets without measure at her troubles. Note, Those who vex most at their troubles, have commonly those about them who will be so much the more apt to make a jest of them.

3. Let her know that God is displeased, highly displeased, at her wickedness, and does and will witness against it; (v. 13.) *I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain*. God, both by his prophets, and by his providence, revealed his wrath from heaven against their *ungodliness and unrighteous-*

ness; the oppressions they were guilty of, though they got by them, and their murders, the blood which has been in the midst of thee; and all their other sins. Note, God has sufficiently discovered how angry he is at the wicked courses of his people; and that they may not say that they have not had fair warning, he smites his hand against the sin before he lays his hand upon the sinner. And this is a good reason why we should despise dishonest gain, even the gain of oppression, and shake our hands from holding of bribes, because these are sins against which God shakes his hands, Isa. xxxiii. 15.

4. Let her know that, proud and secure as she is, she is no match for God's judgments, v. 14. (1.) She is assured that the destruction she has deserved will come; *I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.* He that is true to his promises, will be true to his threatenings too, for he is not a man that he should repent. (2.) It is supposed that she thinks herself able to contend with God, and to stand a siege against his judgments; she bade defiance to the day of the Lord, Isa. v. 19. But, (3.) She is convinced of her utter inability to make her part good with him; *"Can thine heart endure, or can thine hand be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?"* Thou thinkest thou hast to do only with men like thyself, but shalt be made to know thou fallest into the hands of a living God." Observe here, [1.] There is a day coming when God will deal with sinners, a day of visitation. He deals with some, to bring them to repentance, and there is no resisting the force of convictions when he sets them on; he deals with others, to bring them to ruin; he deals with sinners in this life, when he brings upon them his sore judgments. But the days of eternity are especially the days in which God will deal with them; when the full vials of God's wrath will be poured out without mixture. [2.] The wrath of God against sinners, when he comes to deal with them, will be found both intolerable and irresistible. There is no heart stout enough to endure it; it is none of the infirmities which the spirit of a man will sustain; damned sinners can neither forget nor despise their torments, nor have they any thing wherewith to support themselves under their torments. There are no hands strong enough either to ward off the strokes of God's wrath, or to break the chains with which sinners are bound over to the day of wrath. *Who knows the power of God's anger?*

5. Let her know that, since she has walked in the way of the heathen, and learned their works, she shall have enough of them; (v. 15.) *"I will not only send thee among the heathen, out of thine own land, but I will scatter thee among them, and disperse thee in the countries, to be abused and insulted over by strangers."* And since her filthiness and filthy ones continued in her, notwithstanding all the methods God had taken to refine her, (she would not be made clean, Jer. xiii. 27.) he will by his judgments consume her filthiness out of her; he will destroy those that were incurably bad, and reform those that were inclined to be good.

6. Let her know that God has disowned her, and cast her off; he had been her Heritage and Portion; but now, (v. 16.) *"Thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself, shift for thyself, make the best hand thou canst for thyself, for God will no longer undertake for thee."* Note, Those that give up themselves to be ruled by their lusts, will justly be given up to be portioned by them. They that resolve to be their own masters, let them expect no other comfort and happiness than what their own hands can furnish them with, and a miserable portion it will prove; *Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. Thou in thy life time receivest thy good things.* These are the same with this,

*"Thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself, and then when it is too late; and own it in the sight of the heathen, that I am the Lord, who alone am a Portion sufficient for my people."* Note, Those that have lost their interest in God, will know how to value it.

17. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. 21. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. 22. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

The same melancholy string is still harped upon; and various turns given it, to make it affecting, that it may be influencing. The prophet must here show, or at least it is here shown him, that the whole house of Israel is become as dross, and that as dross they shall be consumed. What David has said concerning the wicked ones of the world, is here said concerning the wicked ones of the church, now that it is corrupt and degenerate; (Ps. cxix. 119.) *Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross.*

1. See here how the wretched degeneracy of the house of Israel is described. That state, in David's and Solomon's time, had been a head of gold; when the kingdoms were divided, it was as the arms of silver. But now, (1.) It is degenerated into baser metal, of no value in comparison with what it formerly was; *They are all brass, and tin, and iron, and lead;* which some make to signify divers sorts of sinners among them; their being brass denotes the impudence of some in their wickedness, they are brazen-faced, and cannot blush; their shoes had been iron and brass, (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) but now their brow is so, Isa. xlviii. 4. Their being tin denotes the hypocritical profession of piety, with which many of them cover their iniquity; they have a specious show, but no intrinsic worth. Their being iron denotes the cruel disposition of some, and their delight in war, according to the character of the iron age. Their being lead denotes their dullness, sottishness, and stupidity: though soft and pliable to evil, yet heavy and not moveable to good. *How is the gold become dross! How is the most fine gold changed!* So is Jerusalem's degeneracy bewailed, Lam. iv. 1. Yet this is not the worst; these metals, though of less value, are yet of good use. But, (2.) *The house of Israel is become dross to me.* So she is in God's account, whatever she is in her own and her neighbours' account. They were silver, but now they are even the dross of silver; the word signifies all the dirt, and rubbish, and worthless stuff, that are separated from the silver in the washing, melting, and refining of it. Note,

Sinners, and especially degenerate professors, are in God's account *as dross*; vile, and contemptible, and of no account, as the *evil figs* which *could not be eaten, they were so evil*. They are *useless* and fit for nothing; of no consistency with themselves, and no service to man.

2. How the woful destruction of this degenerate house of Israel is foretold. They are all gathered together in Jerusalem; thither people fled from all parts of the country as to a city of refuge, not only because it was a *strong city*, but because it was the *holy city*. Now God tells them that their flocking into Jerusalem, which they intended for their security, should be as the gathering of various sorts of metal into the furnace or crucible, to be melted down, and to have the dross separated from them. They are *in the midst of Jerusalem*, surrounded by the forces of the enemy; and, being thus enclosed, (1.) *The fire of God's wrath* shall be kindled upon this furnace, and it shall be *blown*, to make it burn fiercely and strongly, *v. 20, 21*. God will *gather them in his anger and fury*. The *blowing of the fire* makes a *great noise*, so will the judgments of God upon Jerusalem; when God stirs up himself to execute judgments upon a provoking people, from the consideration of his own glory, and the necessity of making some examples, then he may be said to *blow the fire of his wrath* against sin and sinners, to *heat the furnace seven times hotter*. (2.) The several sorts of metal gathered in it shall be *melted*; by a complication of judgments, as by a raging fire, their constitution shall be dissolved, they shall lose all their former shape and strength, and shall be utterly unable to stand before the wrath of God. The various sorts of sinners shall be melted down together, and united in a common overthrow, as *brass and lead* in the same furnace; as tares are *bound in bundles for the fire*. They came together into Jerusalem as a place of defence, but God brought them together there as unto a place of execution. (3.) God will *leave them* in the furnace; (*v. 20*.) I will *gather you into the furnace*, and will *leave you there*. When God brings his own people into the furnace, he sits by them as the refiner by his gold, to see that they be not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful; but he will bring these people into the furnace, as men throw dross into it, which they design shall be consumed, and therefore are in no care about it, but *leave it there*. Compare with this Hos. v. 14. *I will tear and go away*. (4.) Hereby the dross shall be wholly separated, and the good metal purified, the impenitent shall be destroyed, and the penitent reformed and fitted for deliverance; *Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer*, Prov. xxv. This judgment shall do that in the house of Israel, for the doing of which other methods had been tried in vain, and *reprobate silver shall they no more be called*, Jer. vi. 30.

23. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, say unto her, *Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation*. 25. *There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof*. 26. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the

clean, and have hid their eyes from my sab baths, and I am profaned among them. 27. Her princes in the midst thereof *are* like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, *and* to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. 28. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered *mortar*, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the LORD hath not spoken. 29. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. 30. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. 31. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.

Here is,

I. A general idea given of the land of Israel, how well it deserved the judgments coming to destroy it, and how much it needed these judgments to refine it. Let the prophet tell her plainly, "*Thou art the land that is not cleansed*, not refined as metal is, and therefore needest to be again put into the furnace; means and methods of reformation have been ineffectual; thou art *not rained upon in the day of indignation*." This was one of the judgments which God brought upon them in the day of his wrath, he *withheld the rain* from them, Jer. xiv. 4. Or, "When thou art under the tokens of God's displeasure, even in the day of indignation thou art *not rained upon*; thou hast not received instruction by the prophets, whose doctrine is said to *descend as the rain*." Or, "When thou art corrected, thou art not cleansed, thy filth is not carried away as that in the streets is by a sweeping rain. Nay, though it be a *day of indignation* with thee, yet thy filthiness, which should be done away, is become more *offensive*, as that of a city is in dry weather, when it is not rained upon." Or, "Thou hast nothing to refresh and comfort thyself with *in the day of indignation*; thou art *not rained upon* by divine consolations." So the rich man in torment had not a *drop of water*, or rain, to cool his tongue.

II. A particular charge drawn up against the several orders and degrees of men among them, which shows that they had all helped to fill the measures of the nation's guilt, but none had done any thing toward the emptying of it; they are therefore all alike.

1. They have every one *corrupted his way*, and those who should have been the brightest examples of virtue, were ringleaders in iniquity and patterns of vice.

(1.) The *prophets*, who pretended to make known the mind of God to them, were not only *deceivers*, but *devourers*, (*v. 25*.) and hardened them in their wickedness, both by their preaching, wherein they promised them impunity and prosperity, and by their conversation, in which they were as profligate as any. *There is a conspiracy of her prophets* against God and religion, against the true prophets and all good men; they conspired together to be all in one song, as Ahab's prophets were, to assure them of peace in their sinful ways. Note, The unity

which is found among pretenders to infallibility, and which they so much boast of, is only the result of a secret conspiracy against the truth. Satan is not divided against himself. The prophets are in conspiracy with the murderers and oppressors, to patronize and protect them in their wickedness, and justify what they did with their false prophecies, provided they may come in sharers with them in the profits of it. They are like a *roaring lion ravening the prey*; they thunder out threats against them whose ruin is aimed at, terrify them, or make them odious to the people, and so make themselves masters. [1.] *Of their lives*; They have devoured souls, have been accessory to the shedding of the blood of many an innocent person, and so have made many to become sorrowful widows, who were comfortable wives. They have persecuted those to death, who witnessed against their pretensions to prophecy, and would not be imposed upon by their counterfeit commission. Or, They devoured souls by flattering sinners into a false peace and a vain hope, and seducing them into the paths of sin, which would be their eternal ruin. Note, Those who draw men to wickedness, and encourage them in it, are the devourers and murderers of their souls. [2.] *Of their estates*; when Naboth is slain, they take possession of his vineyard; They have seized the treasure and precious things, as forfeited; some ways or other they had of devouring the widows' houses, as the Pharisees, Matth. xxiii. 14. Or, They got this treasure, and all these precious things, as fees for false and flattering prophecies; for he that puts into their mouths, they even prepare war against him, Mic. iii. 5. It was sad with Jerusalem when such men as these passed for prophets.

(2.) The priests, who were teachers by office, and had the custody of the sacred things, and should have called the false prophets to account, were as bad as they, v. 26. [1.] They violated the law of God, which they should have observed, and taught others to observe; they made no conscience of the law of the priesthood, but openly brake it, and with contempt, as Hophni and Phinehas. They did what they had a mind, with an express *non obstante— notwithstanding*, to the word of God. And how should they teach the people their duty, who lived in contradiction to their own? [2.] They profaned God's holy things, about which they were to minister, and which they ought to have restrained others from the profanation of. They suffered those to eat of the holy things, who were unqualified by the law, the table of the Lord was contemptible with them; by dealing in holy things with such unhalloved hands they did themselves profane them. [3.] They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they show the people how to put a difference, between the holy and profane, the clean and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [4.] They hid their eyes from God's sabbaths; they took no care about them, it was all one to them whether God's sabbaths were kept holy or no; they neither gave countenance to those who observed them, nor check to those who profaned them, nor did they themselves show any regard to them, or veneration for them. They winked at those who did servile works on that day, and looked another way when they should have inspected the behaviour of the people on sabbath-days. God's sabbaths have such a beauty and glory put upon them by the divine institution as may command respect; but they hid their eyes from them, and would not see that

excellency in them. [5.] By all this God himself was profaned among them; his authority was slighted, his goodness made light of, and the highest affront and contempt imaginable put upon his holiness. Note, The profanation of the honour of the scriptures, of sabbaths and sacred things, is a profanation of the honour of God himself, who is interested in them.

(3.) The princes, who should have interposed with their authority to redress these grievances, were as daring transgressors of the law as any other; (v. 27.) They are like wolves ravening the prey; for such is power without justice and goodness to direct it. All their business was to gratify, [1.] Their own pride and ambition, by making themselves arbitrary and formidable. [2.] Their own malice and revenge, by shedding blood, and destroying souls, sacrificing to their cruelty all those that stood in their way, or had in any thing disobliged them. [3.] Their own avarice, all they aim at, is, to get dishonest gain, by crushing and oppressing their subjects; *Lucri bonus est odor ex re qualibet. Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem—Sweet is the odour of gain, from whatever substance it ascends. Money, money, by fairness or by fraud, money is the all in all.* But though they had not power sufficient to carry them on in their oppressive courses, yet how could they answer it both to their credit and to their consciences? We are told how; (v. 28.) The prophets daubed them with untempered mortar; told them, in God's name, (horrid wickedness!) that there was no harm in what they did, they might dispose of the lives and estates of their subjects as they pleased, and could do no wrong; nay, that in prosecuting such and such whom they had marked out, they did God service; and thus they stopped the mouth of their consciences; they also justified what they did, to the people, nay, and magnified it as if it were all for the public good, and so saved their reputation, and kept their oppressed subjects from murmuring. Note, Daubing prophets are the great supporters of ravening princes, but will prove at last their great deceivers, for they daub with untempered mortar which will not hold, nor will the wall stand long, that is built up with it. They pretend to be seers, but they are vanity; they pretend to be diviners, but they divine lies; they pretend a warrant from Heaven for what they say, and that it is all as true as gospel; they say, Thus saith the Lord God, but it is all a sham, for the Lord has not spoken any such thing.

(4.) The people that had any power in their hands, learned of their princes to abuse it, v. 29. They that should have complained of the oppression of the subject, and have put in a claim of rights on behalf of the injured, that should have stood up for liberty and property, were themselves invaders of it; The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery. The rich oppress the poor, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and even parents their own children; nay, the buyers and sellers will find some way to oppress one another: this is such a sin as, when it is national, is indeed a national judgment, and is threatened as such; (Isa. iii. 5.) The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour. It is an aggravation of the sin, that they have vexed the poor and needy, whom they should have relieved, and have oppressed the stranger, and deprived him of his right, to whom they ought to have been not only just, but kind. Thus was the apostacy universal, and the disease epidemical.

2. There is none that appears as an intercessor for them; (v. 30.) I sought for a man among them, that should stand in the gap, but I found none. Note, (1.) Sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is about a people, at which good

things run out from them, and evil things pour in upon them; a gap by which God enters to destroy them. (2.) There is a way of standing in the gap, and making up the breach against the judgments of God, by repentance, and prayer, and reformation. Moses stood in the gap when he made intercession for Israel *to turn away the wrath of God*, Ps. cvi. 23. (3.) When God is coming forth against a sinful people to destroy them, he expects some to intercede for them, and inquires if there be but one that does; so much is it his desire and delight to show mercy. If there be but a man that stands in the gap, as Abraham for Sodom, he will discover him, and be well-pleased with him. (4.) It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained, so that *not one is found*, that will either give them a good word, or speak a good word for them. (5.) When it is so, what can be expected but utter ruin? (v. 31.) *Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them*, have given it full scope, that it may come upon them in a full stream; yet, whatever God's wrath inflicts upon a people, it is *their own way* that is therein *recompensed upon their heads*, and God deals with them no worse, but even much better, than their iniquity deserves.

### CHAP. XXIII.

This long chapter (as before, *ch.* 16. and 20.) is a history of the apostacies of God's people from him, and the aggravations of those apostacies under the similitude of corporal whoredom and adultery. Here the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the ten tribes and the two, with their capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, are considered distinctly. Here is, I. The apostacy of Israel and Samaria from God, (v. 1.-8.) and their ruin for it, v. 9. 10. II. The apostacy of Judah and Jerusalem from God, (v. 11.-21.) and sentence passed upon them, that they shall in like manner be destroyed for it, v. 22.-35. III. The joint wickedness of them both together, (v. 36.-44.) and the joint ruin of them both, v. 45.-49. And all that is written for warning against the sins of idolatry, and confidence in an arm of flesh, and sinful leagues and confederacies with wicked people, (which are the sins here meant by committing whoredom,) is, that others may hear and fear, and not sin after the similitude of the transgressions of Israel and Judah.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; 3. And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. 4. And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister; and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names, Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah. 5. And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours, 6. Which were clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. 7. Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself. 3. Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured

their whoredom upon her. 9. Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted. 10. These discovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword; and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her.

God had often spoken to Ezekiel, and by him to the people, to this effect, but now his word comes again; for *God speaks* the same thing *once, yea, twice*, yea, many a time, and all little enough, and too little, for *man perceives it not*. Note, To convince sinners of the evil of sin, and of their misery and danger by reason of it, there is need of *line upon line*, so loath we are to know the worst of ourselves. The sinners that are here to be exposed, are, *two women*, two kingdoms, sister kingdoms, Israel and Judah, *daughters of one mother*, having been for a long time but *one people*. Solomon's kingdom was so large, so populous, that immediately after his death it divided into two. Observe,

1. Their character when they were one: (v. 3.) *They committed whoredoms in Egypt*, for there they were guilty of idolatry, as we read before, *ch.* xx. 8. The representing of those sins which are most *provoking* to God and most *ruining* to a people, by the sin of whoredom, plainly intimates what an exceeding sinful uncleanliness is, how offensive how destructive. Doubtless it is itself one of the worst of sins, for the worst of other sins are compared to it here, and often elsewhere; which should increase our detestation and dread of all manner of *fleshy lusts*, all appearances of them, and approaches to them, as *warrior against the soul*, infatuating sinners, bewitching them, alienating their minds from God and all that is good, debauching conscience, rendering them odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and drowning them at last in destruction and perdition.

2. Their names when they became two, v. 4. The kingdom of Israel is called the *elder sister*, because that first made the breach, and separated from the family both of kings and priests that God had appointed; the *greater sister*, (so the word is,) for ten tribes belonged to that kingdom, and only two to the other. God says of them both, *They were mine*, for they were the seed of Abraham *his friend*, and of Jacob *his chosen*; they were in covenant with God, and carried about with them the sign of *their circumcision*, the seal of the covenant. *They were mine*; and therefore their apostacy was the highest injustice. It was alienating God's property, it was the basest ingratitude to the best of Benefactors, and a perfidious, treacherous violation of the most sacred engagements. Note, Those who have been, in profession, the people of God, but have revolted from him, have a great deal to answer for more than those who never made any such profession. *They were mine*, they were espoused to me, and to me *they bare sons and daughters*; there were many among them that were devoted to God's honour and employed in his service, and were the strength and beauty of these kingdoms, as children are of the families they are born in. In this parable, Samaria and the kingdom of Israel shall bear the name of *Aholah—Her own tabernacle*; because the places of worship which that kingdom had, were of their own devising, their own choosing, and the worship itself their own invention; God never owned it: *her tabernacle to herself*; (so some render it;) "Let her take it to herself, and make her best of it." Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah bear the name of *Aholibah—my tabernacle is in her*, because,

their temple was the place which God himself had chosen to put his name there. He acknowledged it to be his, and honoured them with the tokens of his presence in it. Note, Of those that stand in relation to God, and make profession of his name, some have greater privileges and advantages than others; and as those who have greater, are thereby rendered the more *inexcusable* if they revolt from God; so those who have lesser, will not thereby be rendered *excusable*.

3. The treacherous departure of the kingdom of Israel from God; (v. 5.) *Aholah played the harlot when she was nine*. Though the ten tribes had deserted the house of David, yet God owned them for his still; though Jeroboam, in setting up the golden calves, *sinned, and made Israel to sin*, yet, as long as they worshipped the God of Israel only, though by images, he did not quite cast them off. But the way of sin is down-hill. Aholah played the harlot, brought in the worship of Baal, (1 Kings xvi. 31.) set up that *other god*, that dunghill-god, in competition with Jehovah, (1 Kings xviii. 21.) as a vile adulteress *dotes on her lovers*, because they are well dressed and make a figure, because they are young and handsome, (v. 6.) *clothed with blue, captains and rulers, desirable young men*, genteel, and that pass for men of honour. So she doted upon her neighbours, particularly the Assyrians, who had extended their conquests near them; she admired their idols, and worshipped them, admired the pomp of their courts and their military strength, and courted alliances with them upon any terms, as if their own God were not sufficient to be depended upon. We find one of the kings of Israel giving a *thousand talents to the king of Assyria*, to engage him in his interests, 2 Kings xv. 19. She doted on the *chosen men of Assyria*, as worthy to be trusted and employed in the service of the state, (v. 7.) and *on all their idols with which she defiled herself*. Note, Whatever creature we dote upon, pay homage to, and put a confidence in, we make an idol of that creature; and whatever we *make an idol of*, we *defile ourselves with*. And now again, the conviction looks back as far as the original of their nation; *Neither left she her whoredoms which she brought from Egypt*, v. 8. Their being idolaters in Egypt was a thing never to be forgotten; that they should be *in love with Egypt's idols*, even then when they were continually in *fear of Egypt's tyrants and taskmasters*! But (as some have observed) therefore, at that time, when Satan boasted of his having *walked through the earth* as all his own, to disprove his pretensions, God did not say, *Hast thou considered my people Israel in Egypt?* (For they were become idolaters, and were not to be boasted of;) but, *Hast thou considered my servant Job in the land of Uz?* And this corrupt disposition in them, when they were first formed into a people, is an emblem of that original corruption which is born with us, and is woven into our constitution, a strong bias toward the world and the flesh, like that in the Israelites toward idolatry; it was *bred in the bone* with them, and was charged upon them long after, that they *left not their whoredoms brought from Egypt*; it would never be *out of the flesh*, though Egypt had been a house of bondage to them; thus the corrupt affections and inclinations which we brought into the world with us, we have not lost, nor got clear of, but still retain them, though the iniquity we were born in was the source of all the calamities which human life is liable to.

4. The destruction of the kingdom of Israel for their apostasy from God. (v. 9, 10.) *I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers*. God first justly gave her up to her lust, (*Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone*), and then gave her up to her *lovers*. The neighbouring nations, whose idolatries

she had conformed to, and whose friendship she had confided in, and in both had affronted God, are now made use of as the instruments of her destruction. The *Assyrians, on whom she doted*, soon spied out the *nakedness of the land*; discovered her blind side, on which to attack her, stripped her of all her ornaments and all her defences, and so *uncovered her*, and *made her naked and bare*; carried her *sons and daughters* into captivity, *slew her with the sword*, and quite destroyed that kingdom, and put an end to it. We have the story at large, 2 Kings xvii. 6, &c. where the cause of the ruin of that once flourishing kingdom by the Assyrians is showed to be their forsaking of the God of Israel, *fearing other gods, and walking in the statutes of the heathen*; it was for this that God was very *angry with them, and removed them out of his sight*, v. 18. And that the Assyrians, whom they had been so fond of, should be employed in *executing judgments* upon them was very remarkable, and shows how God, in a way of righteous judgment, often makes that a scourge to sinners, which they have inordinately set their hearts upon. The devil will for ever be a tormentor to those impenitent sinners who now hearken to him and comply with him as a tempter.

Thus Samaria became *famous among women*, or *infamous* rather; she *became a name*; (so the word is;) not only she came to be the subject of discourse, and much talked of, as the desolations of cities and kingdoms fill the newspapers, but she was thus ruined for her idolatries *in terrorem*—for warning to all people to take heed of doing likewise; as the public execution of notorious malefactors makes them such a *name*, such an ill name, as may serve to frighten others from these wicked courses which have brought them to a miserable and shameful end. Deut. xxi. 21. *All Israel shall hear and fear*.

10. And when her sister Aholibah saw *this*, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in *her whoredoms*. 12. She doted upon the Assyrians *her neighbours*, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. 13. Then I saw that she was defiled, *that they took both one way*; 14. And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion, 15. Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: 16. And, as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea. 17. And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom; and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them. 18. So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister. 19. Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein



she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. 20. For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh *is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses.* 21. Thus thou callest to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.

The prophet Hosea, in his time, observed that the two tribes retained their integrity in a great measure, when the ten tribes had apostatized; (Hos. xi. 12.) *Ephraim indeed compasses me about with lies, but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints;* and this was justly expected from them; (Hos. iv. 15.) *Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend.* But this lasted not long; by some unhappy matches made between the house of David and the house of Ahab, the worship of Baal had been brought into the kingdom of Judah, but had been by the reforming kings worked out again; and at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes, which was in the reign of Hezekiah, things were in a good posture: but it lasted not long; in the reign of Manasseh, soon after the kingdom of Judah had seen the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, they became *more corrupt* than Israel had been, in *their inordinate love of idols*, v. 11. Instead of being made better by the warning which that destruction gave them, they were made worse by it, as if they were *displeased because the Lord had made that breach upon Israel*; and for that reason became *disaffected* to him and to his service: instead of being made to stand in awe of him as a *jealous God*, they therefore grew strange to him, and liked those gods better, that would admit of partners with them. Note, Those may justly expect God's judgments upon themselves, who do not take warning by his judgments upon others; who see in others what is the end of sin, and yet continue to make a light matter of it. But it is bad indeed with those who are made worse by that which should make them better, and have their lusts irritated and exasperated by that which was designed to suppress and subdue them. Jerusalem grew worse in her *whoredoms* than her sister Samaria had been in her *whoredoms*. This was observed before; (ch. xvi. 51.) *Neither has Samaria committed half of thy sins.*

1. Jerusalem, that had been a *faithful city, became a harlot*, Isa. i. 21. She also *doted upon the Assyrians*, (v. 12.) joined in league with them, joined in worship with them; grew to be in love with their *captains and rulers*, and cried up them as finer and more accomplished gentlemen than any that ever the land of Israel produced; "See how richly, how neatly, they are dressed, *clothed most gorgeously*; how well they sit a horse, they are *horsemen riding on horses*; how charmingly they look, *all of them desirable young men.*" And thus they grew to affect every thing that was *foreign*, and to despise their own nation; and even the religion of it was *mean and homely*, and not to be compared with the curiosity and gaiety that was in the heathen temples. Thus she *increased her whoredoms*; she fell in love, fell in league, with the Chaldeans. Hezekiah himself was faulty this way, when he was proud of the court which the king of Babylon made to him, and complimented his ambassadors with the sight of all his treasures, Isa. xxxix. 2. And the humour increased; (v. 14.) she doted upon the pictures of the Babylonian captains, (v. 15, 16.) joined in alliance with that kingdom, invited them to come and settle in Jerusalem, that they might refine the genius of the *Jewish nation*, and make it more polite; nay, they sent for patterns of

their images, altars, and temples, and made use of them in their worship; thus was she *polluted with her whoredoms*, (v. 17.) and thereby she *discovered her own whoredom*, v. 18. her own strong inclination to idolatry. And when she had enough of the Chaldeans, and grew tired of them, and disposed to break her league with them, as Jehoiakim and Zedekiah did, *her mind being alienated from them*, she courted the *Egyptians*, *doted upon their paramours*, (v. 20.) would come into an alliance with them, and, to strengthen the alliance, would join with them in their idolatries, and then depend upon them to be their protectors from all other nations; for so wise, so rich, so strong, was the Egyptian nation, and came to such perfection in idolatry, that there is no nation now which they can take such satisfaction in as in Egypt. Thus they *called to remembrance the days of their youth*, (v. 19.) *the lewdness of their youth*, v. 21. (1.) They *pleased themselves with the remembrance of it*. When they began to set their affections upon Egypt, they encouraged themselves to put a confidence in that kingdom, because of the old acquaintance they had with it, as if they still retained the gust and relish of the *leeks and onions* they ate there, or, rather, of the idolatrous worship they learned there, and brought up with them from thence. When they began an acquaintance with Egypt, they remembered how *merrily* their fathers worshipped the golden calf, what music and dancing they had at that sport, which they learned in Egypt; and hoped they should now have a fair pretence to come to that again. Thus *she multiplied her whoredoms*, repeated her former whoredoms, and encouraged herself to elose with *present temptations*, by *calling to remembrance the days of her youth*. Note, Those who, instead of reflecting upon their former sins with sorrow and shame, reflect upon them with pleasure and pride, contract new guilt thereby, strengthen their own corruptions, and in effect bid defiance to repentance. This is *returning with the dog to his vomit*. (2.) They called it *God's remembrance*, and *provoked* him to remember it against them. God had said indeed that he would reckon with them for the *golden calf*, that *idol of Egypt*; (Exod. xxxii. 34.) but such was his patience, that he seemed to have forgotten it, till they, by their league now with the Egyptians against the Chaldeans, did, as it were, put him in mind of it; and in the day *when he visits, he will now*, as he has said, *visit for that*. It is very observable how this adulteress changes her lovers; she dotes first on the Assyrians, then she thought the Chaldeans finer, and courted them; after awhile her mind was alienated from them, and she thought the Egyptians more powerful, (v. 20.) and she must contract an intimacy with them; which shows the folly, [1.] Of *fleshy lusts*; when they are indulged, they grow *humoursome and fickle*, are soon *surfeited*, but never *satisfied*, they must have variety; and what is loved one day is loathed the next. *Unius adulterium matrimonium vocant*, as Seneca observes. [2.] Of *idolatry*. Those who think one God too little, will not think a hundred sufficient, but will still be for trying more, as finding all insufficient. [3.] Of seeking to creatures for help; we go from one to another, but are disappointed in them all, and can never rest till we have made the God of Israel our Help.

2. The faithful God justly gives a bill of divorce to this now faithless city, that is *become a harlot*. His jealousy soon discovered her lewdness; (v. 13.) *I saw that she was defiled*, that she was *debauched*; saw which way her inclination was, that the *two sisters both took one way*, and that Jerusalem grew worse than Samaria; for if we stretch out our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out? *Ne*

doubt he shall; and when he has found it, can he be pleased with it? No, (v. 18.) *Then my mind was alienated from her, as it was from her sister.* How could the pure and holy God any longer take delight in such a lewd generation? Note, Sin alienates God's mind from the sinner, and justly, for it is the alienation of the sinner's mind from God; but wo, and a thousand woes, to those from whom *God's mind is alienated*; for whom he *turns from* he will *turn against*.

22. 'Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; 23. The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, *and* all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses. 24. And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, *which* shall set against thee buckler, and shield, and helmet, round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments. 25. And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. 26. They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. 27. Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. 28. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of *them* whom thou hatest, into the hand of *them* from whom thy mind is alienated: 29. And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare; and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. 30. I will do these *things* unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, *and* because thou art polluted with their idols. 31. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thy hand. 32. Thus saith the Lord God, Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much. 33. Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. 34. Thou shalt even drink it, and suck

*it* out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord God. 35. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore hear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

Jerusalem stands indicted by the name of *Aholibah* for that she, as a false traitor to her sovereign Lord the God of heaven, not having his fear before her eyes, but moved by the instigation of the devil, had revolted from her allegiance to him, had compassed and imagined to shake off his government, had kept up a correspondence, and joined in confederacy, with his enemies, and the pretenders to a deity, in contempt of his crown and dignity: to this indictment she has pleaded, *Not guilty; I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim.* But it is found against her by the notorious evidence of the fact, and she stands convicted of it, nor has any thing material to offer why judgment should not be given, and execution awarded according to law. In these verses, therefore, we have the sentence.

1. Her old confederates must be her executioners; and those whom she had courted to be her leaders in sin, are now to be employed as instruments of her punishment; (v. 22.) "*I will raise up thy lovers against thee*; the Chaldeans, whom formerly thou didst so much admire, and covet an acquaintance with, but from whom *thy mind* is since *alienated*, and with whom thou hast perfidiously broken covenant." They are called *thy lovers*, (v. 22.) and yet, (v. 28.) *them whom thou hatest.* Note, It is common for sinful love soon to turn into hatred; as Amnon's to Tamar. Those of headstrong and unreasonable passions are often very *hot* against those persons and things, that a little before they were as *hot* for. Fools run into extremes; nay, and wise men may see cause to change their sentiments. And therefore as we should rejoice and weep as if we rejoiced not and wept not; so we should love and hate as if we loved not and hated not. *Ita ama tanquam osurus—Love as one who may have cause to feel aversion.*

2. The execution to be done upon her is very terrible. Her enemies shall come against her *on every side*; (v. 22.) those of the several nations that constituted the Chaldean army, (v. 23.) all of them *great lords and renowned*, whose pomp and grandeur and splendid appearance made them look the more *amiable*, when they came as friends to protect and patronise Jerusalem, but the more *formidable* when they came to chastise its treachery, and aimed at no less than its ruin. (1.) They shall come with a great deal of military force, (v. 24.) with *chariots and wagons*, furnished with all necessary provisions for a camp, with arms and ammunition, bag and baggage, with a vast army, and well armed. (2.) They shall have justice on their sides; "*I will set judgment before them*;" (they shall have right with them as well as might; for the king of Babylon had just cause to make war upon the king of Judah, because he had broken his league with him;) "*and therefore they shall judge thee*, not only according to God's judgments, as the instruments of his justice, to punish thee for the indignities done to him, but *according to their judgments*, according to the law of nations, to punish thee for thy perfidious dealings with them." (3.) They shall prosecute the war with a great deal of fury and resentment; it being a war of revenge, *they shall deal with thee hatefully*, v. 29. This will make the execution the more severe, that their swords will be dipped in poison. Thou *hatest them*,

and they shall *deal hatefully* with thee; those that *hate*, will be *hated*, and hatefully dealt with. (4.) God himself will lead them on, and this anger shall be mingled with theirs; (v. 25.) *I will set my jealousy against thee*, that shall kindle this fire, and then *they shall deal furiously with thee*. If men deal ever so hatefully, ever so furiously, with us, if we have God on our side, we need not fear them, they can do us no real hurt. But if men deal furiously with us, and God set his jealousy against us too, what will become of us?

The particulars of the sentence here passed upon this notorious adulteress are, [1.] That all she has shall be seized on. *The clothes and the fair jewels*, with which she had endeavoured to recommend herself to her lovers, these she shall be stripped of, v. 26. All those things that were the ornaments of their state, shall be taken away; *“They shall take away all thy labour, all that thou hast gotten by thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare,”* v. 29. Both city and country shall be impoverished, and all the wealth of both swept away. [2.] That her children should go into captivity; *“They shall take thy sons and thy daughters, and make slaves of them,”* (v. 25.) for they are *children of whoredoms*, unworthy the dignities and privileges of Israelites,” Hos. ii. 4. [3.] That she shall be stigmatized and deformed; *“They shall take away thy nose and thine ears; shall mark thee for a harlot, and render thee for ever odious,”* v. 25. This intimates the many cruelties of the Chaldean soldiers toward the Jews that fell into their hands; whom, it is probable, they used barbarously. Some will have this to be understood figuratively; and by the *nose* they think is meant the *kingly* dignity, and by the *ears* that of the *priesthood*. [4.] That she shall be exposed to shame; *Thy lewdness and thy whoredoms shall be discovered;* (v. 29.) as when a malefactor is punished, all his crimes are ripped up, and repeated to his disgrace; what was secret then comes to *light*, and what was done *long since* is then called to *mind*. [5.] That she shall be quite cut off and ruined; *“The remnant of thy people that have escaped the famine and pestilence, shall fall by the sword; and the residue of thy houses that have not been battered down about thy ears, shall be devoured by the fire,”* v. 25. And this shall be the end of Jerusalem.

3. Because she has trod in the steps of Samaria's sins, she must expect no other than Samaria's fate. It is common, in giving judgment, to have an eye to precedents; so has God, in passing this sentence on Jerusalem; (v. 31, &c.) *“Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister, notwithstanding the warning thou hast had given thee, by the fatal consequences of her wickedness; and therefore I will give her cup, her portion of miseries, into thy hand, the cup of the Lord's fury, which will be to thee a cup of trembling.”* Now, (1.) This cup is said to be *deep and large, and to contain much*, (v. 32.) abundance of God's wrath, and abundance of miseries, the fruits of that wrath. It is such a cup as that which we read of, Jer. xxv. 15, 16. *The cup of divine vengeance holds a great deal, and so they will find, into whose hand it shall be put.* (2.) They shall be made to drink the very dregs of this cup, as the *wicked* are said to do; (Ps. lxxv. 8.) *“Thou shalt drink it and suck it out, not because it is pleasant, but because it is forced upon thee; (v. 34.) thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts, for indignation at the extreme bitterness of this cup, being full of the fury of the Lord, (Isa. li. 20.) as men in great anguish tear their hair, and throw every thing from them. Finding there is no remedy, but it must be drank, (for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God,) thou shalt have no manner of patience in the drinking of*

*it.”* (3.) They shall be intoxicated by it, made sick, and be at their wits' end, as men in drink are, staggering, and stumbling, and ready to fall; (v. 33.) *Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow.* Note, Drunkenness has sorrow attending it, to such a degree, that the utmost confusion and astonishment are here represented by it. Who would think that that which is such a force upon nature, such a scandal to it, which deprives men of their reason, disorders them to the last degree, and is therefore expressive of the *greatest misery*, should yet be with many a *beloved sin*; that they should damn their own souls, to distemper their own bodies? *Who has wo and sorrow like them?* Prov. xxiii. 29. (4.) Being so intoxicated, they shall become as drunkards deserve to be, a laughing-stock to all about them; (v. 32.) *Thou shalt be laughed to scorn, and had in derision*, as acting ridiculously in every thing thou goest about. When God is about to ruin a people, he *makes their judges fools, and pours contempt on their princes*, Job xii. 17, 21.

4. In all this God will be justified, and by all this they will be reformed; and so the issue even of this will be God's glory and their good. (1.) They have been *bad*, very *bad*, and that justifies God in all that is brought upon them; (v. 30.) *I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and, v. 35. Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back.* Note, Forgetfulness of God, and a contempt of him, of his eye upon us, and authority over us, are at the bottom of all our treacherous and adulterous departures from him. *Therefore men wander after idols, because they forget God, and their obligations to him; nor could they look with so much desire and delight upon the baits of sin, if they did not first cast God behind their back, as not worthy to be regarded.* And those who put such an affront upon God, how can they think but that it should turn upon themselves at last? *Therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms;* that is, thou shalt *suffer the punishment* of it, and thou alone must *bear the blame*. Men need no more to sink them than the weight of their own sins; and they who will not part with their *lewdness* and their *whoredoms*, must *bear them*. (2.) They shall be *better*, much *better*, and this fire, though *consuming* to many, shall be *refining* to a remnant; (v. 27.) *Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee.* The judgments which were brought upon them by their sins, parted between them and their sins, and taught them at length to say, *What have we to do any more with idols?* Observe, [1.] How *inveterate* the disease was; *Thy whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt.* Their disposition to idolatry was early and innate, their practice of it was ancient, and had gained a sort of prescription by long usage. [2.] How complete the cure was, notwithstanding; *“Though it has taken root, yet it shall be made to cease, so that thou shalt not so much as lift up thine eyes to the idols again, nor remember Egypt with pleasure any more.”* They shall *avoid* the occasions of this sin, for they shall not so much as *look upon an idol, lest their hearts should unawares walk after their eyes.* And they shall abandon all inclinations to it; They shall *not remember Egypt*, they shall not retain any of that affection for idols, which they had from the very infancy of their nation. They got it, through the corruption of nature, in their bondage in Egypt, and lost it through the grace of God, in their captivity in Babylon, which this was the blessed fruit of, even the *taking away of sin; of that sin*; so that whereas, before the captivity, no nation (all things considered) was more impetuously bent upon idols and idolatry than they were, after that captivity, no nation was more

vehemently set against idols and idolatry than they were; insomuch that at this day the image-worship which is practised in the church of Rome confirms the Jews, as much as any thing, in their prejudices against the Christian religion.

36. The LORD said moreover unto me, Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; 37. That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery; and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them. 38. Moreover, this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. 39. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of my house. 40. And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came; for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thine eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, 41. And sattest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. 42. And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. 43. Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them? 44. Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot; so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women. 45. And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of the adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands. 46. For thus saith the Lord God, I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. 47. And the company shall stone them with stones, and despatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. 48. Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. 49. And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

After the ten tribes were carried into captivity,

and that kingdom was made quite desolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a settlement (many of them) in Jerusalem; so that the two sisters were in effect become one again: and therefore, in these verses, the prophet takes those to task jointly, who were thus conjoined; "*Wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah together?*" v. 36. Wilt thou go about to excuse for them? Thou seest the matter is so bad as not to bear an excuse." Or, rather, "Thou shalt now be employed, in God's name, to judge them, ch. xx. 4. The matter is rather worse than better since the union."

1. Let them be made to see the sins they are guilty of; declare unto them openly and boldly their abominations.

1. They have been guilty of gross idolatry, here called adultery; *With their idols they have committed adultery*, (v. 37.) have broken their marriage-covenant with God; have lusted after the gratifications of a carnal, sensual mind in the worship of God. This is the first and worst of the abominations he is to charge them with.

2. They have committed the most barbarous murders, in sacrificing their children to Moloch, a sin so unnatural, that they deserve to hear of it on all occasions; *Blood is in their hands*, innocent blood, the blood of their own children, which they have caused to pass through the fire, (v. 37.) not that they might be dedicated to the idols, but that they might be devoured; a sign that they loved their idols better than that which was dearest to them in the world.

3. They have profaned the sacred things with which God had dignified and distinguished them; this they have done unto me, this indignity, this injury, v. 38. Every contempt put upon that which is holy, reflects upon him who is the Fountain of holiness, and from a relation to whom whatever is called holy has its denomination. God had set up his sanctuary among them, but they defiled it, by making it a house of merchandize, a den of thieves; nay, and much worse, there they set up their idols, and worshipped them, and there they shed the blood of God's prophets. God had revealed to them his holy sabbaths, but they profaned them, by doing all manner of servile work therein, or perhaps by sports and recreations on that day, not only practised, but allowed and encouraged, by authority. They defiled the sanctuary on the same day that they profaned the sabbath. To defile the sanctuary was bad enough on any day, but to do it on the sabbath-day was an aggravation. We commonly say, *the better day, the better deed*; but here, the better day, the worse deed. God takes notice of the circumstances of sin, which add to the guilt. He shows (v. 39.) what was their profanation, both of the sanctuary and of the sabbath. They slew their children, and sacrificed them to their idols, to the great dishonour both of God and of the human nature; and then came, the same day, their hands imbrued with the blood of their children, and their clothes stained with it, to attend in God's sanctuary; not to ask pardon for what they had done, but to present themselves before him, as other Israelites did, expecting acceptance with him, notwithstanding these villanies which they were guilty of; as if God either did not know their wickedness, or did not hate it. Thus they profaned the sanctuary, as if that were a protection to the worst of malefactors; for thus they did in the midst of his house. Note, It is a profanation of God's solemn ordinances, when those that are grossly and openly profane and vicious, impudently and impenitently so intrude upon the services and privileges of them. Give not that which is holy unto dogs. Friend, how camest thou in hither?

4. They have courted foreign alliances, being proud of them, and reposed a confidence in them. This also is represented by the sin of *adultery*, for it was a departure from God, not only to *whom* alone they ought to *pay their homage*, and not to idols, but in *whom* alone they ought to *put their trust*, and not in creatures. Israel was a *peculiar people*, must *dwell alone*, and not be reckoned among the nations; and they profane their crown, and lay their honour in the dust, when they covet to be like them, or in *league* with them. But this they have now done; they have entered into strict alliances with the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians, the most renowned and potent kingdoms at that time; but they scorned alliances with the petty kingdoms and states that lay near them, which yet might have been of more real service to them. Note, Affecting an acquaintance and correspondence with *great people* has often been a snare to *good people*. Let us see how Jerusalem courts her *high allies*, thinking thereby to make herself considerable.

(1.) She privately requested that a public embassy might be sent to her; (v. 40.) *You sent a messenger for men to come from far*. It seems, then, that the neighbours had no desire to come into a confederacy with Jerusalem, but she thrust herself upon them, and sent underhand to desire them to court her: and, *lo, they came*. The wisest and best may be drawn unavoidably into company and conversation with profane and wicked people; but it is no sign either of wisdom or goodness to covet an intimacy with such, and to court it.

(2.) Great preparation is made for the reception of these foreign ministers, for their public entry and public audience; which is compared to the pains that an adulteress takes to make herself look handsome. Jezebel-like, thou *paintedst thy face*, and *deckedst thyself with ornaments*, v. 40. The king and princes made themselves new clothes, fitted up the rooms of state, beautified the furniture, and made it look fresh. Thou *sattest upon a stately bed*, (v. 41.) a stately throne; *a table was prepared, whereon thou hast set mine oil and mine incense*. This was either, [1.] A feast for the ambassadors, a noble treat, agreeable to the other preparations. There was *incense* to perfume the room, and *oil* to anoint their heads. Or, [2.] An altar already furnished for the ambassadors' use in the worship of their idols; to let them know that the Israelites were not so strait-laced but that they could allow foreigners the free exercise of their religion among them, and furnish them with chapels, yea, and complimented them so far as to join with them in their devotions; though the law of their God was against it, yet they could easily *dispense with themselves* to oblige a friend. The *oil and incense* God calls *his*, not only because they were the gift of his providence, but because they should have been offered at his altar; which was an aggravation of their sin in serving idols and idolaters with them. See Hos. ii. 8.

(3.) There was great joy at their coming, as if it were such a blessing as never happened to Jerusalem before: (v. 42.) *A voice of a multitude being at ease was with her*. The people were very *easy*, for they thought themselves very *safe and happy* now that they had such powerful allies; and therefore attended the ambassadors with loud huzzas and acclamations of joy. A great confluence of people there was to the court upon this occasion. The *men of the common sort* were there to grace the solemnity, and to increase the crowd; and *with them were brought Sabeans from the wilderness*. The margin reads it *drunkards from the wilderness*, that would drink healths to the prosperity of this grand alliance, and force them upon others, and be most noisy in shouting upon this occasion. Who-

ever they were, in honour of the ambassadors, they put *bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads*, which made the cavalcade appear very splendid.

(4.) God by his prophets warned them against making these dangerous leagues with foreigners; (v. 43.) *"Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, that from the first was fond of leagues with the heathen, or matching with their families, (Judg. iii. 6.) and afterward of making alliances with their kingdoms; and, though often disappointed therein, would never be dissuaded from it; (This was the adultery she was old in;) I said, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them? Surely experience and observation will by this time have convinced both them and her, that an alliance between the nation of the Jews and a heathen nation can never be for the advantage of either." They are iron and clay that will not mix, nor will God bless it, or smile upon it. But, it seems, her being old in these adulteries, instead of weaning her from them, as one would expect, does but make her the more impudent and insatiable in them; for though she was thus admonished of the folly of it, yet they went in unto her, v. 44. A bargain was soon clapped up, and a league made, first with this, and then with the other, foreign state. Samaria did so, Jerusalem did so, like *lewd women*. They could not rest satisfied in the embraces of God's laws and care, and the assurances of protection he gave them; they could not think his covenant with them security enough. But they must by treaties and leagues, politic ones (they thought) and well concerted, throw themselves into the arms of foreign princes, and put their interests under their protection. Note, Those hearts go a whoring from God, that take a complacency in the pomp of the world, and put a confidence in its wealth, and in an *arm of flesh*, Jer. xvii. 5.*

II. Let them be made to foresee the judgments that are coming upon them for these sins; (v. 45.) *The righteous men, they shall judge them*. Some make the instruments of their destruction to be the *righteous men that shall judge them*. The Assyrians that destroyed Samaria, the Chaldeans that destroyed Jerusalem, those were comparatively *righteous*, had a sense of justice between man and man, and *justly* resented the treachery of the Jewish nation; however, they executed God's judgments, which, we are sure, are all *righteous*. Others understand it of the prophets, whose office it was, in God's name, to *judge* them, and pass sentence upon them. Or, we may take it as an appeal to all *righteous men*, to all that have a sense of equity; they shall all judge concerning these cities, and agree in their verdict, that, forasmuch as they have been notoriously guilty of adultery and murder, and the guilt is national, therefore they ought to suffer the pains and penalties which by law are inflicted upon women in their personal capacity, that *shed blood*, and are *adulteresses*. *Righteous men* will say, "Why should bloody, filthy cities escape any better than bloody, filthy persons? *Judge, I pray thee,*" Isa. v. 3.

This judgment being given by the *righteous men*, the *righteous God* will award execution. See here, 1. What the execution will be, v. 46, 47. The same as before, v. 23, &c. God will *bring a company of enemies upon them*, who shall be made to serve his holy purposes, even then when they are serving their own sinful appetites and passions. These enemies shall easily prevail, for God will *give them into their hands to be removed and spoiled*; this company shall *stone them with stones* as male factors; shall *single them out, and despatch them with their swords*; and, as was sometimes done in severe executions, (witness that of Achan,) they

shall *slay their children, and burn their houses*. 2. What will be the effects of it. (1.) Thus they shall suffer for their sins; *their lewdness shall be recompensed upon them*; (v. 49.) and they shall *bear the sins of their idols*, v. 35, 49. Thus God will assert the honour of his broken law and injured government, and let the world know what a just and jealous God he is. (2.) Thus they shall be broken off from their sins; *I will cause lewdness to cease out of the land*, v. 27, 48. The destruction of God's city, like the death of God's saints, shall do that for them which ordinances and providences before could not do, it shall quite take away their sin; so that Jerusalem shall rise out of its ashes a new lump, as gold comes out of the furnace, purified from its dross. (3.) Thus other cities and nations will have fair warning given them to keep themselves from idols; *that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness*. This is the end of the punishment of malefactors, that they may be made examples to others, who will *see and fear*. *Smite the scorner, and the simple will beware*. The judgments of God upon some are designed to *teach others*, and happy they who receive instruction from them, not to tread in the steps of sinners, lest they be taken in their snares; those who would be taught this, must *know God is the Lord*, (v. 49.) that he is the Governor of the world, a God that judges in the earth, and with whom there is *no respect of persons*.

#### CHAP. XXIV.

Here are two sermons, in this chapter, preached on a particular occasion, and they are both from mount Sinai, the mount of terror, both from mount Ebal, the mount of curses; both speak the approaching fate of Jerusalem. The occasion of them was the king of Babylon's laying siege to Jerusalem, and the design of them is to show that in the issue of that siege he should be not only master of the place, but destroyer of it. I. By the sign of flesh boiling in a pot over the fire, are showed the miseries that Jerusalem should suffer during the siege, and justly, for her filthiness, v. 1. .14. II. By the sign of Ezekiel's not mourning for the death of his wife, is showed that the calamities coming upon Jerusalem were too great to be lamented, so great that they should sink down under them into a silent despair, v. 15. .27.

1. **A** GAIN, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, write thee the name of the day, *even* of this same day; the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day. 3. And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it: 4. Gather the pieces thereof into it, *even* every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones. 5. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, *and* make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein. 6. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it. 7. For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground to cover it with dust; 8. That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered. 9.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great. 10. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burnt. 11. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, *that the scum of it may be consumed*. 12. She hath wearied *herself* with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum *shall be* in the fire. 13. In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. 14. I the LORD have spoken it; it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent: according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God.

We have here,

I. The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's laying siege to Jerusalem, just at the time when he was doing it; (v. 2.) "*Son of man, take notice, the king of Babylon, who is now abroad with his army, thou knowest not where, set himself against Jerusalem this same day.*" It was many miles, it was many days' journey, from Jerusalem to Babylon; perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was, that the design was upon Rabbath of the children of Ammon, and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet, *This day*, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean army is set down before it. Note, At all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God, and under his view. He tells it the prophet, that the prophet might tell it the people, that so, when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and they might infer that, since he was right in his news, he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with Heaven.

II. The notice which he orders him to take of it. He must enter it in his book, *memorandum*, that in the ninth year of Jehoiakin's captivity, (for thence Ezekiel dated, *ch. 1*. 2. which was also the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, for he began to reign when Jehoiakin was carried off,) in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the history, 2 Kings xxv. 1. See how God reveals things to his servants the prophets, especially those things which serve to confirm their word, and so to confirm their own faith. Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the date of remarkable occurrences, which may sometimes contribute to the manifesting of God's glory so much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of scripture-prophecies. *Known unto God are all his works*.

III. The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereupon, the purport of which is, that this siege of Jerusalem, now begun, will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he must say to the rebellious house, to those of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to those that were



yet in their own land. A *rebellious* house will soon be a *ruinous* house.

1. He must show them this by a *sign*; for that stupid people needed to be taught as children are. The comparison made use of is that of a *boiling pot*. This agrees with Jeremiah's vision many years before, when he first began to be a prophet, and, probably, was designed to put them in mind of that; (Jer. i. 13.) *I see a seething pot, with the face toward the north*; and the explanation of it, (v. 15.) makes it to signify the besieging of Jerusalem by the *northern* nations. And as this comparison is intended to confirm Jeremiah's vision, so also to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jerusalem, who had said, (ch. xi. 3.) *This city is the caldron, and we are the flesh*; meaning, "We are as safe here as if we were surrounded with walls of brass." "Well," says God, "it shall be so, you shall be boiled in Jerusalem, as the *flesh in the caldron*, boiled to pieces; let the pot be set on with water in it; (v. 4.) let it be filled with the flesh of the *choice of the flock*, (v. 5.) with the choice pieces, (v. 4.) and the marrow-bones, and let the other bones serve for fuel, that, one way or other, either in the pot or under it, the whole beast may be made use of." A fire of bones, though it be a slow fire, (for the siege was to be long,) is yet a sure and lasting fire; such was God's wrath against them, and not like the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, which has noise and blaze, but no intense heat. They that from all parts of the country fled into Jerusalem for safety, would be sadly disappointed, when the siege laid to it would soon make the place *too hot for them*; and yet there was no getting out of it, but they must be forced to abide by it, as the flesh in a *boiling pot*.

2. He must give them a comment upon this sign. It is to be construed as a *wo to the bloody city*, v. 6. And again, (v. 9.) being *bloody*, let it *go to pot*, to be boiled, it is the fittest place for it. Let us here see,

(1.) What is the *course God takes with it*. Jerusalem, during the siege, is like a pot boiling over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry. [1.] Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which signifies the closeness of the siege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the besiegers, and especially the continued wrath of God burning against them; (v. 9.) *I will make the pile for fire great*. Commission is given to the Chaldeans, (v. 10.) *to heap on wood, and kindle the fire*; to make Jerusalem more and more hot to the inhabitants. Note, The fire which God kindles for the consuming of impenitent sinners, shall never *abate*, much less *go out*, for want of fuel. *Tophet has fire and much wood*, Isa. xxx. 33. [2.] The meat, as it is boiled, is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feast upon. "*Consume the flesh*, let it be thoroughly boiled, boiled to rags; *spice it well*, and make it savoury, for those that will feed sweetly upon it; *let the bones be burnt*;" (either the bones under the pot, let them be consumed with the other fuel, or, as some think, the bones in the pot;) "let it boil so furiously, that not only the flesh may be sodden, but even the bones softened; let all the inhabitants of Jerusalem be, by sickness, sword, and famine, reduced to the extremity of misery." And then, (v. 6.) "*Bring it out piece by piece*; let every man be delivered into the enemy's hand, to be either put to the sword, or made a prisoner. Let them be an easy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man does upon a good dish of meat, when it is set before him. *Let no lot fall upon it*; every piece in the pot shall be fetched out, and devoured, first or last, and therefore it is no matter for casting lots which shall be fetched out first." It was a very severe military execution,

when David measured Moab with *two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive*, 2. Sam. viii.

2. But here is *no line*, no lot of mercy, made use of; all goes one way, and that is to *destruction*. [3.] When all the broth is boiled away, the pot is set empty upon the coals, that it may burn too, which signifies the setting of the city on fire, v. 11. The scum of the meat, or, as some translate it, *the rust of the metal*, is so got into the pot, that there is no making it clean by washing or scouring it, and therefore it must be done by fire; so let the filthiness be burnt out of it, or, rather, *molten in it, and burnt with it*. Let the vipers and their nest be consumed together.

(2.) What is the *quarrel God has with it*. He would not take these severe methods with Jerusalem, but that he is provoked to it; she deserves to be thus dealt with: for,

[1.] It is a *bloody city*; (v. 7, 8.) *Her blood is in the midst of her*. Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city; nay, and they have a disposition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in bloodshed, and so it is *in the midst of them*. Nay, they commit their murders in the face of the sun, and openly and impudently avow them, in defiance of the justice both of God and man. She did not *pour out* the blood she shed *upon the ground, to cover it with dust*, as being ashamed of the sin, or afraid of the punishment. She did not look upon it as a *filthy* thing, proper to be concealed, (Deut. xxiii. 13.) much less dangerous. Nay, she poured out the innocent blood she shed *upon a rock*, where it would not soak in, upon the *top of a rock*, in despite of divine views and vengeance. They shed innocent blood, under colour of justice; so that they gloried in it, as if they had done God and the country good service, so put it, as it were, *on the top of a rock*; or, it may refer to the sacrificing of their children on their high places, perhaps on the top of rocks. Now thus they *caused fury to come up, and take vengeance*, v. 8. It could not be avoided, but that God must in anger visit for these things, *his soul must be avenged on such a nation as this*. If such impudent murderers as these, that even dare divine vengeance, go unpunished, it will be said that God has *forsaken the earth*. It is absolutely necessary that such a bloody city as this should have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of divine justice. And the crime having been public and notorious, it is fit that the punishment should be so too; *I have set her blood on the top of a rock*. Jerusalem was to be made an *example*, and therefore was made a *spectacle*, to the world; God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. It is fit that those who *sin before all*, should be *rebuked before all*; and that *their reputation* should not be consulted by the concealment of their punishment, who were so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin.

[2.] It is a *filthy city*. Great notice is taken, in this explanation of the comparison, of the *scum of this pot*, which signifies the sin of Jerusalem, working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is the pot whose *scum is therein*, and is not gone out of it, v. 6. *The great scum that went not forth out of her*, (v. 12.) that stuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was *molten in it*; (v. 11.) some of this runs over into the fire, (v. 12.) inflames that, and makes it burn the more furiously, but it shall all be consumed at last, v. 11. When the hand of God was gone out against them, instead of humbling themselves under it, repenting and reforming, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity, they grew more impudent and outrageous in sin; quarrelled with God, persecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the last de-

gree against the Chaldeans, snarled at the stone, gnawed their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net. This was *their scum*; in their distress they *treshpassed yet more against the Lord*; like that king *Ahaz*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. There is little hope of those who are made worse by that which should make them better; whose corruptions are excited and exasperated by those rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God, which were designed for the suppressing and subduing of them; or of those whose scum *boiled up* once in convictions, and confessions of sin, as if it would be *taken off* by reformation, but afterward returned again in a revolt from their good overtures; and the heart that seemed softened is hardened again.

This was Jerusalem's case; *She has wearied with lies*, wearied her God with purposes and promises of amendment, which she never stood to, *wearied herself* with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, v. 12. Note, Those that follow after lying vanities, weary themselves with the pursuit. Now see her doom, v. 13, 14. Because she is incurably wicked, she is abandoned to ruin, without remedy. First, Methods and means of reformation had been tried in vain; (v. 13.) "*In thy filthiness is lewdness*; thou art become obstinate and impudent in it; thou hast got a habit of it, which is confirmed by frequent acts. *In thy filthiness* there is a rooted lewdness; as appears by this, *I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged*. I have given thee medicine, but it has done thee no good. I have used the means of cleansing thee, but they have been ineffectual; the intention of them has not been answered." Next it is said to think how many there are on whom ordinances and providences are all lost. Secondly, It is therefore resolved that no more such methods shall be used; *Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more*. The fire shall no longer be a *refining* fire, but a *consuming* fire, and therefore shall not be mitigated and shortened, as it has been, but shall be continued in extremity, till it has done its destroying work. Note, Those that will not be healed, are justly *given up*, and their case adjudged desperate. There is a day coming when it will be said, *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still*. Thirdly, Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin; *I will cause my fury to rest upon thee*. This is the same with what is said of the latter Jews, that *wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*, 1 Thess. ii. 16. They deserve it; *According to thy doings they shall judge thee*, v. 14. And God will do it. The sentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to see how certain their ruin was; "*I the Lord have spoken it*, who am able to make good what I have spoken; *it shall come to pass*, nothing shall prevent it, for *I will do it myself*, *I will not go back* upon any entreaties, the decree is gone forth, and *I will not spare* in compassion to them, *neither will I repent*." He will neither change his mind nor his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to intercede for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themselves with hopes of an escape. God hath said it, and he will do it. Note, The declarations of God's wrath against sinners are as inviolable as the assurances he has given of favour to his people; and the case of such is sad indeed, who have brought it to this issue, that either God must be false, or they must be damned.

15. Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 16. Son of man, behold. I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. 17. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for

the dead, bind the tire of thy head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. 18. So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died: and I did in the morning as I was commanded. 19. And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so? 20. Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 21. Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword. 22. And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. 23. And your fires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one towards another. 24. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do; and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord God. 25. Also, thou son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters, 26. That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? 27. In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem; for, after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, yet he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after, ch. xxxiii. 21. He had assured them, in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. Observe here,

I. The sign by which this was represented to them, and it was a sign that cost the prophet very dear; the more shame for them, that when he, by a divine appointment, was at such an expense to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it.

1. He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprise to him; (v. 16.) *Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke*. Note, (1.) A married state may very well agree with the prophetic office; it is *honourable in all*, and therefore not sinful in ministers. (2.) Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations: no doubt, Ezekiel found a

prudent, tender yoke-fellow, that shared with him in his griefs and cares, to be a happy companion in his captivity. (3.) Those in the conjugal relation must be to each other not only a *covering of the eyes*, (Gen. xx. 16.) to restrain wandering looks after others; but a *desire of the eyes*, to engage pleasing looks on one another. A beloved wife is the *desire of the eyes*, which find not any object more grateful. (4.) That is least safe which is most dear; we know not how soon the *desire of our eyes* may be removed from us, and may become the sorrow of our hearts; which is a good reason why those that *have wives*, should be as though they had none, and those *who rejoice* in them, as though they *rejoiced not*, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Death is a stroke which the most pious, the most useful, the most amiable, are not exempted from. (5.) When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, we must see and own the hand of God in it; *I take away the desire of thine eyes*. He takes our creature-comforts from us when and how he pleases; he gave them to us, but reserved to himself a property in them; and *may he not do what he will with his own?* (6.) Under afflictions of this kind, it is good for us to remember that we are *sons of men*; for so God calls the prophet here. If thou art a *son of Adam*, thy wife is a daughter of *Eve*, and therefore a dying creature. It is an affliction which the children of men are liable to; and *shall the earth be forsaken for us?* According to this prediction, he tells us, (v. 18.) *I spake unto the people in the morning*; for God sent his prophets, *rising up early*, and sending them; then he thought, if ever, they would be disposed to hearken to him. Observe, [1.] Though God had given Ezekiel a certain prospect of this affliction coming upon him, yet it did not take him off from his work, but he resolved to go on in that. [2.] We may the more easily bear an affliction, if it find us in the way of our duty; for nothing can hurt us, nothing come amiss to us, while we keep ourselves in the love of God.

2. He must deny himself the satisfaction of mourning for his wife, which would have been both an honour to her and an ease to the oppression of his own spirit. He must not use the *natural* expressions of sorrow, v. 16. He must not give vent to his passion by *weeping*, or letting his *tears run down*; though tears are a tribute due to the dead, and, when the body is *sown*, it is fit that it should thus be watered. But Ezekiel is not allowed to do this; though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man, and would perhaps be ill thought of by the people if he did it not. Much less might he use the *customary* formalities of mourners. He must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban on him, here called the *tire of his head*; must *put on his shoes*, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases; he must not *cover his lips*, not throw a veil over his face, (as mourners were wont to do, Lev. xiii. 45.) must not be of a *sorrowful countenance*, *appearing unto men to fast*, Matt. vi. 18. He must not *eat the bread of men*, nor expect that his neighbours and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide meat for themselves; but, if it were sent, he must not eat of it, but go on in his business as at other times. It could not but be sore against the grain to flesh and blood, not to lament the death of one he loved so dearly, but so God commanded; and *I did in the morning as I was commanded*. He appeared in public, in his usual habit, and looked as he used to do, without any signs of mourning. (1.) Here there was something *peculiar*, and Ezekiel, to make himself a sign to the people, must put a force upon himself, and exercise an extraordinary piece of self-denial. Note, Our dispositions must always submit to God's directions,

and his command must be obeyed, even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us. (2.) Though mourning for the dead be a duty, yet it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason, and we must not *sorrow as those that have no hope*, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could worst spare, as if we had *lost our God*, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and of this moderation in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, ought to be examples. We must at such a time study to improve the affliction, to accommodate ourselves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased, by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job to *bless the name of the Lord*, even when he *takes* as well as when he *gives*.

11. The explication and application of this sign. The people inquired the meaning of it; (v. 19.) *Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?* They knew that Ezekiel was an affectionate husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it but for some good reason, and for instruction to them; and perhaps they were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and gave them an intimation that God would now comfort them again according to the time he had afflicted them, and make them look pleasant again. Note, When we are inquiring concerning the things of God, our inquiry must be, "What are those things to us? What are we concerned in them? What conviction, what counsel, what comfort, do they speak to us? Wherein do they reach our case?"

Ezekiel gives them an answer *verbatim*, as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must *speak to the house of Israel*.

1. Let them know that as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke, so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, v. 21. If this were *done to the green tree*, what shall be *done to the dry?* If a faithful servant of God was thus afflicted only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence God showed that he was in earnest in his threatenings, and inexorable. We may suppose that Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people? No, it is determined; *God will take away the desire of your eyes*. Note, The removal of the comforts of others should awaken us to think of parting with ours too; *for are we better than they?* We know not how soon the same cup, or a more bitter one, may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with them that weep, as being ourselves also in the body. God will *take away that which their soul pities*, of which they say, *What pity is it that it should be cut off and destroyed! That for which your souls are afraid*; (so some read it;) you shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that? (1.) That which was their *public pride*, the temple; "*I will profane my sanctuary*, by giving that into the enemy's hand, to be plundered and burnt." This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and more the *desire of our eyes*, than any creature-comfort whatsoever. Christ's church, that is his spouse, should be ours too. Though this people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, yet it is called the *desire of their eyes*. Note, Many that are destitute of the *power of godliness*, are yet very fond of the *form* of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy by depriving them of that too. The sanctuary is here called the *excellency of their strength*; they had many strong

holds and places of defence, but the temple excelled them all; it was the *pride of their strength*; they prided in it as their strength, that they were the *temple of the Lord*, Jer. vii. 4. Note, The church-privileges that men are proud of, are profaned by their sins, and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away, (2.) That which was their *family pleasure*, which they looked upon with delight; "*Your sons and your daughters* (which are the dearer to you, because they are but a few *left of many*; the rest having perished by famine and pestilence) shall fall by the sword of the Chaldeans." What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures of themselves, whom they had taken such care and pains to bring up, and whom they loved as their own souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this was the punishment of sin.

2. Let them know that as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction, so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, *Ye shall do as I have done*, v. 22. *Ye shall not mourn nor weep*, v. 23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men shall not lament for the dead, nor cut themselves; (Jer. xvi. 6.) not that there shall be any such merciful circumstances *without*, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace *within*, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow; but they shall not mourn; for, (1.) Their grief shall be so great, that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it, their passions shall *stifle* them, and they shall have no power to ease themselves by *giving vent* to it. (2.) Their calamities shall come so fast upon them, one upon the neck of another, that by long custom they shall be *hardened in their sorrows*, (Job vi. 10.) and perfectly *stupidified*, and moped (as we say) with them. (3.) They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an affront and disturbance to their triumphs. (4.) They shall neither have hearts, nor time, nor money, wherewith to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief; "You will be so entirely taken up with solid, substantial grief, that you will have no room for the shadow of it." (5.) Particular mourners shall not need to distinguish themselves by *covering their lips*, and laying aside their ornaments, and *going bare-foot*; for it is well known that every body is a mourner. (6.) There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it, which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows, "*Ye shall find away for your iniquities*, with seared consciences and reprobate minds, and *ye shall mourn*, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but *one toward another*;" murmuring, and fretting, and complaining of God, thus making their burthen heavier and their wound more grievous, as impatient people do under their afflictions, by mingling their own passions with them.

III. An appeal to the event, for the confirmation of all this; (v. 24.) "*When this comes*, as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now you cannot believe will ever be, *then ye shall know that I am the Lord God*, who have given you this fair warning of it. Then you will remember that Ezekiel was to you a sign." Note, Those who regard not the threatenings of the word when they are preached, will be made to remember them when they are executed. Observe,

1. The great desolation which the siege of Jerusalem should end in; (v. 25.) *In that day*, that terrible day, when the city should be broken up, *I will take from them*, (1.) That which they depended on; *their strength*, their walls, their treasures, their for-

tifications, their men of war, none shall stand them in stead. (2.) That which they boasted of; the *joy of their glory*, that which they looked upon as most their glory, and which they most rejoiced in, the temple of their God, and the palaces of their princes. (3.) That which they delighted in; which was the *desire of their eyes*, and on which they set their minds. Note, Carnal people set their minds upon that on which they can set their eyes; they look at, and dote upon, the things that are seen; and it is their folly to set their minds upon that which they have no assurance of, and which may be taken from them in a moment. Prov. xxiii. 5. *Their sons and their daughters* were all this, *their strength, and joy, and glory*; and these shall go into captivity.

2. The notice that should be brought to the prophet, not by revelation, as the notice of the siege was brought him, (v. 2.) but in an ordinary way; (v. 26.) *He that escapes in that day*, shall, by a special direction of Providence, come to thee, to bring thee intelligence of it; which we find now done, ch. xxxiii. 21. The ill news came slowly, and yet to Ezekiel and his fellow-captives it came too soon.

3. The divine impression which he should be under, upon the receiving that notice, v. 27. Whereas from this time to that, Ezekiel was thus far *dumb*, that he prophesied no more against the land of Israel, but against the neighbouring nations, as we shall find in the following chapters, then he shall have orders given him to *speak against the children of his people*, (ch. xxxiii. 2, 22.) then *his mouth shall be opened*. He was suspended from prophesying against them in the mean time, because, Jerusalem being besieged, his prophecies could not be sent into the city; because, when God was speaking so loud by the rod, there was the less need of speaking by the word, and because then the accomplishments of his prophecies would be the full confirmation of his mission, and would the more effectually clear the way for him to begin again. It being referred to that issue, that issue must be waited for. Thus Christ forbade his disciples to preach openly that he was Christ, till after his resurrection, because that was to be the full proof of it. But then *thou shalt speak* with the greater assurance, and the more effectually, either to their conviction, or to their confusion. Note, God's prophets are never silenced but for wise and holy ends. And when God gives them the opening of the mouth again, (as he will in due time; for even the witnesses that are slain shall arise,) it shall appear to have been for his glory that they were for awhile silent, that people may the more certainly and fully know that *God is the Lord*.

## CHAP. XXV.

Judgment began at the house of God, and therefore with them the prophets began, who were the judges; but it must not end there, and therefore they must not. Ezekiel had finished his testimony which related to the destruction of Jerusalem. As to that, he was ordered to say no more, but stand upon his watch-tower, and wait the issue; and yet he must not be silent; there are divers nations bordering upon the land of Israel, which he must prophesy against, as Isaiah and Jeremiah had done before; and must proclaim God's controversy with them, chiefly for the injuries and indignities which they had done to the people of God in the day of their calamity. In this chapter, we have his prophecy, I. Against the Ammonites, v. 1. 7. II. Against the Moabites, v. 8. III. Against the Edomites, v. 11. 14. IV. Against the Philistines, v. 15. 17. That which is laid to the charge of each of them, is, their barbarous and insolent conduct toward God's Israel; for which God threatens to put the same cup of trembling into their hand. God's resenting it thus would be an encouragement to Israel to believe that though he had dealt thus severely with them, yet he had not cast them off, but would still own them, and plead their cause.

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set

thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; 3. And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God, Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity: 4. Behold, therefore, I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. 5. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 6. For thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast clapped *thy* hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; 7. Behold, therefore, I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD

Here,

I. The propnet is ordered to address himself to the Ammonites, in the name of the *Lord Jehovah*, the *God of Israel*, who is also the God of the whole earth. But what can Chemosh, the god of the children of Ammon, say, in answer to it? He is bidden to *set his face against the Ammonites*, for he is God's representative as a prophet, and thus he must signify that God *set his face against them, for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*, Ps. xxxiv. 16. He must speak with boldness and assurance, as one that knew whose errand he went upon, and that he should be borne out in delivering it. He must therefore *set his face as a flint*, Isa. 1. 7. He must show his displeasure against these proud enemies of Israel, and face them down, though they were very impudent; and thus must show that though he had prophesied so much and so long *against Israel*, yet still he was for Israel, and, while he witnessed against their corruptions, adhered to, and gloried in, God's covenant with them. Note, Those are miserable that have the preaching and praying of God's prophets against them; against whom *their faces are set*.

II. He is directed what to say to them. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon, and has been so many years, and knows little of the state of his own nation, much less of the nations that were about it; but God tells him both what they were doing, and what he was about to do with them. And thus by the spirit of prophecy he is enabled to speak as pertinently to their case as if he had been among them.

1. He must upbraid the Ammonites with their insolent and barbarous triumphs over the people of Israel in their calamities, *v. 3*. The Ammonites said, when all went against the Jews, *Aha, so would we have it*. They were glad to see, (1.) The temple burned, the sanctuary profaned by the victorious Chaldeans; this is put first, to intimate what was the cause of the controversy; they had an enmity to the Jews for the sake of their religion, though it was only some poor remains of the profession of it that were to be found among them. (2.) The nation ruined. They rejoiced when *the land of Israel was*

*made desolate*, the cities burnt, the country wasted, and both depopulated, and when the house of *Judah went into captivity*. When they had not power to oppress God's Israel themselves, they were pleased to see the Chaldeans oppress them; partly because they envied their wealth and the good land they enjoyed, partly because they feared their growing power, and partly because they hated their religion, and the divine oracles they were favoured with. It is repeated again, (*v. 6*.) *They clapped with their hands*, to irritate the rage of the Chaldeans, and to set them on as dogs upon the game; or, they clapped their hands in triumph, attended this tragedy with their *Plaudite—Give us your applause*, thinking it *well acted*; never was there any thing more *diverting or entertaining* to them. *They stamped with their feet*, ready to leap and dance for joy upon this occasion; they not only *rejoiced in heart*, but they could not forbear showing it; though every one that had any sense of honour and humanity would cry shame upon them for it. Especially considering that they rejoiced thus, not for any thing they got by Israel's fall; if so, they had been the more excusable. Most people are for themselves. But this was purely from a principle of malice and enmity; *Thou hast rejoiced in heart with all thy despite*, which signifies both scorn and hatred *against the land of Israel*. Note, The people of God have always had a great deal of ill-will borne them by this wicked world; and their calamities have been their neighbours' entertainments. See to what unnatural instances of malice the enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, will carry them. The Ammonites, of all people, should not have rejoiced in Jerusalem's ruin, but should rather have trembled, because they themselves had such a narrow escape at the same time; it was but cross or pile\* which should be besieged first, Rabbah or Jerusalem, *ch. xxi. 20*. And they had reason to think that the king of Babylon would set upon them next. But thus were their hearts hardened to their ruin, and their insolence against Jerusalem was to them an *evident token of perdition*, Phil. i. 28. It is a very wicked thing to be *glad at the calamities of any*, especially of God's people, and a sin that God will surely reckon for; such delight has God in showing mercy, and so backward is he to punish, that nothing is more pleasing to him than to be stopped in the ways of his judgments by intercessions, nor any thing more provoking than to *help forward the affliction* when he is but a *little displeased*. *Zech. i. 15*.

2. He must threaten the Ammonites with utter ruin, for this insolence which they were guilty of. God turns away his wrath from Israel against them, as is said, *Prov. xxiv. 17, 18*. God is jealous for his people's honour, because his own is so nearly interested in it. And therefore they that touch that, shall be made to know that they touch the apple of his eye. He had before predicted the destruction of the Ammonites, *ch. xxi. 28*. Had they repented, that had been revoked; but now it is ratified. (1.) A destroying enemy is brought against them; *I will deliver thee to the men of the east*, first to the Chaldeans, who came from the north-east, and whose army, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the country of the Ammonites, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem; (as Josephus relates, *Antiq. lib. 10. cap. 11.*) and then to the Arabians, who were properly the *children of the east*, who, when the Chaldeans had made the country desolate, and quitted it, came and took possession of it for themselves, probably with the consent of the conquerors: shepherds' tents were their palaces, these they set up in the country of the Ammonites,

\* A game, in which it is put to chance whether the side of a coin which bears the cross, or that which bears the reverse, shall lie upward.—Ed.

there they *made their dwellings*, v. 4. They enjoyed the products of the country; *They shall eat thy fruit, and drink thy milk*; and the milk from the cattle is the fruit of the ground at second-hand. They made use even of the royal city for their cattle; (v. 5.) *I will make Rabbah*, that was a nice and splendid city, to be a *stable for camels*; for its new masters, whose wealth lies all in cattle, will not think they can put the palaces of Rabbah to a better use. Rabbah had been a habitation of brutish men, justly therefore it is now made a *stable for camels*; and the country a *couching-place for flocks*, more innocent beasts than those with which it had been before replenished. (2.) God himself acts as an Enemy to them; (v. 7.) *I will stretch out mine hand upon thee*, a hand that will reach far, and strike home, which there is no resisting the blow of, for it is a mighty hand; nor bearing the weight of, for it is a heavy hand. God's hand stretched out against the Ammonites will not only deliver them for a *spoil to the heathen*, so that their neighbours shall prey upon them, but will cut them off from the people, and make them perish out of the countries, so that there shall be no remains of them in that place. Compare with this, Jer. xlix. 1, &c. What can sound more terrible than that resolution, (v. 7.) *I will destroy thee?* For the almighty God is able both to save and to destroy, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Both the threatenings here, (v. 5. and v. 7.) conclude with this, *Ye shall know that I am the Lord*. For, [1.] Thus God will maintain his own honour, and will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon. [2.] Thus he will bring those that were strangers to him, into an acquaintance with him, and it will be a blessed effect of their calamities. Better know God, and be poor, than be rich, and ignorant of him.

3. Thus saith the Lord God, Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen; 9. Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim, 10. Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. 11. And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the LORD. 12. Thus saith the Lord God, Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them: 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will also stretch out my hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. 14. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger, and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God. 15. Thus saith the Lord God, Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despightful heart, to destroy it for the old

hatred; 16. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will stretch out my hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coast. 17. And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

Three more of Israel's *ill-natured* neighbours are here arraigned, convicted, and condemned to destruction, for contributing to, and triumphing in, Jerusalem's fall.

I. The Moabites. Seir, which was the seat of the Edomites, is joined with them, (v. 8.) because they said the same as the Moabites; but they were afterward reckoned with by themselves, v. 12. Now observe, 1. What was the sin of the Moabites; they said, *Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen*. They triumphed, (1.) In the apostacies of Israel, were pleased to see them forsake their God, and worship idols, and hoped that in a while their religion would be quite lost and forgotten, and the house of Judah would be like all the heathen, perfect idolaters. When those that profess religion walk unworthy of their profession, they encourage the enemies of religion to hope that it will in time sink, and be run down, and quite abandoned; but let the Moabites know that though there are those of the house of Judah who have made themselves like the heathen, yet there is a remnant that retain their integrity, the religion of the house of Judah shall recover itself, its peculiarities shall be preserved, it shall not lose itself among the heathen, but distinguish itself from them, till it deliver itself honourably into a better institution. (2.) They triumphed in the calamities of Israel. They said, "*The house of Judah is like all the heathen*, in as bad a state as they; their God is no more able to deliver them from this overflowing scourge of these parts of the world, than the gods of the heathen are to deliver them. Where are the promises they gloried in, and all the wonders which they and their fathers told us of? What the better are they for the covenant of peculiarity, upon which they so much valued themselves? They that looked with so much scorn upon all the heathen, are now set upon a level with them, or rather sunk below them." Note, Those who judge only by outward appearance, are ready to conclude that the people of God have lost all their privileges, when they have lost their worldly prosperity; which does not follow, for good men, even in affliction, in captivity among the heathen, have graces and comforts within, sufficient to distinguish them from all the heathen. Though the event seem one to the righteous and wicked, yet indeed it is vastly different. 2. What should be the punishment of Moab for this sin; because they triumphed in the overthrow of Judah, their country shall be in like manner overthrown with that of the Ammonites, who were guilty of the same sin; (v. 9, 10.) *I will open the side of Moab*, will uncover its shoulder, will take away all its defences, that it may become an easy prey to any that will make a prey of it. (1.) See here how it shall be exposed; the frontier-towns, that were its strength and guard, shall be demolished by the Chaldean forces, and laid open. Some of the cities are here named, which are said to be the glory of the country, which they trusted in, and boasted of, as impregnable; these shall decay, be deserted, or betrayed, or fall into the enemy's hand, so that Moab shall lie exposed, and whoever will, may penetrate into the heart of the country. Note, Those who glory in any other defence and protection than that of the divine power, providence, and



promise, will, sooner or later, see cause to be ashamed of their glorying. (2.) See here to whom it shall be exposed; *The men of the east*, when they come to take possession of the country of the Ammonites, shall seize that of the Moabites too. God, the Lord of all lands, will give them that land; for the kingdoms of men he gives to whomsoever he will. The Arabians, who are *shepherds*, and *live quietly*, plain men dwelling in tents, shall by an overruling Providence be put in possession of the land of the Moabites, who are soldiers, men of war, and cunning hunters, that *live turbulently*. The Chaldeans shall get it by war, and the Arabians shall enjoy it in peace. Concerning the Ammonites it is said, *They shall no more be remembered among the nations*, (v. 10.) for they had been accessory to the murder of Gedaliah, Jer. xl. 14. But of the Moabites it is said, *I will execute judgments upon Moab*; they shall feel the weight of God's displeasure, but perhaps not to that degree that the Ammonites shall; however, so far as that, *they shall know that I am the Lord*; that the God of Israel is a God of power, and that his covenant with his people is not broken.

II. The Edomites, the posterity of Esau, betwixt whom and Jacob there had been an old enmity. And here is,

1. The sin of the Edomites, v. 12. They not only triumphed in the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, as the Moabites and Ammonites had done, but they took advantage from the present distressed state to which the Jews were reduced, to do them some real mischiefs; probably, made inroads upon their frontiers, and plundered their country; *Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance*. The Edomites had of old been tributaries to the Jews, according to the sentence that the elder should serve the younger. In Jehoram's time they revolted; Amaziah severely chastised them, (2 Kings xiv. 7.) and for this they *took vengeance*; now they would pay off all the old scores; and not only incensed the Babylonians against Jerusalem, crying, *Raze it, raze it*, (Ps. cxxxvii. 7.) but cut off those that escaped; as we find in the prophecy of Obadiah, which is wholly directed against Edom, v. 11, 12, &c. It is called here *revenging a revenge*, which intimated that they were not only eager upon it, but very cruel in it, and recompensed to the Jews more than double. Herein he has greatly offended. Note, It is a great offence to God for us to revenge ourselves upon our brother; for God has said, *Vengeance is mine*. We are forbidden to *revenge*, or to *bear a grudge*. Suppose Judah had been hard upon Edom formerly, it was a base thing for the Edomites now, in revenge for it, to *smite them secretly*; but the Jews had a divine warrant to reign over the Edomites, for that therefore they ought not to have made reprisals; and it was the more disingenuous for them to retain the old enmity, when God had particularly commanded his people to forget it, (Deut. xxiii. 7.) *Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite*.

2. The judgments threatened against them for this sin. God will take them to task for it; (v. 13.) *I will stretch out my hand upon Edom*. Their country shall be desolate from *Temam*, which lay in the south part of it; and *they shall fall by the sword unto Dedan*, which lay north; the desolations of war should go through the nation. (1.) They had *taken vengeance*, and therefore God will *lay his vengeance* upon them; (v. 14.) *They shall know my vengeance*. They that will not leave it to God to take vengeance for them, may expect that he will take vengeance on them; and they that will not believe and fear his vengeance, shall be made to know and feel his vengeance; they shall be dealt with according to God's anger, and according to his fury, not according to the weakness of the in-

struments that are employed in it, but according to the strength of the arm that employs them. (2.) They had taken vengeance on Israel, and God will lay his vengeance on them by the hand of *his people Israel*; they suffered much by the Chaldeans, which seems to be referred to, Jer. xlix. 8. But be side that there were *saviours* to come upon *moun Zion*, who should judge the mount of Esau, (Obad. 21.) and Israel's Redeemer comes *with dyed garments from Bozrah*, (Isa. lxiii. 1.) this implies a promise that Israel should recover itself again, to that degree as to be in a capacity of corbing the insolence of its neighbours. And we find (1 Mac. v. 3.) that *Judas Maccabeus fought against the children of Esau in Idumea, gave them a great overthrow, abated their courage, and took their spoil*. And Josephus says (*Antiq. lib. 13. cap. 17.*) that Hircanus made the Edomites tributaries to Israel. Note, The equity of God's judgments is to be observed, when he not only avenges injuries upon those that did them, but by those against whom they were done.

III. The Philistines. And, 1. Their sin is much the same with that of the Edomites; They have *dealt by revenge* with the people of Israel, and have *taken vengeance with a spiteful heart*, not to disturb them only, but to *destroy them, for the old hatred*, (v. 15.) the old grudge they bore them, or, as the margin reads it, *with perpetual hatred*, a hatred that began long since, and which they resolved to continue; the anger was implacable, they *dealt by revenge*, traded in the acts of malice; it was their constant practice, and their heart, their spiteful heart, was upon it. 2. Their punishment likewise is much the same, v. 16. They that were for destroying God's people, shall themselves be cut off and destroyed. And (v. 17.) they that were for avenging themselves, God will *execute great vengeance upon them*. This was fulfilled when that country was wasted by the Chaldean army, not long after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is foretold, Jer. xlvii. It was strange that these nations, which bordered upon the land of Israel, were not alarmed by the success of the Chaldean army, and made to tremble in the apprehensions of their own danger; when their neighbour's house was on fire, it was time to look to their own; but their impicity and malice made them forget their politics, till God by his judgments convinced them that the cup was going round, and they were not the less safe for their being secure.

## CHAP. XXVI.

The prophet had soon done with those four nations that he set his face against in the foregoing chapters; for they were not at that time very considerable in the world, nor would their fall make any great noise among the nations, nor any figure in history. But the city of Tyre is next set to the bar, which, being a place of vast trade, was known all the world over; and therefore here are three whole chapters, this and the two that follow, spent in the prediction of the destruction of Tyre. We have *the burthen of Tyre*, Isa. xxiii. It is but just mentioned in Jeremiah, as sharing with the natives in the common calamity, ch. xxv. 22.—xxvii. 3.—xlvii. 4. But Ezekiel is ordered to be large upon that head. In this chapter, we have, 1. The sin charged upon Tyre, which was, triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 2. II. The destruction of Tyre itself foretold. 1. The extremity of this destruction; it shall be utterly ruined, v. 4., 6, 12., 14. 2. The instruments of this destruction; many nations, v. 3. and the king of Babylon by name with his vast victorious army, 7., 11. 3. The great surprise, that this should give to the neighbouring nations, who would all wonder at the fall of so great a city, and be alarmed at it. v. 15., 21.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month that the word of the LORD came unto me,

saying, 2. Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken *that was* the gates of the people; she is turned unto me; I shall be replenished, *now* she is laid waste: 3. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I *am* against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. 4. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. 5. It shall be *a place* for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord God; and it shall become a spoil to the nations. 6. And her daughters which *are* in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD. 7. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people. 8. He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field; and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee. 9. He shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers. 10. By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. 11. With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground. 12. And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise; and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones, and thy timber, and thy dust, in the midst of the water. 13. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. 14. And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be *a place* to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken *it*, saith the Lord God.

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year, which was the year that Jerusalem was taken, and in the *first day of the month*, but it is not said what month; some think the month in which Jerusalem was taken, was the fourth month, others the month after; or perhaps it was the first month, and so it was the first day of the year. Observe here,

I. The pleasure with which the Tyrians looked

upon the ruins of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was a great way off, in Babylon, but God told him what Tyrus said against Jerusalem; (v. 2.) *Aha, she is broken*, broken to pieces, that was the *gates of the people*, to whom there was a great resort, and where there was a general rendezvous of all nations, some upon one account, and some upon another; and I shall get by it; all the wealth, power, and interest which Jerusalem had, it is hoped, shall be turned to Tyre; and so *now* that *she is laid waste*, I shall be replenished. We do not find that the Tyrians had such a hatred and enmity to Jerusalem and the sanctuary as the Ammonites and Edonites had, or were so spiteful and mischievous to the Jews; they were men of business, and of large acquaintance and free conversation, and therefore were not so bigoted, and of such a persecuting spirit, as the narrow souls that lived retired, and knew not the world; all their care was to get estates, and enlarge their trade, and they looked upon Jerusalem not as an enemy, but as a rival. Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend to David and Solomon, and we do not read of any quarrels the Jews had with the Tyrians; but Tyre promised herself that the fall of Jerusalem would be an advantage to her in respect of trade and commerce; that now she shall have Jerusalem's customers, and the great men from all parts that used to come to Jerusalem for the accomplishing of themselves, and to spend their estates there, will now come to Tyre, and spend them there; and whereas many, since the Chaldean army became so formidable in those parts, had retired into Jerusalem, and brought their estates thither for safety, as the Rechabites did, now they will come to Tyre, which, being in a manner surrounded with the sea, will be thought a place of greater strength than Jerusalem; and thus the prosperity of Tyre will rise out of the ruins of Jerusalem. Note, To be secretly pleased with the death or decay of others when we are likely to get by it, with their fall when we may thrive upon it, is a sin that does most easily beset us, but is not thought to be such a bad thing, and so provoking to God, as really it is. We are apt to say, when those who stand in our light, in our way, are removed, when they break, or fall into disgrace, "We shall be *replenished*, now that they are *laid waste*." But this comes from a selfish, covetous principle, and a desire to be *placed alone in the midst of the earth*, as if we grudged that any should live by us. This comes from a want of that love to our neighbour as to ourselves, which the law of God so expressly requires, and from that inordinate love of the world as our happiness, which the love of God so expressly forbids. And it is just with God to blast the designs and projects of those who thus contrive to raise themselves upon the ruins of others; and we see they are often disappointed.

II. The displeasure of God against them for it. The providence of God had done well for Tyrus; Tyre was a pleasant and wealthy city, and might have continued so, if she had, as she ought to have done, sympathized with Jerusalem in her calamities, and sent her an address of condolence; but when, instead of that, she showed herself pleased with her neighbour's fall, and perhaps sent an address of congratulation to the conquerors, then God says, *Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, v. 3.* And let her not expect to prosper long, if God be against her.

1. God will bring formidable enemies upon her; *Many nations shall come against thee*; an army made up of many nations, or one nation that shall be as strong as many. Those that have God *against them*, may expect all the creatures *against them*; for what peace can they have, with whom God is at war? They shall come pouring in *as the waves of the sea*, one upon the neck of another, with an

irresistible force. The person is named that shall bring this army upon them; *Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings*, that had many kings tributaries to him, and dependants on him, beside those that were his captives, Dan. ii. 37, 38. He is that *head of gold*. He shall come with a vast army, *horses and chariots*, &c. all land forces; we do not find he had any naval force, or any thing wherewith he might attack it by sea, which made the attempt the more difficult, as we find, *ch. xxix. 18.* where it is called a *great service which he served against Tyrus*. He shall besiege it in form, (v. 8.) *make a fort, and cast a mount, and (v. 9.) shall set engines of war against the walls*. His troops shall be so numerous as to raise a *dust* that shall cover the city, v. 10. They shall make a *noise* that shall even *shake the walls*, and they shall shout at every attack, as soldiers do, when they *enter a city* that is *broken up*: the horses shall prance with so much fury and violence, that they shall even *tread down the streets* though ever so well paved.

2. They shall do terrible execution. (1.) The enemy shall make themselves masters of all their fortifications, shall *destroy the walls, and break down the towers*, v. 4. For what walls are so strongly built as to be a fence against the judgments of God? Her *strong garrisons shall go down to the ground*, v. 11. And the *walls shall be broken down*, v. 12. The city held out a long siege, but it was taken at last. (2.) A great deal of blood shall be shed; *Her daughters which are in the field, the cities upon the continent, which were subject to Tyre as the mother city, the inhabitants of them shall be slain by the sword*, v. 6. The invaders begin with them that come first in their way. And, (v. 11.) *he shall slay thy people with the sword*; not only the soldiers that are found in arms, but the burghers, shall be *put to the sword*, the king of Babylon being highly incensed against them for holding out so long. (3.) The wealth of the city shall all become a spoil to the conqueror; (v. 12.) *They made a prey of the merchandise*; it was in hope of the plunder, that the city was set upon with so much vigour. See the vanity of *riches*, that they are *kept for the owners to their hurt*; entice and recompense thieves, and not only cease to benefit those who took pains for them, and were duly entitled to them, but are made to serve their enemies, who were thereby put into a capacity of doing them so much the more mischief. (4.) The city itself shall be laid in ruins. All the *pleasant houses* shall be *destroyed*; (v. 12.) such as were pleasantly situated, beautified, and furnished, shall become a heap of rubbish. Let none please themselves too much in their pleasant houses, for they know not how soon they may see the desolation of them. Tyre shall be utterly ruined; the enemy shall not only pull down the houses, but shall carry away *the stones and the timber*, which might serve for the rebuilding of it, and shall *lay them in the midst of the water*, not to be recovered, or ever made use of again. Nay, (v. 4.) *I will scrape her dust from her*; not only shall the loose dust be blown away, but the very ground it stands upon shall be torn up by the enraged enemy, carried off, and laid *in the midst of the water*, v. 12. The *foundation is in the dust*, that dust shall be all taken away, and then the city must fall of course. When Jerusalem was destroyed, it was *ploughed like a field*, Mic. iii. 12. But the destruction of Tyre is carried further than that; the very *soil* of it shall be *scraped* away, and it shall be made *like the top of a rock*; (v. 4, 14.) pure rock that has no earth to cover it; it shall only be a place *for the spreading of nets*, (v. 5, 14.) it shall serve fishermen to dry their nets upon, and mend them. (5.) There shall be a full period to all its mirth and joy; (v. 13.) *I will cause the noise*

*of thy songs to cease*. Tyre had been a joyous city, (Isa. xxiii. 7.) with her *songs* she had courted customers to deal with her in a way of trade; but now farewell all her profitable commerce and pleasant conversation; Tyre is no more a place either of business or of sport. *Lastly*, It shall be *built no more*, (v. 14.) not built any more as it had been, with such state and magnificence; nor built any more in the same place, within the sea, nor built any where of a long time; the present inhabitants shall be destroyed or dispersed, so that this Tyre shall be *no more*. For *God has spoken it*, (v. 5, 14.) and when what he has said is accomplished, *they shall know* thereby that *he is the Lord*, and not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.

15. Thus saith the Lord God to Tyrus Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee? 16. Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee. 17. And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed *that wast* inhabited of sea-faring men, the renowned city which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror *to be* on all that haunt it! 18. Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure. 19. For thus saith the Lord God, When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; 20. When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living; 21. I will make thee a terror, and thou *shalt be no more*: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God.

The utter ruin of Tyre is here represented in very strong and lively figures, which are exceedingly affecting.

1. See how *high*, how *great* Tyre had been, how little likely ever to have come to this. The remembrance of men's former grandeur and plenty is a great aggravation of their present disgrace and poverty. Tyre was a *renowned city*, (v. 17.) famous among the nations, the *crowning city*, (so she is called, Isa. xxiii. 8.) a city that had crowns in her gift, honoured all she smiled upon, crowned herself and all about her; she was *inhabited of seas*, of those that trade at sea, of those who from all parts came thither by sea, bringing with them the *abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the sand*. She was *strong in the sea*; easy of access to her friends, but to her enemies inaccessible; fortified by a *wal-*

of water, which made her impregnable. So that she with her pomp, and her inhabitants with their pride, caused their terror to be on all that haunted that city, and upon any account frequented it. It was well fortified, and formidable in the eyes of all that acquainted themselves with it. Every body stood in awe of the Tyrians, and was afraid of obliging them. Note, Those who know their strength are too apt to cause terror, to pride themselves in frightening those they are an over-match for.

2. See how low, how little, Tyre is made, v. 19, 20. This renowned city is made a desolate city, is no more frequented as it has been, there is no more resort of merchants to it, it is like the cities not inhabited, which are no cities, and, having none to keep them in repair, will go to decay of themselves; Tyre shall be like a city overflowed by an inundation of waters, which cover it, and upon which the deep is brought up. As the waves had formerly been its defence, so now they shall be its destruction. She shall be brought down with them that descend into the pit, with the cities of the old world that were under water, and with Sodom and Gomorrah, that lie in the bottom of the Dead Sea. Or, She shall be in the condition of those who have been long buried, of the people of old time, who are old inhabitants of the silent grave, who are quite rotted away under ground, and quite forgotten above ground; such shall Tyre be, free among the dead; set in the lower parts of the earth, humbled, mortified, reduced. It shall be like the places desolate of old, as well as like persons dead of old; it shall be like other cities that have formerly been in like manner deserted and destroyed. It shall not be inhabited again; none shall have the courage to attempt the rebuilding of it upon that spot, so that it shall be no more; the Tyrians shall be lost among the nations, so that people will look in vain for Tyre in Tyre; Thou shalt be sought for and never found again. New persons may build a new city upon a new spot of ground hard by, which they may call Tyre, but Tyre, as it is, shall never be any more. Note, The strongest cities in this world, the best fortified and best furnished, are subject to decay, and may in a little time be brought to nothing. In the history of our own island, many cities are spoken of as in being when the Romans were here, which now our antiquaries scarcely know where to look for, and of which there remains no more evidence, than Roman urns and coins dugged up there sometimes accidentally. But in the other world we look for a city that shall stand for ever, and flourish in perfection through all the ages of eternity.

3. See what a distress the inhabitants of Tyre are in; (v. 15.) There is a great slaughter made in the midst of thee, many slain, and great men; it is probable, when the city was taken, that the generality of the inhabitants were put to the sword; then did the wounded cry, and they cried in vain, to the pitiless conquerors; they cried quarter, but it would not be given them; the wounded are slain without mercy, or, rather, that is the only mercy that is showed them, that the second blow shall rid them out of their pain.

4. See what a consternation all the neighbours are in, upon the fall of Tyre. This is elegantly expressed here, to show how astonishing it should be. (1.) The islands shall shake at the sound of thy fall, v. 15. As when a great merchant breaks, all that he deals with are shocked by it, and begin to look about them; perhaps they had effects in his hands, which they are afraid they shall lose. Or, When they see one fail and become bankrupt of a sudden, in debt a great deal more than he is worth, it makes them afraid for themselves, lest they should do so too. Thus the isles, which thought

themselves safe in the embraces of the sea, when they see Tyre fall, shall tremble, and be troubled, saying, "What will become of us?" And it is well if they make this good use of it, to take warning by it not to be secure, but to stand in awe of God and his judgments. The sudden fall of a great tower shakes the ground round about it; thus all the islands in the Mediterranean sea shall feel themselves sensibly touched by the destruction of Tyre, it being a place they had so much knowledge of, such interests in, and such a constant correspondence with. (2.) The princes of the sea shall be affected with it, who ruled in those islands; or, the rich merchants, who live like princes, (Isa. xxiii. 8.) and the masters of ships, who command like princes, these shall condole the fall of Tyre, in a most compassionate and pathetic manner; (v. 16.) They shall come down from their thrones, as neglecting the business of their thrones, and despising the pomp of them; they shall lay away their robes of state, their brodered garments, and shall clothe themselves all over with tremblings, with sackcloth that will make them shiver. Or, They shall by their own act and deed make themselves to tremble upon this occasion; they shall sit upon the ground in shame and sorrow; they shall tremble every moment at the thought of what has happened to Tyre, and for fear of what may happen to themselves; for what island is safe if Tyre be not? They shall take up a lamentation for thee, shall have elegies and mournful poems penned upon the fall of Tyre, v. 17. How art thou destroyed! [1.] It shall be a great surprise to them, and they shall be affected with wonder, that a place so well fortified by nature and art, so famed for politics, and so full of money, which is the sinews of war, and that held out so long and with so much bravery, should be taken at last; (v. 21.) I make thee a terror. Note, It is just with God to make those a terror to their neighbours, by the suddenness and strangeness of their punishment, who make themselves a terror to their neighbours by the abuse of their power. Tyre had caused her terror, (v. 17.) and now is made a terrible example. [2.] It shall be a great affliction to them, and they shall be affected with sorrow; (v. 17.) they shall take up a lamentation for Tyre, as thinking it a thousand pities that such a rich and splendid city should be thus laid in ruins. When Jerusalem, the holy city, was destroyed, there were no such lamentations for it, it was nothing to them that passed by; (Lam. i. 12.) but when Tyre, the trading city, fell, it was universally bemoaned. Note, Those who have the world in their hearts, lament the loss of great men more than the loss of good men. [3.] It shall be a loud alarm to them; They shall tremble in the day of thy fall, because they shall have reason to think that their own turn will be next. If Tyre fall who can stand? Howl, fir-trees, if such a cedar be shaken. Note, The fall of others should awaken us out of our security. The death or decay of others in the world is a check to us, when we dream that our mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved.

5. See how the irreparable ruin of Tyre is aggravated by the prospect of the restoration of Israel. Thus shall Tyre sink, when I shall set glory in the land of the living, v. 20. Note, (1.) The holy land is the land of the living; for none but holy souls are properly living souls; where living sacrifices are offered to the living God, and where the lively oracles are, there the land of the living is; there David hoped to see the goodness of the Lord, Ps. xxvii. 13. That was a type of heaven, which is indeed the land of the living. (2.) Though this land of the living may for a time lie under disgrace, yet God will again set glory in it; the glory that is departed shall return; and the restoration of what

they had been deprived of shall be so much more their glory. God will himself be the *Glory* of the lands that are the *lands of the living*. (3.) It will aggravate the misery of those that have their portion in the land of the dying, of those that are for ever dying, to behold the happiness of those, at the same time, that shall have their everlasting portion in the *land of the living*. When the rich man was himself in torment, he saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and glory set for him in the *land of the living*.

## CHAP. XXVII.

Still we are attending the funeral of Tyre, and the lamentations made for the fall of that renowned city. In this chapter, we have, 1. A large account of the dignity, wealth, and splendour of Tyre, while it was in its strength, the vast trade it drove, and the interest it had among the nations, (v. 1. . 25.) which is designed to make its ruin the more lamentable. 11. A prediction of its fall and ruin, and the confusion and consternation which all its neighbours shall thereby be put into, v. 26. . 36. And this is intended to stain the pride of all worldly glory, and, by setting the one over against the other, to let us see the vanity and uncertainty of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, and what little reason we have to place our happiness in them, or to be confident of the continuance of them; so that all this is written for our learning.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus; 3. And say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, *which art* a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the Lord God, O Tyrus, thou hast said, *I am* of perfect beauty. 4. Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty. 5. They have made all thy *ship*-boards of fir-trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee. 6. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars: the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory, *brought* out of the isles of Chittim. 7. Fine linen, with brodered work from Egypt, was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail: blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was that which covered thee. 8. The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise men, O Tyrus, *that* were in thee were thy pilots. 9. The ancients of Gebal, and the wise men thereof, were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea, with their mariners, were in thee to occupy thy merchandise. 10. They of Persia, and of Lud, and of Phut, were in thine army thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness. 11. The men of Arvad, with thine army, *were* upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect. 12. Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all *kind* of riches: with silver, iron, tin, and

lead, they traded in thy fairs. 13. Javan, Tubal, and Mesbech, they *were* thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market. 14. They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses, and horsemen, and mules. 15. The men of Dedan *were* thy merchants; many isles *were* the merchandise of thy hand: they brought thee *for* a present, horns of ivory and ebony. 16. Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. 17. Judah, and the land of Israel, they *were* thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm. 18. Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool. 19. Dan also and Javan, going to and fro, occupied in thy fairs; bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market. 20. Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots. 21. Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats; in these *were they* thy merchants. 22. The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they *were* thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. 23. Haren, and Cambeh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad, *were* thy merchants. 24. These *were* thy merchants in all sorts of *things*, in blue clothes, and brodered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise. 25. The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market; and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

Here,

1. The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Tyrus, v. 2. It was yet in the height of its prosperity, and there appeared not the least symptom of its decay; yet the prophet must *lament* it, because its prosperity is its snare, is the cause of its pride and security, which will make its fall the more grievous. Even those that *live at ease* are to be *lamented*, if they are not preparing for trouble. He must lament it because its ruin is hastening on apace, it is sure, it is near; and though the prophet foretold it, and justify God in it, yet he must *lament* it. Note, We ought to mourn for the miseries of other nations, as well as of our own, out of an affection for mankind in general; it is a part of the *honour* we owe to *all men* to bewail their calamities, even those which they have brought upon themselves by their own folly.

11. He is directed what to say, and to say it in the name of the Lord *Jehovah*, a name not unknown in Tyre, and which shall be better known, *ch. xxvi. 6.*

1. He must upbraid Tyre with her pride; O

*Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty*, (v. 3.) of *universal beauty*, (so the word is,) every way accomplished, and therefore every where admired. Zion, that had the *beauty of holiness*, is called indeed the *perfection of beauty*, (Ps. 1. 2.) that is the *beauty of the Lord*. But Tyre, because well built, and well filled with money and trade, will set up for a perfect beauty. Note, It is the folly of the children of this world to value themselves on the pomp and pleasure they live in, to call themselves *beauties* for the sake of them, and, if in these they excel others, to think themselves *perfect*. But God takes notice of the vain conceits men have of themselves in their prosperity, when the mind is lifted up with the condition, and often, for the humbling of the spirit, finds ways to bring down the estate. Let none reckon themselves *beautified* any further than they are *sanctified*, nor say that they are of *perfect beauty* till they come to *heaven*.

2. He must upbraid Tyre with her prosperity, which was the matter of her pride. In elegies, it is usual to insert *encomiums* of those whose fall we lament; the prophet, accordingly, praises Tyre for all that she had that was praiseworthy. He has nothing to say of her religion, her piety, her charity, her being a refuge to the distressed, or using her interest to do good offices among her neighbours; but she lived great, and had a great trade, and all the trading part of mankind made court to her. The prophet must describe her height and magnificence, that God may be the more glorified in her fall, as the God who *looks upon every one that is proud, and abases them; hides them in the dust together, and binds their faces in secret*, Job xl. 12.

(1.) The city of Tyre was advantageously situated, at the *entry of the sea*, (v. 3.) having many commodious harbours each way, not as cities sited on rivers, which the shipping can come but one way to. It stood at the end of the Mediterranean, very convenient for trade by land into all the Levant parts; so that she became a *merchant of the people for many isles*; lying between Greece and Asia, it became the great emporium, or mart-town, the rendezvous of merchants from all parts; *Thy borders are in the heart of the seas*, v. 4. It was surrounded with water, which was a great advantage to its trade; the darling of the sea, laid in its bosom, in its heart. Note, It is a great convenience, upon many accounts, to live in an island; seas are the most *ancient landmarks*, not which our fathers have set, but the God of our fathers, and which cannot be removed as other landmarks may, nor so easily got over. The people so situated may the more easily dwell alone, if they please, may the more easily traffic abroad, and keep a correspondence with the nations. We therefore of this island must own that he who determines the bounds of men's habitations, has determined well for us.

(2.) It was curiously built, according as the fashion then was; and, being a city on a hill, it made a glorious show, and tempted the ships that sailed by into her ports; (v. 4.) *Thy builders have perfected thy beauty*. They have so improved in architecture, that nothing appears in the builders of Tyre that can be found fault with; and yet it wants that perfection of beauty into which the Lord does, and will, build up his Jerusalem.

(3.) It had its haven replenished with abundance of *gallant ships*, Isa. xxxiii. 21. The ship carpenters did their part, as well as the house carpenters theirs. The Tyrians are thought to be the first that invented the art of navigation; at least, they improved it, and brought it to as great a perfection perhaps as it could be without the loadstone. [1.] They made the *boards*, or planks, for the hulk of the ship, of *fir-trees* fetched from Senir, a mount in the land of Israel, joined with Hermon, Cant. iv. 8.

Planks of fir were smooth and light, but not so lasting as our English oak. [2.] They had cedars from Lebanon, another mountain of Israel, for their masts, v. 5. [3.] They had oaks from Bashan, (Isa. ii. 13.) to make oars; for it is probable that their ships were mostly galleys, that go with oars. The people of Israel built few ships for themselves, but they furnished the Tyrians with timber for shipping. Thus one country uses what another produces, and so they are serviceable one to another, and cannot say to each other, *I have no need of thee*. [4.] Such magnificence did they affect in building their ships, that they made the very *benches of ivory*, which they fetched from the *isles of Chittim*, from Italy or Greece, and had workmen from the Ashurites or Assyrians to make them; so rich would they have their state-rooms in their ships to be. [5.] So very prodigal were they, that they made their *sails of fine linen* fetched from Egypt, and that *embroidered* too, v. 7. Or, it may be meant of their *flags*, (which they hoisted to notify what city they belonged to,) which were very costly. The word signifies a *banner* as well as a *sail*. [6.] They hung those rooms on ship-board with *blue and purple*, the richest cloths and richest colours they could get from the isles they traded with. For though Tyre was itself famous for *purple*, which is therefore called the *Tyrian dye*, yet they must have that which was *far-fetched*.

(4.) These gallant ships were *well manned*, by men of great ingenuity and industry. The *pilots* and masters of the ships, that had command in their fleets, were of their own city, such as they could put a confidence in; (v. 8.) *Thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were thy pilots*. But for common sailors, they had them from other countries; *The inhabitants of Arvad and Zidon were thy mariners*; these came from cities near them; Zidon was sister to Tyre, not two leagues off, to the northward; there they bred able seamen, which it is the interest of the maritime powers to support, and give all the countenance they can to. They sent to Gebal in Syria for *calkers, or strengtheners of the clefts, or chinks*, to stop them when the ships came home, after long voyages, to be repaired. To do this, they had the *ancients, and wise men*, v. 9. For there is more need of wisdom and prudence to repair what is gone to decay than to build anew. In public matters there is occasion for the *ancients and wise men* to be the *repairers of the breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in*. Nay, all the countries they traded with were at their service, and were willing to send men into their pay, or to fix their youths as apprentices in Tyre, or to put them on board their fleets; so that *all the ships in the sea, with their mariners, were ready to occupy thy merchandise*. Those that give good wages, shall have hands at command.

(5.) Their city was guarded by a military force that was very considerable, v. 10, 11. The Tyrians were themselves wholly given to trade; but it was necessary that they should have a good army on foot, and therefore they took those of other states into their pay, such as were fittest for service; though they had them from afar, (which perhaps was their policy,) from Persia, Lud, and Phut. These bore their arms, when there was occasion, and in time of peace *hanged up the shield and buckler*, in the armoury, as it were to proclaim peace, and let the world know that they had at present no need of them; but they were ready to be taken down whenever there was occasion for them. Their walls were guarded by the *men of Arvad*, their towers were garrisoned by the *Gammadims*, robust men, that had a great deal of strength in their arms; yet the vulgar Latin renders it *pygmies*, men no longer than one's arm. They hung



their shields upon the walls in their magazines, or places of arms; or hung them out upon the walls of the city, that none might dare to approach them, seeing how well provided they were with all things necessary for their own defence. Thus they set forth thy comeliness, (v. 10.) and made thy beauty perfect, v. 11. It contributed as much as any thing to the glory of Tyre, that it had those of all nations about in its service, except of the land of Israel, (though it lay next them,) which furnished them with timber, but we do not find that it furnished them with men; that would have trenchanted upon the liberty and dignity of the Jewish nation, 2 Chron. ii. 17, 18. It was also the glory of Tyre that it had such a militia, so fit for service, and in constant pay; and such an armoury, like that in the tower of David, where hung the shields of mighty men, Cant. iv. 4. It is observable, that there and here the armouries are said to be furnished with shields and helmets, defensive arms, not with swords and spears, offensive, though it is probable that there were such; to intimate that the military force of a people must be intended only for their own protection, and not to invade and annoy their neighbours; to secure their own right, not to encroach upon the rights of others.

(6.) They had a vast trade, and a correspondence with all parts of the known world. Some nations they dealt with in one commodity, and some in another, according as either its products or its manufactures were, and the fruits of nature or art were with which it was blessed. This is very much enlarged upon here, as that which was the principal glory of Tyre, and which supported all the rest. We do not find any where in scripture so many nations named together, as are here; so that this chapter, some think, gives much light to the first account we have of the settlement of the nations after the flood, Gen. x. The critics have abundance of work here to find out the several places and nations spoken of; concerning many of them their conjectures are different, and they leave us in the dark, and at much uncertainty; it is well that it is not material; modern surveys come short of explaining the ancient geography. And therefore we will not amuse ourselves here with a particular enquiry, either concerning the traders, or the goods they traded in; we leave it to the critical expositors, and observe that only which is improvable.

[1.] We have reason to think that Ezekiel knew little, of his own knowledge, concerning the trade of Tyre; he was a priest, carried away captive far enough from the neighbourhood of Tyre, we may suppose when he was young, there he had been eleven years. And yet he speaks of the particular merchandises of Tyre as nicely as if he had been comptroller of the custom-house there; by which it appears that he was divinely inspired in what he spoke and wrote. It is God that saith this, v. 3.

[2.] This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us that God's eye is upon men, and that he takes cognizance of what they do, when they are employed in their worldly business; not only when they are at church, praying and hearing, but when they are in their markets and fairs, and upon the exchange, buying and selling; which is a good reason why we should in all our dealings keep a conscience void of offence; and have our eye always upon him whose eye is always upon us.

[3.] We may here observe the wisdom of God, and his goodness, as the common Father of mankind, in making one country to abound in one commodity, and another in another, and all more or less serviceable either to the necessity, or to the comfort and ornament, of human life. *Non omnis fert omnia tellus*—One land does not supply all the varieties of produce. Providence dispenses its gifts variously,

some to each, and all to none, that there may be a mutual commerce among those whom God has made of one blood, though they are made to dwell on all the face of the earth, Acts xvii. 26. Let every nation therefore thank God for the productions of its country; though they be not so rich as those of others, yet there is use for them in the public service of the world.

[4.] See what a blessing trade and merchandise are to mankind, especially when followed in the fear of God, and with a regard not only to private advantage, but to a common benefit. *The earth is full of God's riches*, Ps. civ. 24. There is a multitude of all kind of riches in it, (as it is here, v. 12.) gathered off its surface, and digged out of its bowels. The earth is also full of the fruits of men's ingenuity and industry, according as their genius leads them; now by exchange and barter these are made more extensively useful; thus what can be spared is helped off, and what is wanted is fetched in, in lieu of it, from the most distant countries. Those that are not tradesmen themselves, have reason to thank God for tradesmen and merchants, by whom the productions of other countries are brought to our hands, as those of our own are by our husbandmen.

[5.] Beside the necessities that are here traded in, see what abundance of things are here mentioned, that only serve to please fancy, and are made valuable only by men's humour and custom; and yet God allows us to use them, and trade in them, and part with those things for them, which we can spare, that are of an intrinsic worth much beyond them. Here are horns of ivory and ebony, (v. 15.) that are brought for a present, exposed to sale, and offered in exchange, or, as some think, presented to the city, or the great men of it, to obtain their favour. Here are emeralds, coral, and agate, (v. 16.) all precious stones and gold, (v. 22.) which the world could better be without than iron and common stones. Here are, to please the taste and smell, the chief of all spices, (v. 22.) cassia and calamus, (v. 19.) and, for ornament, purple, brodered work, and fine linen; (v. 16.) precious cloths for chariots, (v. 20.) blue cloths, (which Tyre was famous for,) brodered work, and chests of rich apparel, bound with rich cords, and made of cedar, a sweet wood to perfume the garments kept in them, v. 24. Upon the review of this invoice, or bill of parcels, we may justly say, What a great many things are here that we have no need of, and can live very comfortably without!

[6.] It is observable that Judah and the land of Israel were merchants in Tyre too; in a way of trade they were allowed to converse with the heathen. But they traded mostly in wheat, a substantial commodity, and necessary; wheat of Minnith and Pannag, two countries in Canaan famous for the best wheat, as some think; the whole land indeed was a land of wheat, (Deut. viii. 8.) it had the fat of kidneys of wheat, Deut. xxxii. 14. Tyre was maintained by corn fetched from the land of Israel: they traded likewise in honey, and oil, and balm, or rosin; all useful things, and not serving to pride or luxury. And the land which these were the staple commodities of, was that which was the glory of all lands, which God reserved for his peculiar people, not those that traded in spices and precious stones; and the Israel of God must reckon themselves well provided for if they have food convenient; for they that are acquainted with the delights of the children of God, will not set their hearts on the delights of the sons and daughters of men, or the treasures of kings and provinces. We find indeed that the New Testament Babylon trades in such things as Tyre traded in, Rev. xviii. 12, 13. For, notwithstanding its pretensions to sanctity, it is a mere worldly interest.

[7.] Though Tyre was a city of great merchandise, and they got abundance by buying and selling, importing commodities from one place, and exporting them to another, yet manufacture-trades were not neglected. *The wares of their own making*, and a *multitude of such wares*, are here spoken of, v. 16, 18. It is the wisdom of a nation to encourage art and industry, and not to bear hard upon the handicraft-tradesmen; for it contributes much to the wealth and honour of a nation to send abroad *wares of their own making*, which may bring them in the *multitude of all riches*.

[8.] All this made Tyrus very great and very proud; *The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market*, (v. 25.) thou wast admired and cried up by all the nations that had dealings with thee; *for thou wast replenished in wealth and number of people, was beautified, and made very glorious, in the midst of the seas*. Those that grow very rich are cried up as *very glorious*; for riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, Gen. xxxi. 1.

26. Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas. 27. Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that *are* in thee, and in all thy company, which *is* in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. 28. The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots. 29. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; 30. And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads; they shall wallow themselves in the ashes; 31. And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth; and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing. 32. And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, *saying*, What *city* is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? 33. When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people: thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise. 34. In the time *when* thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise, and all thy company in the midst of thee, shall fall. 35. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in *their* countenance. 36. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never *shall* be any more.

We have seen Tyre flourishing, here we have Tyre falling; and great is the fall of it, so much the greater for its having made such a figure in the

world. Note, The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states, sooner or later, have their day to come down; they have their period: and when they are in their zenith, they will begin to decline; but the destruction of Tyre was sudden. *Her sun went down at noon*. And all her wealth and grandeur, pomp and power, did but aggravate her ruin, and make it the more grievous to herself, and astonishing to all about her. Now observe here,

1. How the ruin of Tyrus will be brought about, v. 26. She is as a great ship richly laden, that is split or sunk by the indiscretion of her steersmen; *Thy rowers have themselves brought thee into great and dangerous waters*; the governors of the city, and those that had the management of their public affairs, by some mismanagement or other involved them in that war with the Chaldeans, which was the ruin of their state; by their insolence, by some affront given to the Chaldeans, or some attempt made upon them, in confidence of their own ability to contend with them, they provoked Nebuchadnezzar to make a descent upon them, and, by their obstinacy in standing it out to the last, enraged him to that degree, that he determined the ruin of their state; and, *like an east wind, broke them in the midst of the seas*. Note, It is ill with a people when those that sit at the stern, instead of putting them into the harbour, run them aground.

2. How great and general the ruin will be. All her wealth shall be buried with her, *her riches, her fairs, and her merchandise*; (v. 27.) all that had any dependence upon her, and dealings with her, in trade, in war, in conversation, they shall all *fall with her into the midst of the seas, in the day of her ruin*. Note, Those who make creatures their confidence, place their happiness in their interest in them, and rest their hopes upon them, will of course fall with them; *happy therefore are they that have the God of Jacob for their Help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, who lives for ever*.

3. What sad lamentation would be made for the destruction of Tyre. The pilots, her princes and governors, when they see how ill they have conducted themselves, and how much they have contributed to their own ruin, shall *cry out* so loud as to make even the *suburbs shake*; (v. 28.) such a vexation shall it be to them to reflect upon their own bad conduct. The inferior officers, that were as the mariners of the state, shall be forced to come down from their respective posts, (v. 29.) and they shall *cry out against thee*, as having deceived them, in not proving so well able to hold out, as they thought thou hadst been; they shall *cry bitterly* for the common ruin, and their own share in it. They shall use all the most solemn expressions of grief; they shall *cast dust on their heads*, in indignation against themselves, shall *wallow themselves in ashes*, as having bid a final farewell to all ease and pleasure; they shall *make themselves bald* (v. 31.) with *tearing their hair*; and, according to the custom of great mourners, they shall *gird themselves with sackcloth*, who used to wear fine linen; and, instead of merry songs, they shall *weep with bitterness of heart*. Note, Losses and crosses are very grievous, and hard to be borne, to those that have long been wallowing in pleasure, and sleeping in carnal security.

4. How Tyre should be upbraided with her former honour and prosperity; (v. 32, 33.) she that was Tyrus the *renowned*, shall now be called *Tyrus the destroyed in the midst of the sea*. "*What city is like Tyre?* Did ever any city come down from such a height of prosperity to such a depth of adversity? Time was, when *thy wares*, those of thine own making, and those that passed through thy hands, *went forth out of the seas*, and were exported to all parts of the world; then *thou filledst many*

people, and didst enrich the kings of the earth and their kingdoms." The Tyrians, though they bore such a sway in trade, were yet, it seems, fair merchants, and let their neighbours not only live, but thrive, by them. All that dealt with them, were gainers; they did not cheat or oppress the people, but did enrich them with the *multitude of their merchandise*. "But now they that used to be enriched by thee, shall be ruined with thee;" (as is usual in trade;) "*when thou shalt be broken, and all thou hast is seized on, all thy company shall fall too,*" v. 34. There is an end of Tyre, that made such a noise and bustle in the world. This great blaze goes out in a snuff.

5. How the fall of Tyre should be matter of terror to some, and laughter to others, according as they were differently interested and affected. Some shall be *sore afraid*, and shall be *troubled*, (v. 35.) concluding it will be their own turn to fall next. Others shall *hiss at her*, (v. 36.) shall ridicule her pride and vanity, and bad conduct, and think her ruin just. She triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, and there are those that will triumph in hers. When God casts his judgments on the sinner, *men also shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place*, Job xxvii. 22, 23. *Is this the city which men called the perfection of beauty?*

### CHAP. XXVIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. A prediction of the fall and ruin of the king of Tyre, who, in the destruction of that city, is particularly set up as a mark for God's arrows, v. 1. . 10. II. A lamentation for the king of Tyre, when he is thus fallen, though he falls by his own iniquity, v. 11. . 19. III. A prophecy of the destruction of Zion, which was in the neighbourhood of Tyre, and had a dependence upon it, v. 20. . 23. IV. A promise of the restoration of the Israel of God, though in the day of their calamity they were insulted over by their neighbours, v. 24. . 26.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God, Because thy heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, *I am a god*, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thy heart as the heart of God: 3. Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel: there is no secret that they can hide from thee: 4. With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: 5. By thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic, hast thou increased thy riches, and thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 6. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God; 7. Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. 8. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. 9. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, *I am God*? but thou shalt be a man, and no god, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. 10. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the

hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.

We had done with Tyrus in the foregoing chapter, but now the prince of Tyrus is to be singled out from the rest; here is something to be said to him by himself; a *message to him from God*, which the prophet must send him, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear.

1. He must tell him of his pride. His people were proud, (ch. xxvii. 3.) and so is he; and they shall both be made to know that *God resists the proud*. Let us see,

1. What were the expressions of his pride; *His heart was lifted up*, v. 2. He had a great conceit of himself, was blown up with an opinion of his own sufficiency, and looked with disdain upon all about him; out of the abundance of the pride of his heart, he said, *I am a god*: he did not only say it in his heart, but had the impudence to speak it out. God has said of princes, *They are gods*; (Ps. lxxxii. 6.) but it does not become them to say so of themselves; it is a high affront to him who is *God alone*, and will not give his glory to another. He thought that the city of Tyre had as necessary a dependence upon him as the world has upon the God that made it; and that he was himself independent as God, and unaccountable to any. He thought himself to have as much wisdom and strength as God himself, and as incontestable an authority, and that his prerogatives were as absolute, and his word as much a law, as the word of God. He challenged divine honours, and expected to be praised and admired as a god, and doubted not to be *deified* among other heroes, after his death, as a great benefactor to the world. Thus the king of Babylon said, *I will be like the Most High*, (Isa. xiv. 14.) not like the *Most Holy*. *I am the strong God*, and therefore will not be contradicted, because I cannot be controlled. *I sit in the seat of God*; I sit as high as God, my throne equal with his. *Divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet—Cæsar divides dominion with Jove*. I sit as safe as God, as safe in the heart of the seas, and as far out of the reach of danger, as he in the height of heaven. He thinks his guards of men of war about his throne as pompous and potent as the hosts of angels that are about the throne of God. He is put in mind of his meanness and mortality, and, since he needs to be told, he shall be told, that self-evident truth, *Thou art a man, and not God*, a depending creature, a dying creature; thou art *flesh*, and not *spirit*, Isa. xxxi. 3. Note, Men must be made to know that they are *but men*, Ps. ix. 20. The greatest wits, the greatest potentates, the greatest saints, are *men*, and *not gods*; Jesus Christ was both God and man. The king of Tyre, though he has such a mighty influence upon all about him, and with the help of his riches bears a mighty sway, though he has tribute and presents brought to his court with as much devotion as if they were sacrifices to his altar, though he is flattered by his courtiers, and made a god of by his poets, yet, after all, he is *but a man*, he knows it, he fears it; but he sets his heart as the heart of God; "Thou hast conceived thyself to be a god, hast compared thyself with God, thinking thyself as wise and strong and as fit to govern the world, as he." It was the ruin of our first parents, and ours in them, that they would be *as gods*, Gen. iii. 5. And still that corrupt nature which inclines men to set up themselves as their own masters, to do what they will, and their own carvers, to have what they will, their own end, to live to themselves, and their own felicity, to enjoy themselves, *sets their hearts as the heart of God*, invades his prerogatives, and catches at the flowers of his crown—a presumption that cannot go unpunished.

2. We are here told what it was that he was proud of.

(1.) His *wisdom*. It is probable that this prince of Tyre was a man of very good natural parts, a philosopher, and well read in all the parts of learning that were then in vogue, at least, a politician, and one that had great dexterity in managing the affairs of state. And then he thought himself *wiser than Daniel*, v. 3. We found, before, that Daniel, though now but a young man, was celebrated for his prevaletancy in prayer, ch. xiv. 14. Here, we find he was famous for his prudence in the management of the affairs of this world, a great scholar and statesman, and withal a great saint; and yet not a prince, but a poor captive. It was strange that under such external disadvantages his lustre should shine forth, so that he was become *wise to a proverb*. When the king of Tyre dreams himself to be a god, he says, *I am wiser than Daniel*. *There is no secret that they can hide from thee*. Probably, he challenged all about him to *prove him with questions*, as Solomon was proved, and he had unriddled all their enigmas, had solved all their problems, and none of them all could puzzle him: he had perhaps been successful in discovering plots, and diving into the counsels of the neighbouring princes; and therefore thought himself omniscient, and that no thought could be withholden from him; therefore he said, *I am a god*. Note, *Knowledge puffeth up*; it is hard to know much and not to know it too well, and to be elevated with it. He that was *wiser than Daniel*, was prouder than Lucifer. Those therefore that are knowing must study to be humble, and to evidence that they are so.

(2.) His *wealth*. That way his wisdom led him; it is not said that *by his wisdom* he searched into the arena either of nature or government, modeled the state better than it was, or made better laws, or had advanced the interests of the commonwealth of learning; but his *wisdom and understanding* were of use to him in *traffic*. As some of the kings of Judah *loved husbandry*, (2 Chron. xxvi. 10.) so the king of Tyre loved merchandise, and by it he *got riches, increased his riches, and filled his treasures with gold and silver*, v. 4, 5. See what the wisdom of this world is; those are cried up as the wisest men, that know how to get money, and by right or wrong to raise estates; and yet really *this their way is their folly*, Ps. xlix. 13. It was the folly of the king of Tyre, [1.] That he attributed the increase of his wealth to himself, and not to the providence of God, forgetting him who *gave him power to get wealth*, Deut. viii. 17, 18. [2.] That he *therefore* thought himself a *wise man*, because he was a *rich man*; whereas a fool may have an estate, (Eccl. ii. 19.) yea, and a fool may get an estate, for the world has been often observed to favour such, *when bread is not to the wise*, Eccl. ix. 11. [3.] That his heart was *lifted up because of his riches*; for the increase of his wealth, which made him so haughty and secure, so insolent and imperious, and which *set his heart as the heart of God*. The man of sin, when he had a great deal of worldly pomp and power, *showed himself as a god*, 2 Thess. ii. 4. Those who are rich in this world, have therefore need to charge that upon themselves, which the word of God charges upon them, *that they be not high-minded*, 1 Tim. vi. 17.

II. Since *pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*, he must tell him of that *destruction*, of that *fall*, which was now hastening on, as the just punishment of his presumption in setting up himself a rival with God. "Because thou hast pretended to be a god, (v. 6.) therefore thou shalt not be long a man," v. 7. Observe here,

1. The instruments of his destruction, *I will bring strangers upon thee*—the Chaldeans, whom we do

not find mentioned among the many nations and countries that traded with Tyre, ch. 27. If any of those nations had been brought against it, they would have had some compassion upon it for old acquaintance sake; but these *strangers* will have none; they are people of a *strange language*, which the king of Tyre himself, wise as he is, perhaps understands not. They are the *terrible of the nations*; it was an army made up of *many nations*, and it was at this time the most *formidable* both for strength and fury. These God has at command, and these he will bring upon the king of Tyre.

2. The extremity of the destruction; *They shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom*, v. 7. against all those things which thou gloryest in as thy beauty, and the production of thy wisdom. Note, It is just with God that our enemies should make that *their prey* which we have made our *pride*. The king of Tyre's palace, his treasury, his city, his navy, his army, these he glories in as his *brightness*, these, he thinks, make him illustrious and glorious as a god on earth. But all these the victorious enemy shall *defile*, shall deface, shall *defile*; he thought them sacred, things that none durst touch; but the conquerors shall seize them as common things, and spoil the *brightness* of them. But, whatever comes of what he has, surely his person is sacred; no, (v. 8.) *They shall bring thee down to the pit, to the grave; thou shalt die the death*. And, (1.) It shall not be an *honourable death*, but an *ignominious* one. He shall be so *vilified* in his death, that he may despair of being *deified* after his death. He shall die the *deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas*, that have no honour done them at their death, but their dead bodies are immediately thrown overboard, without any ceremony or mark of distinction, to be a feast for the fish. Tyre is *like to be destroyed in the midst of the sea*, (ch. xxvii. 32.) and the prince of Tyre shall fare no better than the people. (2.) It shall not be a *happy death*, but a *miserable* one; he shall die the *deaths of the uncircumcised*, (v. 10.) of those that are strangers to God, and not in covenant with him, and therefore that die under his wrath and curse. It is *deaths*, a double death, temporal and eternal, the death both of body and soul. He shall die the *second death*; that is dying miserably indeed. The sentence of death, here passed upon the king of Tyre, is ratified by a divine authority; *I have spoken it, saith the Lord God*. And what he has said he will do. None can gainsay it, nor will he unsay it.

3. The effectual disproof that this will be of all his pretensions to deity; (v. 9.) "When the conqueror sets his sword to thy breast, and thou seest no way of escape, *wilt thou then say, I am God?* Wilt thou then have such a conceit of thyself, and such a confidence in thyself, as thou now hast? No, thy being overpowered by death, and by the fear of it, will force thee to own that thou art not a god, but a weak, timorous, trembling, dying man. *In the hand of him that slays thee*, (in the hand of God, and of the instruments that he employd,) *thou shalt be a man, and not God*; utterly unable to resist, and help thyself." *I have said, Ye are gods; but ye shall die like men*, Ps. lxxxii. 6, 7. Note, Those who pretend to be rivals with God, shall be forced one way or other to let fall their claims. Death, at furthest, when we come into his hand, will make us know that we are men.

11. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 12. Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God, Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. 13. Thou hast

been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. 14. Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so*: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15. Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God; and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17. Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. 18. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee; and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee. 19. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

As after the prediction of the ruin of Tyre, (*ch. xxvi.*) followed a pathetic lamentation for it, (*ch. xxvii.*) so after the ruin of the *king of Tyre* is foretold, it is bewailed.

1. This is commonly understood of the present prince of Tyre, spoken to, *v. 2.* His name was *Ethbaal*, or *Ithobalus*, as Diodorus Siculus calls him, that was king of Tyre when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. He was, it seems, upon all external accounts, an *accomplished* man, very great and famous; but his iniquity was his ruin. Many expositors have suggested, that beside the literal sense of this lamentation there is an allegory in it, and that it is an allusion to the fall of the angels that sinned, who undid themselves by their pride. And (as is usual in texts that have a mystical meaning) some passages here refer primarily to the king of Tyre, as that of his merchandises, others to the angels, as that of being *in the holy mountain of God*. But if there be any thing mystical in it, (as perhaps there may,) I shall rather refer it to the fall of Adam, which seems to be glanced at, (*v. 13.*) *Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God, and that in the day thou wast created.*

II. Some think that by *the king of Tyre* is meant the whole royal family, this including also the foregoing kings, and looking as far back as Hiram king of Tyre. The present governor is called *prince*; (*v. 2.*) but he that is here lamented is called *king*. The court of Tyre and its kings had for many ages been famous. But sins ruins it.

Now we may observe two things here:

1. What was *the renown* of the king of Tyre. He

is here spoken of as having lived in great splendour, *v. 12.—15.* He was a *man*; but it is here owned that he was a very considerable man, and one that made a mighty figure in his day. (1.) He far exceeded other men; Hiram and other kings of Tyre had done so in their time; and the present king perhaps had not come short of any of them: *Thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty*: both the powers of human nature and the prosperity of human life, seemed in him to have been at the highest pitch. He was looked upon to be as wise as the reason of men could make him, and as happy as the wealth of this world and the enjoyment of it could make him; in him you might see the utmost that both could do; and therefore *seal up the sum*, for nothing can be added; he is a complete man, perfect in *suo genere*—in his kind. (2.) He seemed to be as wise and happy as Adam in innocency; (*v. 13.*) “*Thou hast been in Eden, even in the garden of God*; thou hast lived as it were in *paradise* all thy days, hast had a full enjoyment of every thing that is *good for food or pleasant to the eyes*; and an uncontroverted dominion over all about thee, as Adam had.” One instance of the magnificence of the king of Tyre, is, that he *outdid* all other princes in jewels, which those have the most plenty of that trade most abroad, as he did; *Every precious stone was his covering*. There is a great variety of precious stones; but he had of *every sort*, and in such plenty, that, beside what were treasured up in his cabinet, and were the ornaments of his crown, he had his clothes *trimmed* with them; they were his *covering*: nay, (*v. 14.*) he *walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire*, these precious stones, which glittered and sparkled like fire. His rooms were in a manner set round with jewels, so that he *walked* in the midst of them, and then fancied himself as glorious as if, like God, he had been surrounded by so many angels, who are compared to a *flame of fire*. And if he be such an admirer of precious stones as to think them as *bright as angels*, no wonder that he is such an admirer of himself, as to think himself as *great as God*. Nine several sorts of precious stones are here named, which were all in the High Priest’s ephod. Perhaps they are particularly named, because he, in his pride, used to speak particularly of them, and tell those about him, with a great deal of foolish pleasure, “This is such a precious stone; of such a value, and so and so are its virtues.” Thus is he upbraided with his vanity. Gold is mentioned last, as far inferior in value to those *precious stones*; and he used to speak of it accordingly. Another thing that made him think his palace a paradise, was, the curious music he had, the *tabrets and pipes*, hand instruments and wind instruments; the *workmanship* of these was extraordinary, and they were prepared for him on purpose; prepared *in thee*, the pronoun is feminine, *in thee*, O Tyre; or it denotes that the king was effeminate in doting on such things. They were prepared *in the day he was created*, that is, either born, or created king; they were made on purpose to celebrate the joys either of his birth-day or of his coronation-day. These he prided himself much in, and would have all that came to see his palace take notice of them. (3.) He looked like an incarnate angel; (*v. 14.*) *Thou art the anointed cherub that covers or protects*; that is, he looked upon himself as a guardian angel to his people, so bright, so strong, so faithful; *appointed* to their office, and *qualified* for it; anointed kings should be to their subjects as *anointed cherubim*, that *cover* them with the wings of their power; when they are such, God will own them; their advancement was from him; *I have set thee so*. Some think, because mention was made of Eden, that it refers to the cherub set on the east of Eden to cover

it, Gen. iii. 24. He thought himself as able to guard his city from all invaders as that angel was for his charge. Or, it may refer to the cherubim in the most holy place, whose wings *covered* the ark; he thought himself as bright as one of them. (4.) He appeared in as much splendour as the High Priest when he was clothed with his garments for glory and beauty; "*Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God*, as president of the temple built on that holy mountain; thou didst look as great, and with as much majesty and authority, as ever the High Priest did when he walked in the temple, which was *garnished with precious stones*, (2 Chron. iii. 6.) and had his habit on, which had precious stones both in the breast and on the shoulders; in that he seemed to *walk in the midst of the stones of fire*." Thus glorious is the king of Tyre; at least, he thinks himself so.

2. Let us now see what was *the ruin* of the king of Tyre, what it was that stained his glory, and laid all this honour in the dust; (v. 15.) "*Thou wast perfect in thy ways*; thou didst prosper in all thy affairs, and every thing went well with thee; thou hadst not only a *clear*, but a *bright* reputation; *from the day thou wast created*, the day of thine accession to the throne, *till iniquity was found in thee*; and that spoiled all." This may perhaps allude to the deplorable case of the angels that fell, and of our first parents, who were *perfect in their ways till iniquity was found in them*. And when iniquity was once found in him it increased, he grew worse and worse; as appears, v. 18. "*Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries*; thou hast lost the benefit of all that which thou thoughtest sacred, and in which, as in a sanctuary, thou thoughtest to take refuge; these thou hast defiled, and so exposed thyself by the multitude of thine iniquities." Now observe,

(1.) What the iniquity was that was the ruin of the king of Tyre. [1.] *The iniquity of his traffic*, (so it is called, v. 18.) both his and his people's, for their sin is charged upon him, because he connived at it, and set them a bad example; (v. 16.) *By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence*, and thus thou hast sinned. The king had so much to do with his merchandise, and was so wholly intent upon the gains of that, that he took no care to do justice, to right those that suffered wrong, and to protect them from violence: nay, in the multiplicity of business, wrong was done to many *by oversight*; and in his dealings he made use of his power to *invade the rights* of those he dealt with. Note, Those that have much to do in the world, are in great danger of doing much amiss; and it is hard to deal with many without violence to some. Trades are called mysteries; but too many make them mysteries of iniquity. [2.] *His pride and vainglory*; (v. 17.) "*Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty*; thou wast in love with thyself, and thy own shadow. And thus thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of the brightness, the pomp and splendour, wherein thou livedst." He gazed so much upon this, that it dazzled his eyes, and prevented him from seeing his way. He appeared so puffed up with his greatness, that it bereaved him both of his wisdom, and of the reputation of it. He really became a *fool in glorying*. Those make a bad bargain for themselves, that part with their wisdom for the gratifying of their gaiety, and, to please a vain humour, lose a real excellency.

2. What the ruin was, that this iniquity brought him to. [1.] He was thrown out of his dignity, and dislodged from his palace, which he took to be his paradise and temple; (v. 16.) *I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God*. His kingly power was high as a *mountain*, setting him above others; it was a *mountain of God*, for the powers

that be are ordained of God, and have something in them that is sacred; but, having abused his power, he is reckoned profane, and is therefore deposed and expelled; he disgraces the crown he wears, and so has forfeited it, and shall be destroyed *from the midst of the stones of fire*, the precious stones with which his palace was *garnished*, as the temple was; and they shall be no protection to him. [2.] He was exposed to contempt and disgrace, and trampled upon by his neighbours; *I will cast thee to the ground*, (v. 17.) will cast thee among the *pavement-stones*, from the midst of the *precious stones*, and will lay thee a rueful spectacle before kings, that they may behold thee, and take warning by thee not to be proud and oppressive." [3.] He was quite consumed; his city, and he in it; *I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee*. The conquerors, when they have plundered the city, will kindle a fire in the heart of it, which shall lay it, and the palace particularly, in ashes. Or, it may be taken more generally, for the fire of God's judgments, which shall devour both prince and people, and bring all the glory of both to ashes upon the earth; and this fire shall be *brought forth from the midst of thee*. All God's judgments upon sinners take rise from themselves; they are *devoured* by a fire of their own kindling. [4.] He was hereby made a terrible example of divine vengeance. Thus he is reduced *in the sight of all them that behold him*; (v. 18.) *They that know him shall be astonished at him*, and shall wonder how one that stood so high could be brought so low. The king of Tyre's palace, like the temple at Jerusalem when it was destroyed, shall be an *astonishment and a hissing*, 2 Chron. vii. 20, 21. So fell the king of Tyre.

20. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it, 22. And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. 23. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the LORD. 24. And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I am the Lord God. 25. Thus saith the Lord God, When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. 26. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God.



God's glory is his great end, both in all the *good* and in all the *evil* which *proceed out of the mouth of the Most High*; so we find in these verses,

1. God will be glorified in the destruction of Zidon, a city that lay near to Tyre, was more ancient, but not so considerable, had a dependence upon it, and stood and fell with it. God says here, *I am against thee, O Zidon, and I will be glorified in the midst of thee*, v. 22. And again, "They that would not know by gentler methods, shall be made to *know that I am the Lord*, and I alone, and that I am a just and jealous God, *when I shall have executed judgments in her*, destroying judgments, when I shall have done execution according to justice, and according to the sentence passed; and so shall be *sanctified in her*." The Zidonians, it should seem, were more addicted to idolatry than the Tyrians were, who, being men of business and large conversation, were less under the power of bigotry and superstition; the Zidonians were noted for the worship of Ashtaroth; Solomon introduced it, 1 Kings xi. 5. Jezebel was daughter to the king of Zidon, who brought the worship of Baal into Israel; (1 Kings xvi. 31.) so that God had been much dishonoured by the Zidonians. Now, says he, *I will be glorified, I will be sanctified*. The Zidonians were borderers upon the land of Israel, where God was known, and where they might have got the knowledge of him, and have learned to glorify him; but, instead of that, they seduced Israel to the worship of their idols. Note, When God is sanctified, he is glorified; for his holiness is his glory; and those whom he is not sanctified and glorified by, he will be sanctified and glorified upon, by *executing judgments* upon them, which speak him a just Avenger of his own and his people's injured honour.

The judgments that shall be executed upon Zidon are, *war and pestilence*, two wasting, depopulating judgments, v. 23. They are God's messengers which he *sends* on his errands, and they shall *accomplish* that for which he *sends* them. *Pestilence and blood* shall be sent into *her streets*, there the dead bodies of those shall lie, who perished, some by the plague, occasioned perhaps through ill diet when the city was besieged, and some by the sword of the enemy, most likely the Chaldean armies, when the city was taken, and all were put to the sword. Thus the wounded shall be *judged*; when they are dying of their wounds, they shall judge themselves, and others shall say, *They justly fall*; or, as some read it, *They shall be punished by the sword*, that sword which has commission to destroy on *every side*. It is God that judges, and he will overcome.

Nor is it Tyre and Zidon only on which God would *execute judgments*, but on all those that despised his people Israel, and triumphed in their calamities; for this was now God's controversy with the nations that were *round about them*, v. 26. Note, When God's people are under his correcting hand for their faults, he takes care, as he did concerning malefactors that were scourged, *that they shall not seem vile* to those that are about them, and therefore takes it ill of those who despise them, and so *help forward the affliction* when he is but a *little displeased*, Zech. i. 15. God *regards* them even in their low estate; and therefore let not men *despise* them.

2. God will be glorified in the restoration of his people to their former safety and prosperity. God had been dishonoured by the sins of his people, and their sufferings too had given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme; (Isa. lii. 5.) but God will now both cure them of their sins, and ease them of their troubles, and so *will be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen*, will recover the honour of his holiness, to the satisfaction of all the world, v. 25. For,

(1.) They shall return to the possession of their own land again; *I will gather the house of Israel out of their dispersions*, in answer to that prayer, (Ps. cvi. 47.) *Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen*; and in pursuance of that promise, (Deut. xxx. 4.) *Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee*. Being gathered, they shall be brought in a body, to dwell in the land that I have given to my servant Jacob. God had an eye to the ancient grant, in bringing them back, for that remained in force, and the discontinuance of the possession was not a disfeasance of the right. He that gave it, will again give it.

(2.) They shall enjoy great tranquillity there. When those that had been vexatious to them are taken off, they shall live in quietness; there shall be no more a *pricking brier*, or a *grieving thorn*, v. 24. They shall have a happy settlement, for they shall *build houses*, and *plant vineyards*; and they shall enjoy a happy security and serenity there; they shall *dwell safely*, shall *dwell with confidence*, and there shall be none to disquiet them, or make them afraid, v. 26. This never had a full accomplishment in the body of that people, for after their return out of captivity, they were ever and anon molested by some bad neighbour or other. Nor has the gospel-church been ever quite free from *pricking briers* and *grieving thorns*; yet sometimes *the church has rest*; believers always dwell safely under the divine protection, and may be *quiet from the fear of evil*. But the full accomplishment of this promise is reserved for the heavenly Canaan, when all the saints shall be gathered together, and every thing that *offends* shall be removed, and all griefs and fears forever banished.

## CHAP. XXIX.

Three chapters we had concerning Tyre and its king, next follow four chapters concerning Egypt and its king. This is the first of them. Egypt had formerly been a house of bondage to God's people; of late they had had but too friendly a correspondence with it, and had depended too much upon it; and therefore, whether the prediction reached Egypt or no, it would be of use to Israel, to take them off from their confidence in their alliance with it. The prophecies against Egypt, which are all laid together in these four chapters, were of five several dates; the first in the tenth year of the captivity; (v. 1.) the second in the twenty-seventh; (v. 17.) the third in the eleventh year, and the first month; (ch. xxx. 20.) the fourth in the eleventh year, and the third month; (ch. xxxi. 1.) the fifth in the twelfth year; (ch. xxxii. 1.) and another in the same year, v. 17. In this chapter, we have, I. The destruction of Pharaoh foretold, for his dealing deceitfully with Israel, v. 1. . 7. II. The desolation of the land of Egypt foretold, v. 8. . 12. III. A promise of the restoration thereof, in part, after forty years, v. 13. . 16. IV. The possession that should be given to Nebuchadrezzar of the land of Egypt, v. 17. . 20. V. A promise of mercy to Israel, v. 21.

1. **I**N the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: 3. Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. 4. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales; and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy

rivers shall stick unto thy scales. 5. And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven. 6. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I *am* the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. 7. When they took hold of thee by the hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Here is,

I. The date of this prophecy against Egypt. It was in the *tenth year of the captivity*, and yet it is placed after the prophecy against Tyre, which was delivered in the eleventh year, because in the accomplishment of the prophecies, the destruction of Tyre happened before the destruction of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar's gaining Egypt was the reward of his service against Tyre; and *therefore* the prophecy against Tyre is put first, that we may the better observe that. But particular notice must be taken of this, that the first prophecy against Egypt was just at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jerusalem, and raise the siege, (Jer. xxxvii. 5.) but did not answer the expectations of the Jews from them. Note, It is good to foresee the failing of all our creature-confidences, then when we are most in temptation to depend upon them; that we may *cease from man*.

II. The scope of this prophecy. It is directed against *Pharaoh king of Egypt, and against all Egypt*, v. 2. The prophecy against Tyre began with the people, and then proceeded against the prince. But this begins with the prince, because it began to have its accomplishment in the insurrections and rebellions of the people against the prince, not long after this.

III. The prophecy itself. Pharaoh Hophrah (for so was the present Pharaoh surnamed) is here represented by a *great dragon*, or crocodile, that *lies in the midst of his rivers*, as Leviathan in the waters, to *play therein*, v. 3. Nilus, the river of Egypt, was famed for crocodiles. And what is the king of Egypt, in God's account, but a *great dragon*, venomous and mischievous? Therefore says God, *I am against thee, I am above thee*; so it may be read. How high soever the princes and potentates of the earth are, there is a *higher than they*, (Eccl. v. 8.) a God *above* them, that can control them, and, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, a God *against* them, that will be free to reckon with them. Observe here,

1. The pride and security of Pharaoh. He *lies in the midst of his rivers*, rolls himself with a great deal of satisfaction in his wealth and pleasures; and he says, *My river is my own*: he boasts that he is an absolute prince, his subjects are his vassals, Joseph bought them long ago, Gen. xlvii. 23. That he is a sole prince, and has neither partner in the government, nor competition for it; that he is out of debt, what he has is his *own*, and none of his neighbours have any demands upon him; that he is independent, neither tributary nor accountable to any. Note, Worldly, carnal minds please themselves with, and pride themselves in, their property, forgetting that whatever we have, we have only the use of it, the property is in God; we ourselves are

not our own, but his; our *tongues are not our own*, Ps. xii. 4. Our river is not *our own*, for its springs are in God. The most potent prince cannot call what he has, his *own*, for though it be so against all the world, it is not so against God. But Pharaoh's reason for his pretensions is yet more absurd; *My river is my own, for I have made it for myself*. Here he usurps two of the divine prerogatives, to be the author, and the end, of his own being and felicity. He only that is the great Creator, can say of this world, and of every thing in it, *I have made it for myself*. He calls his river his *own*, because he *looks not unto the Maker thereof, nor has respect unto him that fashioned it long ago*, Isa. xxii. 11. What we have, we have received *from God*, and must use *for God*, so that we cannot say, *We made it*, much less, *We made it for ourselves*; and why then *do we boast*? Note, Self is the great idol that all the world worships, in contempt of God and his sovereignty.

2. The course God will take with this proud man, to humble him. He is a great dragon in the waters, and God will accordingly deal with him, v. 4, 5. (1.) He will draw him out of his rivers, for he has a *hook and a cord for this Leviathan*, with which he can manage him, though none on earth can; (Job xli. 1.) "*I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers*; will cast thee out of thy palace, out of thy kingdom, out of all those things in which thou takest such a complacency, and placest such a confidence." Herodotus relates of this Pharaoh, who was now king of Egypt, that he had reigned in great prosperity for twenty-five years, and was so elevated with his successes, that he said, *God himself cannot cast me out of his kingdom*; but he shall soon be convinced of his mistake, and what he depended on shall be no defence. God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy. (2.) *All his fish* shall be drawn out with him, his servants, his soldiers, and all that had a *dependence on him*, as he thought, but really such as he had *dependence upon*; these shall *stick to his scales*, adhere to their king, resolving to live and die with him. But, (3.) The king and his army, the dragon and all the fish that stick to his scales, shall perish together, as fish cast upon dry ground, and shall be *meat to the beasts and fowls*, v. 5. Now this is supposed to have its accomplishment soon after, when this Pharaoh, in defence of Arius king of Libya, who had been expelled his kingdom by the Cyrenians, levied a great army, and went out against the Cyrenians, to re-establish his friend, but was defeated in battle, and all his forces put to flight, which gave such disgust to his kingdom, that they rose in rebellion against him. Thus was he left *thrown into the wilderness, he and all the fish of the river with him*. Thus issue men's pride and presumption and carnal security. Thus men justly lose what they call their *own under God*, when they call it their *own against him*.

3. The ground of the controversy God has with the Egyptians; it is because they have cheated his people, they encouraged them to expect relief and assistance from them when they were in distress, but failed them; (v. 6, 7.) *because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel*. They pretended to be a *staff* for them to lean upon, but when any stress was laid upon them, they were either *weak and could not*, or treacherous and *would not*, do that for them that was expected. They *broke under them*, to their great disappointment and amazement, so that they *rent their shoulder, and made all their loins to be at a stand*. The king of Egypt, it is probable, had encouraged Zedekiah to break his league with the king of Babylon, with a promise that he would stand by him, which when he failed to do to any purpose, it could not but put

them into a great consternation. God had told them, long since, that the Egyptians were broken reeds; (Isa. xxx. 6, 7.) Rabshakeh had told them so; (Isa. xxxvi. 6.) and now they found it so. It was indeed the folly of Israel to trust them, and they were well enough served when they were deceived in them. God was righteous in suffering them to be so. But that is no excuse at all for the Egyptians' falsehood and treachery, nor shall it secure them from the judgments of that God who is, and will be, the Avenger of all such wrongs. It is a great sin, and very provoking to God, as well as unjust, ungrateful, and very dishonourable and unkind, to put a cheat upon those that put a confidence in us.

8. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. 9. And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD: because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it. 10. Behold, therefore, I *am* against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste *and* desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. 11. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. 12. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries *that are* desolate, and her cities among the cities *that are* laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 13. Yet thus saith the Lord God, At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: 14. And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and I will cause them to return *into* the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom. 15. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. 16. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth *their* iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I *am* the Lord God.

This explains the foregoing prediction, which was figurative, and looks something further. Here is a prophecy,

1. Of the ruin of Egypt. The threatening of this is very full and particular; and the sin for which this ruin shall be brought upon them, is, their pride, v. 9. They said, *The river is mine, and I have made it*; therefore their land shall spue them out. (1.) God is against them, both against the king and against the people, *against thee and against thy rivers*; waters signify *people and multitudes*, Rev. xvii. 15. (2.) Multitudes of them shall be cut off by the sword of war, a sword which God will bring upon them, to destroy *both man and beast*, this

sword of a civil war. (3.) The country shall be *depopulated*. The land of Egypt shall be *desolate and waste*, (v. 9.) the country not cultivated, the cities not inhabited; the wealth of both was their pride, and that God will take away. It shall be *utterly waste; wastes of waste*, (so the margin reads it,) *and desolate*; (v. 10.) *neither men nor beasts shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited*, (v. 11.) it shall be *desolate in the midst of the countries that are so*, v. 12. This was the effect not so much of those wars spoken of before, which were made *by them*, but of the war which the king of Babylon made *upon them*. It shall be desolate from one end of the land to the other, *from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia*. The sin of pride is enough to ruin a whole nation. (4.) The people shall be *dispersed and scattered* among the nations, (v. 12.) so that they who thought the balance of power was in their hand, should now become a contemptible people. Such a fall does a *haughty spirit go before*.

2. Of the restoration of Egypt after awhile, v. 13. Egypt shall lie *desolate forty years*, (v. 12.) and then *I will bring again the captivity of Egypt*, v. 14. Some date the forty years from Nebuchadnezzar's destroying Egypt, others from the desolation of Egypt some time before; however, they end about the first year of Cyrus, when the seventy years' captivity of Judah ended, or soon after. Then this prediction was accomplished, (1.) That God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them to *return to the land of their habitation*, and give them a settlement there again, v. 14. Note, Though God will find out a way to humble the proud, yet he will not contend for ever, no, not with them in this world. (2.) That yet they shall not make a figure again as they have done. Egypt shall be a *kingdom* again, but it shall be the *basest of the kingdoms*, (v. 15.) it shall have but little wealth and power, and shall not extend its conquests as formerly; shall be the tail of the nations, and not the head. It is a mercy that it shall become a kingdom again, but, to humble it, it shall be a despicable kingdom; it shall be a long time before it recover any thing like its ancient lustre. For two reasons it shall be thus mortified.

[1.] That it may not domineer over its neighbours, that it may not *exalt itself above the nations*, nor *rule over the nations*, as it has done, but that it may know what it is to be low and despised. Note, Those who abuse their power will justly be stripped of it; and God, as King of nations, will find out a way to maintain the injured rights and liberties, not only of his own, but of other nations.

[2.] That it may not deceive the people of God; (v. 16.) *It shall no more be the confidence of the house of Israel*; they shall no more be in temptation to trust in it as they have done, which is a sin that *brings their iniquity to remembrance*, that is, provokes God to punish them not for that only, but for all their other sins. Or, it *puts them in mind* of their idolatries, to return to them, *when they look* to the idolaters, to repose a confidence in them. Note, The creatures we confide in are often *therefore* ruined, because there is no other way effectually to cure us of our confidence in them. Rather than Israel shall be ensnared again, the whole land of Egypt shall be laid waste. He that once *gave Egypt for their ransom*, (Isa. xliii. 3.) will now *give Egypt for their cure*; and it shall be *destroyed* rather than Israel shall not in this particular be *reformed*. God, not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, breaks those creature-stays which we lean too much upon; and makes them to be *no more*, that they may be no more our confidence.

17. And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder *was* peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20. I have given him the land of Egypt *for* his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God. 21. In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, sixteen years after the prophecy in the former part of the chapter, and almost as long after those which follow in the next chapters; but it comes in here for the explication of all that was said against Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar spent two or three campaigns in the conquests of the Ammonites and Moabites, and making himself master of their countries. Then he spent thirteen years in the siege of Tyre; during all that time the Egyptians were embroiled in war with the Cyrenians and one with another, by which they were very much weakened and impoverished; and just at the end of the siege of Tyre, God delivers this prophecy to Ezekiel, to signify to him, that that utter destruction of Egypt, which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completed by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the twentieth verse of the next chapter. And Dr. Lightfoot observes, that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book, but is laid here, that all the prophecies against Egypt might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh-Hophrah, foretold in the former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold, Jer. xlv. 30. This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold, Jer. xliii. 10. Observe,

1. What success God would give to Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him *that land*, that he might *take the spoil and prey* of it, v. 19, 20. It was a cheap and easy prey, he subdued it with very little difficulty. The blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it were inconsiderable; but it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was of value. Their having been divided among themselves, no doubt, gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who, when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. *En! quid discordia cives perduxit miseros! What wretchedness does civil discord bring!* Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadnezzar should *array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on*

*his coat*, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

2. Upon what considerations God would give Nebuchadnezzar this success against Egypt; it was to be a recompense to him for the *hard service* with which he had caused his army to serve *against Tyre*, v. 18.—20. (1.) The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work, it cost Nebuchadnezzar abundance of blood and treasure; it held out thirteen years, all that time the Chaldean army was hard at it, to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea, between Tyre and the continent, was filled up with earth, and many other difficulties which were thought insuperable they had to struggle with; but so great a prince, having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this was! In prosecuting this siege, *every head was made bald, and every shoulder peeled*, with carrying burthens, and labouring in the water, when they had a strong tide and a strong town to contend with. Egypt, a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered; Tyre, a single city, being unanimous, is with difficulty subdued. Those that have much to do in the world, find some affairs go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But, (2.) In this service God owns that they *wrought for him*, v. 20. He set them at work, for the humbling of a proud city and its king; though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men and bad men are tools that God makes use of, and are *working for him*, even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully does God overrule all to his own glory. Yet, (3.) For this service he had *no wages nor his army*. He was at a vast expense to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappointed; the Tyrians sent away by ships their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations from it. Therefore, (4.) He shall have the spoil of Egypt to recompense him for his service against Tyre. Note, God will be behind-hand with none for any service they do for him, but, one way or other, will recompense them for it; none shall kindle a fire on his altar for naught. The service done for him by worldly men with worldly designs, shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which his faithful servants that have a sincere regard to his will and glory, would not be put off with. This accounts for the prosperity of wicked men in this world; God is in it paying them for some service or other, in which he has made use of them; *Verily they have their reward*. Let none envy it them. The conquest of Egypt is spoken of as Nebuchadnezzar's *full reward*, for that completed his dominion over the then known world in a manner; that was the last of the kingdoms he subdued; when he was master of that, he became the *head of gold*.

3. The mercy God had in store for the house of Israel soon after. When the tide is at the highest, it will turn, and so it will when it is at the lowest. Nebuchadnezzar was at the zenith of his glory when he had conquered Egypt, but within a year after he ran mad, (Dan. iv.) was so seven years; and within a year or two after he had recovered his senses he resigned his life. When he was *at the highest*, Israel was at the *lowest*, then were they in the depth of their captivity, their bones dead and dry; but in *that day the horn of the house of Israel shall bud forth*, v. 21. The day of their deliver-

ance shall begin to dawn, and they shall have some little reviving in their bondage; in the honour that shall be done, (1.) To their *princes*; they are the *horns of the house of Israel*, the seat of their glory and power, these began to *bud forth* when Daniel and his fellows were highly preferred in Babylon; Daniel *sat in the gate of the city*; *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were set over the affairs of the province*, (Dan. ii. 49.) these were all of the *king's seed, and of the princes*, Dan. i. 3. And it was within a year after the conquests of Egypt that they were thus preferred; and, soon after, three of them were made famous by the honour God put upon them in bringing them alive out of the burning fiery furnace. This might very well be called the *budding forth of the horn of the house of Israel*. And, some years after, this promise had a further accomplishment in the enlargement and elevation of Jehoiachin king of Judah, Jer. liii. 31, 32. They were both tokens of God's favour to Israel, and happy *omens*. (2.) To their *prophets*; And *I will give thee the opening of the mouth*. Though none of Ezekiel's prophecies, after this, are recorded, yet we have reason to think he went on prophesying, and with more liberty and boldness, when Daniel and his fellows were in power, and would be ready to protect him not only from the Babylonians, out from the wicked ones of his own people. Note, It bodes well to a people when God enlarges the liberties of his ministers, and they are countenanced and encouraged in their work.

### CHAP. XXX.

In this chapter, we have, I. A continuation of the prophecy against Egypt, which we had in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, just before the desolation of that once flourishing kingdom was completed by Nebuchadrezzar. In which is foretold the destruction of all her allies and confederates, all her interests and concerns, and the several steps which the king of Babylon should take in pushing on this destruction, v. 1. 19. II. A repetition of a former prophecy against Egypt, just before the desolation of it begun by their own bad conduct, which gradually weakened them, and prepared the way for the king of Babylon, v. 20. 26. It is all much to the same purport with what we had before.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Howl ye, Wo worth the day! 3. For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. 4. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. 5. Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword. 6. Thus saith the LORD, They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord God. 7. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted. 8. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be de-

stroyed. 9. In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships, to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt for, lo, it cometh. 10. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon. 11. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain. 12. And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked; and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the LORD have spoken it. 13. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph, and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. 14. And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No. 15. And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt; and I will cut off the multitude of No. 16. And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder, and Noph shall have distresses daily. 17. The young men of Aven and Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword: and these cities shall go into captivity. 18. At Tephneh also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. 19. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt is here very full and particular, as well as, in the general, very frightful. What can protect a provoking people, when the righteous God comes forth to contend with them?

1. It shall be a very lamentable destruction, and such as shall occasion great sorrow; (v. 2, 3.) "*Howl ye, ye may justly shriek now that it is coming, for ye will be made to shriek and make hideous outcries when it comes. Cry out, Wo worth the day! or, Ah the day, alas because of the day, the terrible day! Wo and alas! For the day is near; the day we have so long dreaded, so long deserved. It is the day of the Lord, the day in the which he will manifest himself as a God of vengeance; you have your day now, when you carry all before you, and trample on all about you, but God will have his day now shortly; the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment.*" Ps. xxxvii. 13. It will be a *cloudy day*, that is, dark and dismal, without the shining forth of any comfort; and it shall threaten a storm; *fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. It shall be the time of the heathen, of reckoning with the heathen, for all their heathenish practices; that time which David spake of when God would pour*

out his fury upon the heathen, (Ps. lxxix. 6.) when they should sink, Ps. ix. 15.

2. It shall be the destruction of Egypt, and of all the states and countries in confederacy with her, and in her neighbourhood. (1.) Egypt herself shall fall; (v. 4.) *The sword shall come upon Egypt*, the sword of the Chaldeans, and it shall be a victorious sword, for the slain shall fall in Egypt, fall by it, fall before it. Is the country populous? They shall take away her multitude. Is it strong, and well fixed? *Her foundations shall be broken down*, and then the fabric, though built ever so fine, ever so high, will fall of course. (2.) Her neighbours and inmates shall fall with her; when the slain fall so thick in Egypt, *great pain shall be in Ethiopia*, both that in Africa, which is in the neighbourhood of Egypt on one side, and that in Asia, which is near to it on the other side; when their neighbour's house was on fire, they could not but apprehend their own in danger: nor were their fears groundless, for they shall all fall with them by the sword; (v. 5.) Ethiopia, and Libya, (Cush and Phut, so the Hebrew names are, two of the sons of Ham, who are mentioned,) and Misraim, that is, Egypt, between them, Gen. x. 6. The Lydians, who were famous archers, are spoken of as confederates with Egypt, Jer. xlv. 9. These shall fall with Egypt and Chub; the Chaldeans, the inhabitants of the inner Libya; these and others were the mingled people; there were those of all these and other countries, who upon some account or other resided in Egypt; as did also the men of the land that is in league, some of the remains of the people of Israel and Judah, the children of the covenant, or league, as they are called, (Acts iii. 25.) the children of the promise, Gal. iv. 28. These sojourned in Egypt, contrary to God's command, and these shall fall with them. Note, They that will take their lot with God's enemies, shall have their lot with them; yea, though they be in profession the men of the land that is in league with God.

3. All that pretend to support the sinking interests of Egypt, shall come down under her, shall come down with her; (v. 6.) *They that uphold Egypt shall fall*, and then Egypt must fall of course. See the justice of God; Egypt pretended to uphold Jerusalem when that was tottering, but proved a deceitful reed; and now they that pretended to uphold Egypt, shall prove no better. Those that deceive others are commonly paid in their own coin, they are themselves deceived. (1.) Does Egypt think herself upheld by the absolute authority and dominion of her king? *The pride of her power shall come down*, v. 6. The power of the king of Egypt was his pride; but that shall be broken, and humbled. (2.) Is the multitude of her people her support? These shall fall by the sword, even from the tower of Syene, which is in the utmost corner of the land, from that side of it by which the enemy shall enter. Both the countries and the cities, the husbandmen and the merchants, shall be desolate, (v. 7.) as before, ch. xxix. 12. *Even the multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease*, v. 10. That populous country shall be depopulated. The land shall be even filled with the slain, v. 11. (3.) Is the river Nile her support, and the several channels of it a defence to her? *I will make the rivers dry*, (v. 12.) so that those natural fortifications, which were thought impregnable, because impassable, shall stand them in no stead. (4.) Are her idols a support to her? Those shall be destroyed, those imaginary upholders shall appear more than ever to be imaginary, for so images are when they pretend to be deliverers and strong holds; (v. 13.) *I will cause their images to cease out of Noph*. (5.) Is her royal family her support? *There shall be no more a prince in the land of Egypt*; the royal family shall be ex-

tirpated and extinguished, which had continued so long. (6.) Is her courage her support, and does she think to uphold herself by the bravery of her men of war, who have now of late been injured to service? That shall fail; *I will put a fear in the land of Egypt*. (7.) Is the rising generation her support; is she upheld by her children, and does she think herself happy because she has her quiver full of them? Alas, the young men shall fall by the sword, (v. 17.) and the daughters shall go into captivity, (v. 18.) and so she shall be robbed of all her hopes.

4. God shall inflict these desolating judgments on Egypt; (v. 8.) *They shall know that I am the Lord*, and greater than all gods, than all their gods, when I have set a fire in Egypt. The fire that consumes nations is of God's kindling; and when he sets fire to a people, all their helpers shall be destroyed; those that go about to quench the fire shall themselves be devoured by it; for who can stand before him when he is angry? When he pours out his fury upon a place, when he sets fire to it, (v. 15, 16.) neither its strength nor its multitude can stand it in any stead.

5. The king of Babylon and his army shall be employed as instruments of this destruction; *The multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease*, and be quite cut off by the hand of the king of Babylon, v. 10. They that undertook to protect Israel from the king of Babylon, shall not be able to protect themselves. It is said of the Chaldeans, who should destroy Egypt, (1.) That they are strangers, (v. 12.) who therefore shall show no compassion for old acquaintance-sake, but shall carry it strangely toward them. (2.) That they are the terrible of the nations, (v. 11.) both in respect of force, and in respect of fierceness; and, being terrible, they shall make terrible work. (3.) That they are the wicked; who will not be restrained by reason and conscience, the laws of nature, or the laws of nations, for they are without law; *I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked*. They do violence unjustly, as they are wicked; yet, so far as they are instruments in God's hand of executing his judgments, it is on his part justly done. Note, God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another; and even wicked men acquire a title to prey, *jure belli*—by the laws of war, for God sells it into their hands.

6. No place in the land of Egypt shall be exempted from the fury of the Chaldean army, not the strongest, not the remotest; *The sword shall go through the land*. Divers places are here named: Pathros, Zoan, and No, (v. 14.) Sin and Noph, (v. 15, 16.) Aven and Phibeseth, (v. 17.) Tehaphneh, v. 18. These shall be made desolate, shall be fired, and God's judgments shall be executed upon them, and his fury poured out upon them. Their strength and multitude shall be cut off; they shall have great pain, shall be rent asunder with fear, and shall have distresses daily; their day shall be darkened, their honours, comforts, and hopes shall be extinguished; their yokes shall be broken, so that they shall no more oppress and tyrannize as they have done; the pomp of their strength shall cease, and a cloud shall cover them; a cloud so thick that through it they shall not see any hopes, nor shall their glory be seen, or shine further. And, lastly, the Ethiopians, who are at a distance from them, as well as those who are mingled with them, shall share in their pain and terror; God will by his providence spread the rumour, and the careless Ethiopians shall be made afraid, v. 9. Note, God can strike a terror upon those that are most secure; fearfulness shall, when he pleases, surprise the most presumptuous hypocrites.

The close of this prediction leaves, (1.) The land of Egypt mortified; *Thus will I execute judgments on Egypt*, v. 19. The destruction of Egypt is the



*executing of judgments*, which intimates not only that it is done justly, for its sins, but that it is done regularly and legally, by a *judicial* sentence. All the executions God does, are according to *his judgments*. (2.) The God of Israel herein glorified; *They shall know that I am the Lord*. The Egyptians shall be made to know it, and the people of God shall be made to know it better. *The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth*.

20. And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword. 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. 23. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 24. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly-wounded man. 25. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. 26. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

This short prophecy of the weakening of the power of Egypt was delivered about the time that the army of the Egyptians, which attempted to raise the siege of Jerusalem, was frustrated in its enterprises, and returned *re infectâ*—without accomplishing their purpose; whereupon the king of Babylon renewed the siege, and carried his point. The kingdom of Egypt was very ancient, and had been many ages considerable. That of Babylon was but lately arrived at its great pomp and power, being built upon the ruins of the kingdom of Assyria. Now it is with them as it is with families and states; some are growing up, others are declining and going back; one must increase, and the other must of course decrease.

1. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Egypt shall grow weaker and weaker. The extent of his territories shall be abridged, his wealth and power shall be diminished, and he shall become less able than ever to help either himself or his friend. (1.) This was in part done already; (v. 21.) *I have broken the arm of Pharaoh* some time ago. One arm of that kingdom might well be reckoned *broken*, when the king of Babylon routed the forces of Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish, (Jer. xli. 2.) And made himself master of all that pertained to Egypt from the river of Egypt to Euphrates, 2 Kings xxiv. 7. Egypt had been long in gathering strength, and extending its dominions, and therefore that there may be a pro-

portion observed in providence, it loses its strength *slowly and by degrees*. It was soon after the king of Egypt slew good king Josiah, and in the same reign, that its arm was thus *broken*, and it received that fatal blow which it never recovered. Before Egypt's heart and neck were broken, its arm was; God's judgments come upon a people by steps that they may meet him repenting. When the arm of Egypt is broken, *it shall not be bound up to be healed*, for none can heal the wounds that God gives, but himself. Those whom he *disarms*, whom he *disables*, cannot again hold the sword. (2.) This was to be done again; one arm was broken before, and something was done toward the setting of it, toward the healing of the deadly wound that was given to the beast. But now (v. 22.) *I am against Pharaoh, and will break both his arms; both the strong, and that which was broken and set again*. Note, If lesser judgments do not prevail to humble and reform sinners, God will send greater. Now God will *cause the sword to fall out of his hand*, which he caught hold of as thinking himself strong enough to hold it. It is repeated, (v. 24.) *I will break Pharaoh's arms*. He had been a cruel oppressor to the people of God formerly, and of late the *staff of a broken rod* to them; and now God, by breaking his arms, reckons with him for both. God justly breaks that power which is abused either to *put wrongs* upon people, or to *put cheats* upon them. But this is not all; (1.) The king of Egypt shall be *dispirited*, when he finds himself in danger of the king of Babylon's forces; *he shall groan before him with the groaning of a deadly wounded man*. Note, It is common for those that are most *elevated* in their prosperity, to be most *dejected* and *disheartened* in their adversity. Pharaoh, even before the sword touches him, shall *groan* as if he had received his death's wound. (2.) The people of Egypt shall be *dispersed*, (v. 23.) and again, (v. 26.) *I will scatter them among the nations*. Other nations had mingled with them, (v. 5.) now they shall be mingled with other nations, and seek shelter in them, and so be *made to know* that the Lord is righteous.

2. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Babylon shall grow stronger and stronger, v. 24, 25. It is said and repeated, that God will, (1.) *Put strength* into the king of Babylon's arms, that he may be able to go through the service he is designed for. (2.) That he will *put a sword*, his sword, into the king of Babylon's hand, which signified his giving him a commission, and furnishing him with arms for carrying on a war, particularly against Egypt. Note, As judges on the bench, like Pilate, (John xix. 11.) so generals in the field, like Nebuchadnezzar, have no power but what is given them from above.

## CHAP. XXXI.

The prophecy of this chapter, as the two chapters before, is against Egypt, and designed for the humbling and mortifying of Pharaoh. In passing sentence upon great criminals, it is usual to consult precedents, and to see what has been done to others in the like case, which serves both to *direct* and to *justify* the proceedings: Pharaoh stands indicted at the bar of divine justice for his pride and haughtiness, and the injuries he had done to God's people; but he thinks himself so high, so great, as not to be accountable to any authority; so strong, and so well guarded, as not to be conquerable by any force. The prophet is therefore directed to make a report to him of the case of the king of Assyria, whose head city was Nineveh. I. He must show him how great a monarch the king of Assyria had been, what a vast empire he had, what a mighty sway he bore; the king of Egypt, great as he was, could not go beyond him, v. 3. . 9. II. He must then show him how like he was to the king of Assyria in pride and carnal security, v. 10. III. He must next read him the history of the fall and ruin of the king of Assyria, what a noise it made among the nations, and what a warning it gave to all potent princes to take heed of pride, v. 11. . 17. IV. He must leave the king of

Egypt to apply all this to himself, to see his own face in the looking-glass of the king of Assyria's sin, and to foresee his own fall through the perspective-glass of his ruin, v. 18.

1. **AND** it came to pass in the eleventh **A** year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness? 3. Behold, the Assyrian *was* a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. 4. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. 5. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long, because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. 6. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. 7. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. 8. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir-trees were not like his boughs, and the chesnut-trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. 9. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that *were* in the garden of God, envied him.

This prophecy bears date the month before Jerusalem was taken, as that in the close of the foregoing chapter about four months before; when God's people were in the depth of their distress, it would be some comfort to them, as it would serve likewise for a check to the pride and malice of their neighbours, that insulted over them, to be told from heaven that the cup was going round, even the cup of trembling, that it would shortly be taken out of the hands of God's people, and put into the hands of those that hated them, Isa. li. 22, 23. In this prophecy,

1. The prophet is directed to put Pharaoh upon searching the records for a case parallel to his own; (v. 2.) *Speak to Pharaoh, and to his multitude*, to the multitude of his attendants, that contributed so much to his magnificence, and the multitude of his armies, that contributed so much to his strength; these he was proud of, these he put a confidence in, and they were as proud of him, and trusted as much in him. Now ask him, *Whom art thou like in thy greatness?* We are apt to judge of ourselves by comparison. Those that think highly of themselves, fancy themselves as *great* and as *good* as such and such, that have been mightily celebrated. The flatterers of princes tell them whom they equal in pomp and grandeur; "Well," says God, "let him pitch upon the most famous potentate that ever was, and it shall be allowed that he is *like him in greatness*, and no way inferior to him; but let him pitch upon whom he

will, he will find that *his day came to fall*; he will see there was *an end of all his perfection*, and must therefore expect the end of his own in like manner." Note, The falls of others, both into sin and ruin, are intended as admonitions to us not to be secure or *high-minded*, or to think we stand out of danger.

11. He is directed to show him an instance of one whom he resembled in greatness; and that was the Assyrian, (v. 3.) whose monarchy had continued from Nimrod. Sennacherib was one of the mighty princes of that monarchy; but it sunk down soon after him, and the monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar was built upon its ruins, or rather grafted upon its stock. Let us now see what a flourishing prince the king of Assyria was. He is here compared to a stately cedar, v. 3. The glory of the house of David is illustrated by the same similitude, ch. xvii. 3. The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, which were all fruit-trees, had refused to be *promoted over the trees*, because they would not leave their fruitfulness; (Judg. ix. 8, &c.) and therefore the choice falls upon the cedar, that is stately and strong, and casts a great shadow, but bears no fruit.

1. The Assyrian monarch was a *tall cedar*, such as the cedars in Lebanon generally were, of a *high stature*, and *his top among the thick boughs*; he was attended by other princes that were tributaries to him, and was surrounded by a life-guard of brave men. He surpassed all the princes in his neighbourhood, they were all shrubs to him; (v. 5.) *His height was exalted above all the trees of the field*, they were many of them very high, but he overtopped them all, v. 8. The cedars, even those in the garden of Eden, where, we may suppose, they were the best of the kind, *would not hide him*, but his top branches outshot theirs.

2. He was a *spreading cedar*; his branches did not only *run up* in height, but *run out* in breadth; denoting that this mighty prince was not only exalted to great dignity and honour, and had a name above the names of the great men of the earth, but that he obtained great dominion and power; his territories were large, and he extended his conquests far, and his influences much further. This cedar, like a *vine*, sent forth *his branches to the sea, to the river*, Ps. lxxx. 11. *His boughs were multiplied, his branches became long*; (v. 5.) so that he had a *shadowing shroud*, v. 3. This contributed very much to his *beauty*, that he grew *proportionably* large as well as high. He was *fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches*, (v. 7.) very comely as well as very stately, *fair by the multitude of his branches*, v. 9. His large dominions were well managed, like a spreading tree that is kept in shape and good order by the skill of the gardener, so as to be very beautiful to the eye. His government was as *amiable* in the eyes of wise men, as it was *admirable* in the eyes of all men. The *fir-trees* were not like his boughs, so straight, so green, so regular; nor were the branches of the *chesnut-trees* like his branches, so thick, so spreading. In short, *no tree in the garden of God, in Eden, in Babylon*, (for that stood where paradise was planted,) there where there was every tree that was *pleasant to the sight*, (Gen. ii. 9.) there was none like to this cedar in *beauty*; in all the nations about there was no prince so much admired, so much courted, and which every body was so much in love with, as the king of Assyria. Many of them *did virtuously*, but he *excelled them all*, outshone them all. *All the trees of Eden envied him*, v. 9. When they found they could not compare with him, they were angry and grieved that he so far outdid them, and secretly grudged him the praise due to him. Note, It is the unhappiness of those who in any thing excel others, that thereby they make themselves the *objects of envy*; and *who can stand before envy?*

3. He was *serviceable*, as far as a standing, growing cedar could be, and that was only by his shadow; (v. 6.) *All the fowls of heaven*, some of all sorts, made their nests in his boughs, where they were sheltered from the injuries of the weather. The *beasts of the field* put themselves under the protection of his branches, there they were *levant—rising up*, and *couchant—lying down*, there they brought forth their young; for they had there a natural covert from the heat and from the storm. The meaning of all is, *Under his shadow dwelt all great nations*; they all fled to him for safety, and were willing to swear allegiance to him, if he would undertake to protect them; as travellers in a shower come under thick trees for shelter. Note, Those who have power, ought to use it for the protection and comfort of those whom they have power over; for to that end they are intrusted with power. Even the bramble, if he be anointed king, invites the trees to come, and *trust in his shadow*, Judg. ix. 15. But the utmost security that any creature, even the king of Assyria himself, can give, is but like the *shadow of a tree*, which is but a scanty and slender protection, and leaves a man many ways exposed. Let us therefore flee to God for protection, and he will take us *under the shadow of his wings*, where we shall be warmer and safer than under the shadow of the strongest and stateliest cedar, Ps. xvii. 8.—xci. 4.

4. He seemed to be *settled and established* in his greatness and power. For, (1.) It was God that made him fair, v. 9. For by him kings reign: he was comely with the comeliness that God put upon him. Note, God's hand must be eyed and owned in the advancement of the great men of the earth; and therefore we must not envy them: yet that will not secure the continuance of their prosperity; for he that gave them their beauty, if they be deprived of it, knows how to turn it into deformity. (2.) He seemed to have a good bottom; this cedar was not like the *heath in the desert, made to inhabit the parched places*, (Jer. xvii. 6.) it was not a *root in a dry ground*, Isa. liii. 2. No, he had abundance of wealth to support his power and grandeur; (v. 4.) *The waters made him great*; he had vast treasures, large stores and magazines, which were as *the deep that set him up on high*, constant revenues coming in by taxes, customs, and crown-rents, which were as *rivers running round about his plants*; these enabled him to strengthen and secure his interests every where, for he sent out his little rivers, or conduits, to all the trees of the field, to water them, and when they had maintenance from the king's palace, (Ezra iv. 14.) and their country was nourished by the king's country, (Acts xii. 20.) they would be serviceable and faithful to him. Those that have wealth flowing upon them in *great rivers*, find themselves obliged to send it out again in *little rivers*; for, as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, and the more men have, the more occasion they have for it; yea, and still the more they have occasion for. The branches of this cedar became long because of the multitude of waters, which fed them, (v. 5. and v. 7.) *his root was by great waters*, which seems to secure it that its leaf should never wither, (Ps. i. 3.) that it should not see when heat comes, Jer. xvii. 8. Note, Worldly people may seem to have an established prosperity, yet it only seems so, Job v. 3. Ps. xxxvii. 35.

10. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; 11. I have, therefore, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven

him out for his wickedness. 12. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. 13. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: 14. To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit. 15. Thus saith the Lord God, In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed; and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. 16. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. 17. They also went down into hell with him, unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen. 18. To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh, and all his multitude, saith the Lord God. |

We have seen the king of Egypt resembling the king of Syria in pomp and power and prosperity, how like he was to him in his greatness; now here we see,

1. How he does likewise resemble him in his pride; (v. 10.) as face answers to face in a glass, so does one corrupt, carnal heart to another; and the same temptations of a prosperous state by which some are overcome, are fatal to many others too. *Thou, O king of Egypt, hast lifted up thyself in height*, hast been proud of thy wealth and power, ch. xxix. 3. And just so, *he*, the king of Assyria, when he had shot up his top among the thick boughs, his heart was immediately lifted up in his height, and he grew insolent and imperious, set God himself at defiance, and trampled upon his people; witness the messages and letter which the great king, the king of Assyria, sent to Hezekiah, Isa. xxxvi. 4 How haughtily does he speak of himself and his own achievements, how scornfully of that great and good man! There were other sins in which the Egyptians and the Assyrians did concur, particu-

larly that of oppressing God's people; it is charged upon them both together, (Isa. lii. 4.) but here that sin is run up to its cause, and that was, pride; for it is the *contempt of the proud* that they are filled with. Note, When men's outward condition rises, their minds commonly rise with it. And it is very rare to find an humble spirit in the midst of great advancements.

II. How he shall therefore resemble him in his fall; and for the opening of this part of the comparison,

1. Here is a history of the fall of the king of Assyria. For his part, says God, (v. 11.) *I have therefore, because he was thus lifted up, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen.* Cyaxares, king of the Medes, in the 26th year of his reign, in conjunction with Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the 1st year of his reign, destroyed Nineveh, and with it the Assyrian empire. Nebuchadnezzar, though he was not then, yet afterwards became, very emphatically, the *mighty one of the heathen*; most mighty among them; and most mighty over them, to prevail against them. (1.) It is God himself that orders his ruin; *I have delivered him into the hand of the executioner; I have driven him out.* Note, God is the Judge, who puts down one, and sets up another, Ps. lxxv. 7. And when he pleases, he can extirpate and expel those who think themselves, and seem to others, to have taken deepest root. And the mightiest ones of the heathens could not gain their point against those they contended with, if the Almighty did not himself deliver them into their hands. (2.) It is his own sin that procures his ruin; *I have driven him out for his wickedness.* None are driven out from their honour, power, and possessions, but it is for their wickedness. None of our comforts are ever lost, but what have been a thousand times forfeited. If the wicked are driven away, it is in their wickedness. (3.) It is a *mighty one of the heathen* that shall be the instrument of his ruin. For God often employs one wicked man in punishing another. *He shall surely deal with him*, shall know how to manage him, great as he is. Note, Proud, imperious men will, sooner or later, meet with their match.

Now, in this history of the fall of the Assyrian, observe,

[1.] A continuation of the similitude of the cedar. He grew very high, and extended his boughs very far; but his day comes to fall. *First*, This stately cedar was cropped; *the terrible of the nations cut him off*; soldiers, who, being both armed and commissioned to kill and slay and destroy, may well be reckoned among *the terrible of the nations*; they have lopped off his branches first; have seized upon some parts of his dominion, and forced them out of his hands; so that in all *mountains and valleys of the nations about*, in the high-lands and low-lands, and by all the rivers, there were cities or countries that were broken off from the Assyrian monarchy, that had been subject to it, but were either *revolted or recovered* from it. Its feathers were borrowed; and when every bird had fetched back its own, it was naked like the stump of a tree. *Secondly*, It was deserted; *All the people of the earth*, that had fled to him for shelter, are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. When he was disabled to give them protection, they thought they no longer owed him allegiance. Let not great men be proud of the number of those that attend them, and have a dependence upon them, it is only for what they can get; when Providence frowns upon them, their retinue is soon dispersed and scattered from them. *Thirdly*, It was insulted over, and its fall triumphed in; (v. 13.) *Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain*, to tread upon the broken branches of this cedar. Its fall is triumphed in by the other

trees, who were angry to see themselves over-stripped so much; *All the trees of Eden*, that were cut down and fallen before him, *all that drank water of the rain of heaven*, as the stump of the tree, that is left in the south, is said to be wet with the dew of heaven, (Dan. iv. 23.) and to bud through the scent of water; (Job xiv. 9.) *all these shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth*, when they see this proud cedar brought as low as themselves. *Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*—To have companions in woe is a solace to those who suffer. But, on the contrary, the trees of Lebanon, that are yet standing in their height and strength, *mourned for him*, and the trees of the field *fainted for him*, because they could not but read their own destiny in his fall. *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedar be shaken*, for they cannot expect to stand long, Zech. xi. 2.

[2.] An explanation of the similitude of the cedar. By the cutting down of this cedar is signified the slaughter of this mighty monarch and all his adherents and supporters; they are all *delivered to death*, to fall by the sword, as the cedar by the axe; he and his princes, who, he said, were *altogether kings*, go down to the grave, *to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men*, as common persons of no quality or distinction; *they die like men*, (Ps. lxxxii. 7.) they were carried away with them that go down to the pit, and their pomp did neither protect them nor descend after them. Again, (v. 16.) He was cast down to hell with them that descend into the pit; he went into the state of the dead, and was buried as others are, in obscurity and oblivion. Again, (v. 17.) *They all that were his arm*, on whom he stayed, by whom he acted, and exerted his power, all that dwelt under his shadow, his subjects and allies, and all that had any dependence on him, they all went down into ruin, down into the grave with him, unto them that were slain with the sword, to those that were cut off by untimely deaths before them, under the load of guilt and shame. When great men fall, a great many fall with them, as a great many in like manner have fallen before them.

[3.] What God designed, and aimed at, in bringing down this mighty monarch and his monarchy. He designed thereby, *First*, To give an alarm to the nations about; to put them all to a stand, to put them all to a gaze; (v. 16.) *I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall*; they were all struck with astonishment to see so mighty a prince brought down thus; it gave a shock to all their confidences, every one thinking his turn would be next. *When he went down to the grave*, (v. 15.) *I caused a mourning*, a general lamentation, as the whole kingdom goes into mourning at the death of the king; in token of this general grief, *I covered the deep for him*, put that into black, gave a stop to business, in complaisance to this universal mourning; *I restrained the floods, and the great waters were stayed*, that they might run in another channel, that of lamentation. Lebanon particularly, the kingdom of Syria, that was sometimes in confederacy with the Assyrian, mourned for him; as the allies of Babylon, Rev. xviii. 9. *Secondly*, To give an admonition to the nations about, and to their kings; (v. 14.) *To the end that none of all the trees by the waters*, though ever so advantageously situated, *may exalt themselves for their height*, may be proud and conceited of themselves, and shoot up their top among the thick boughs, looking disdainfully upon others, nor stand upon themselves for their height, confiding in their own policies and powers, as they could never be brought down. Let them all take warning by the Assyrian, for he once held up his head as high, and thought he kept his footing as firm, as any of them; but his pride went before his destruction, and his confidence failed him. Note, The fall of

proud, presumptuous men is intended for warning to others to keep humble. It had been well for Nebuchadnezzar, who was himself active in bringing down the Assyrian, if he had taken the admonition.

2. Here is a prophecy of the fall of the king of Egypt in like manner, v. 18. He thought himself like the Assyrian in *glory and greatness*, overtopping *all the trees of Eden*, as the cypress does the shrubs; but *thou also shalt be brought down*, with the other trees that are pleasant to the sight, as those in Eden. *Thou shalt be brought to the grave*, to the nether or lower *parts of the earth*, thou shalt lie *in the midst of the uncircumcised*, that die in their uncleanness, die ingloriously, die under a curse, and at a distance from God; then shall those whom he has trampled upon, triumph over him, saying, "*This is Pharaoh and all his multitude*." See how mean he looks, how low he lies; see what all his pomp and pride are come to; here is all that is left of him." Note, Great men, and great multitudes, with the great figure and great noise they make in the world, when God comes to contend with them, will soon become little, less than nothing; such as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

### CHAP. XXXII.

Still we are upon the destruction of Pharaoh and Egypt; which is wonderfully enlarged upon, and with a great deal of emphasis. When we read so very much of Egypt's ruin, no less than six several prophecies at divers times delivered concerning it, we are ready to think, Surely there is some special reason for it. And, I. Perhaps it may look as far back as the book of Genesis, where we find (ch. xv. 14.) that God determined to *judge Egypt* for oppressing his people; and though that was in part fulfilled in the plagues of Egypt, and the drowning of Pharaoh, yet, in this destruction here foretold, those old scores were reckoned for, and that was to have its full accomplishment. II. Perhaps it may look as far forward as the book of the Revelation, where we find that the great enemy of the gospel-church, that *makes war with the Lamb*, is *spiritually called Egypt*, Rev. xi. 8. And if so, the destruction of Egypt and its Pharaoh was a type of the destruction of that proud enemy; and betwixt this prophecy of the ruin of Egypt and the prophecy of the destruction of the antichristian generation there is some analogy. We have two distinct prophecies in this chapter, relating to Egypt, both in the same month, one on the first day, the other that day fortnight, probably both on the sabbath-day. They are both lamentations, not only to signify how *lamentable* the fall of Egypt should be, but to intimate how much the prophet himself should lament it, from a generous principle of love to mankind. The destruction of Egypt is here represented under two similitudes; 1. The killing of a lion, or a whale, or some such devouring creature, v. 1. . 16. 2. The funeral of a great commander or captain-general, v. 17. . 32. The two prophecies of this chapter are much of the same length.

1. **AND** it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas; and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst the rivers. 3. Thus saith the Lord God, I will, therefore, spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net. 4. Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee,

and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. 5. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. 6. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimdest, *even* to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. 7. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. 8. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. 9. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. 10. Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at *every* moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall. 11. For thus saith the Lord God, The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. 12. By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them; and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. 13. I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them. 14. Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord God. 15. When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the Lord. 16. This is the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her: the daughters of the nations shall lament her; they shall lament for her, *even* for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord God.

Here,

I. The prophet is ordered to *take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt*, v. 2. It concerns ministers to be much of a serious spirit, and, in order thereunto, to be frequent in *taking up lamentations* for the fall and ruin of sinners, as those that have not *desired*, but *dreaded the woful day*. Note, Ministers that would affect others with the things of God, must make it appear that they are themselves affected with the miseries which sinners bring upon themselves by their sins. It becomes us to weep and tremble for those that will not weep and tremble for themselves, to try if thereby we may set them a weeping, set them a trembling.

II. He is ordered to show cause for that lamentation.

1. Pharaoh has been a *troubler of the nations*, even of his own nation, which he should have procured the repose of. He is *like a young lion of the nations*, (v. 2.) loud and noisy, hectoring and

threatening, as a lion when he roars. Great potentates, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, are, in God's account, no better than *beasts of prey*. He is like a whale, or dragon, like a crocodile (so some) *in the seas*, very turbulent and vexatious, as the *leviathan* that *makes the deep to boil like a pot*, Job xli. 31. When Pharaoh engaged in an unnecessary war with the Cyrenians, he *came forth with his rivers*, with his armies, *troubled the waters*, disturbed his own kingdom, and the neighbouring nations, *foiled the rivers*, and made them muddy. Note, A great deal of disquiet is often given to the world by the restless ambition and implacable resentments of proud princes. Ahab is he that *troubles Israel*, and not Elijah.

2. He that has troubled others, must expect to be himself troubled; for the Lord is righteous, Josh. vii. 25.

(1.) This is set forth here by a comparison. Is Pharaoh like a *great whale*, which, when it comes up the river, gives great disturbance, a leviathan which Job cannot *draw out with a hook*? (Job xli. 1.) Yet God has a net for him, which is large enough to enclose him, and strong enough to secure him; (v. 3.) *I will spread my net over thee*, even the army of the Chaldeans, a *company of many people*; they shall force him out of his fastnesses, dislodge him out of his possessions, throw him like a great fish upon dry ground, *upon the open field*, (v. 4.) where, being out of his element, he must die of course, and be a prey to the birds and beasts, as was foretold, ch. xxix. 5. What can the strongest fish do to help itself, when it is out of the water, and lies gasping? *The flesh of this great whale shall be laid upon the mountains*, (v. 5.) and the *valleys shall be filled with his height*. Such numbers of Pharaoh's soldiers shall be slain, that the dead bodies shall be scattered upon the hills, and there shall be heaps of them piled up in the valleys. Blood shall be shed in such abundance as to swell the rivers in the valleys. Or, Such shall be the bulk, such the height, of this leviathan, that, when he is laid upon the ground, he shall fill a valley. Such vast quantities of blood shall issue from this *leviathan*, as shall *water the land of Egypt*, the land wherein *now he swims*, now he sports himself, v. 6. It shall reach to the mountains, and the waters of Egypt shall again be *turned into blood*, by this means: *The rivers shall be full of thee*. The judgments executed upon Pharaoh of old are expressed by the *breaking of the head of leviathan in the waters*, Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14. But now they go further; this old serpent not only has now his head bruised, but is all crushed to pieces.

(2.) It is set forth by a prophecy of the deep impressions which the destruction of Egypt should make upon the neighbouring nations; it would put them all into a consternation, as the fall of the Assyrian monarchy did, ch. xxxi. 15, 16. When Pharaoh, who had been like a blazing, burning torch, is *put out and extinguished*, it shall make all about him look black, v. 7. The heavens shall be hung with black, the *stars darkened*, the sun eclipsed, and the moon be deprived of her borrowed light. It is from the upper world that this lower world receives its light; and therefore, (v. 8.) when the *bright lights of heaven are made dark above*, darkness by consequence is *set upon the land*, upon the earth; so it shall be on the land of Egypt. Here the plague of darkness, which was upon Egypt of old for three days, seems to be alluded to, as, before, the turning of the waters into blood. For when former judgments are forgotten, it is just that they should be repeated. When their privy-counsellors, and statesmen, and those that have the direction of the public affairs, are deprived of wisdom, and made fools, and the things that belong to their peace

are hid from their eyes, then their *lights are darkened*, and the land is in a mist. This is foretold, Isa. xix. 13. *The princes of Zoan are become fools*. Now upon the spreading of the report of the fall of Egypt, and the bringing of the news to remote countries, *countries which they had not known*, (v. 9.) people shall be much affected, and shall feel themselves sensibly touched by it. [1.] It shall fill them with vexation to see such an ancient, wealthy, potent kingdom thus humbled and brought down, and the pride of worldly glory, which they have such a value for, stained. *The hearts of many people will be vexed* to see the word of the God of Israel fulfilled in the destruction of Egypt, and that all the *gods of Egypt* were not able to relieve it. Note, The destruction of some wicked people is a vexation to others. [2.] It shall fill them with admiration; (v. 10.) *They shall be amazed at thee*, shall wonder to see so *great riches and power come to nothing*, Rev. xviii. 17. Note, They that admire with complacency the pomp of this world, will admire with consternation the ruin of that pomp; which to those that know the vanity of all things here below is no surprise at all. [3.] It shall fill them with fear; *Even their kings* (that think it their prerogative to be secure) shall be *horribly afraid for thee*, concluding their own house to be in danger, when their neighbour's is on fire. *When I shall brandish my sword before them, they shall tremble every man for his own life*. Note, When the sword of God's justice is *drawn against some*, to cut them off, it is thereby *brandished before* others, to give them warning. And those that will not be admonished by it, and made to reform, shall yet be frightened by it, and *made to tremble*. *They shall tremble at every moment, because of thy fall*. When others are ruined by sin, we have reason to quake for fear, as knowing ourselves guilty and obnoxious. *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?*

(3.) It is set forth by a plain and express prediction of the desolation itself that should come upon Egypt.

[1.] The *instruments of the desolation* appear here very formidable. It is the *sword of the king of Babylon*, that warlike, that victorious prince, that shall *come upon thee*; (v. 11.) the *swords of the mighty*, even the *terrible of the nations, all of them*, (v. 12.) an army that there is no standing before. Note, Those that delight in war, and are upon all occasions entering into contention, may expect, some time or other, to be engaged with those that will prove too hard for them. Pharaoh had been forward to quarrel with his neighbour, and to come forth *with his rivers*, with his armies, v. 2. But God will now give him enough of it.

[2.] The *instances of the desolation* appear here very *frightful*; much the same with what we had before, ch. xxix. 10.—12. ch. xxx. 7. *First*, The *multitude of Egypt shall be destroyed*; not decimated, some picked out to be made examples, but all cut off. Note, The numbers of sinners, though they be a *multitude*, will neither secure them against God's power, nor entitle them to his pity. *Secondly*, The pomp of Egypt shall be spoiled; the pomp of their court, what they have been proud of. Note, In renouncing the pomps of this world we did ourselves a great kindness, for they are things that are soon spoiled, and that cheat their admirers. *Thirdly*, The cattle of Egypt, that used to feed by the rivers, shall be *destroyed*, (v. 13.) either cut off by the sword, or carried off for a prey. Egypt was famous for horses, which would be an acceptable booty to the Chaldeans. The rivers shall be no more frequented as they have been by man and beast, that came thither to drink. *Fourthly*, The *waters of Egypt*, that used to flow



briskly, shall now grow deep and slow and heavy, and shall *run like oil*, (v. 14.) a figurative expression signifying that there should be such universal sadness and heaviness upon the whole nation, that even the rivers should go softly and silently like mourners, and quite forget their rapid motion. *Fiftly*, The whole country of Egypt shall be stripped of its wealth; it shall be *destitute of that whereof it was full*, (v. 15.) corn and cattle, and all the pleasant fruits of the earth; when those are *smitten that dwell therein*, the ground is *untilled*, and that which is gathered becomes an easy prey to the invader. Note, God can soon empty those of this world's goods that have the greatest fullness of those things, and are full of them; that enjoy most, and have their hearts set upon those enjoyments. The Egyptians were *full of their pleasant and plentiful country*, and its rich productions. Every one that talked with them might perceive how much it filled them. But God can soon make their *country destitute of that whereof it is full*; it is therefore our wisdom to be full of *treasures in heaven*. When the country is made destitute, 1. It shall be an instruction to them; *Then shall they know that I am the Lord*. A sensible conviction of the vanity of the world, and the fading, perishing nature of all things in it, will contribute much to our right knowledge of God as our Portion and Happiness. 2. It shall be a lamentation to all about them; *The daughters of the nations shall lament her*, (v. 16.) either because, being in *alliance* with her, they share in her grievances, and suffer with her; or, being admirers of her, they at least share in her grief, and sympathize with her. They shall lament for *Egypt and all her multitude*; it shall excite their pity to see so great a devastation made. By enlarging the matters of our joy we increase the occasions of our sorrow.

17. It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, *even her*, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. 19. Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. 20. They shall fall in the midst of *them that are slain* by the sword; she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes. 21. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. 22. Asshur is there, and all her company: his graves *are* about him; all of them slain, fallen by the sword. 23. Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living. 24. There is Elam, and all her multitude round about her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them

that go down to the pit. 25. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitudes: her graves *are* round about him; all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of *them that be slain*. 26. There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves *are* round about him; all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living. 27. And they shall not lie with the mighty *that are fallen* of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war; and they have laid their swords under their heads; but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though *they were* the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. 28. Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with *them that are slain* with the sword. 29. There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their might are laid by *them that were slain* by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit. 30. There be the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with *them that be slain* by the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit. 31. Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, *even Pharaoh* and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord God. 32. For I have caused my terror in the land of the living: and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with *them that are slain* with the sword, *even Pharaoh*, and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

This prophecy concludes and completes the burden of Egypt, and leaves it and all its multitude in the pit of destruction. We are here invited to attend the funeral of that once flourishing kingdom, to lament its fall, and to take a view of those who attend it to the grave, and accompany it in the grave. This dead corpse of a kingdom is here,

I. *Brought to the grave*. The prophet is ordered to *cast them down to the pit*, (v. 18.) to foretell it as one that had authority, as Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, Jer. i. 10. He must speak in God's name, and as from him who will cast them down. Yet he must foretell it as one that had an *affectionate concern* for them; he must *wail for the multitude of Egypt*, even when he *casts them down*. When Egypt is slain, let her have an honourable funeral, befitting her quality; let her be buried *with the daughters of the famous nations*, in their burying-places, and with the same ceremony; it is but a poor allay to the reproach and terror of death, to be buried with those that were famous; yet this

s all that is allowed to Egypt. Shall Egypt think to exempt herself from the common fate of proud and imperious nations? No, she must take her lot with them; (v. 19.) "*Whom dost thou pass in beauty?*" Art thou so much fairer than any other nation, that thou shouldest expect therefore to be excused? No, others, as fair as thou, are sunk into the pit; *go down* therefore, and *be thou laid with the uncircumcised*. Thou art like them, and must lie among them; the multitude of Egypt shall all *fall in the midst of them that are slain with the sword*, now that there is a general slaughter made among the nations." Egypt with the rest must drink of the bloody cup, and therefore she is *delivered to the sword*, to the sword of war; (but, in God's hand, the sword of justice,) is delivered to be publicly executed. *Draw her and all her multitude*; either draw them as the dead bodies of great men are drawn in honour to the grave, in a hearse; or, as malefactors are drawn in disgrace to the place of execution, on a sledge; *draw them* to the pit, and let them be made a spectacle to the world.

II. This corpse of a kingdom is *bid welcome to the grave*, and Pharaoh is made free of the congregation of the dead, and admitted into their regions, not without some pomp and ceremony, as the surprising fall of the king of Babylon is illustrated, *Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming*, and to introduce thee into those mansions of darkness, Isa. xiv. 9, &c. so here, (v. 21.) *They shall speak to him out of the midst of hell*, as it were congratulating his arrival, and calling him to join with them, in acknowledging that which neither he nor they would be brought to own when they were in their pomp and pride, that it is in vain to think of contesting with God, and none ever hardened their hearts against him, and prospered. They shall say to him, and to him that pretended to help him, Where are you now? What have you brought your attempts to at last?

Divers nations are here mentioned as gone down to the grave before Egypt, that are ready to give her a scornful reception, and upbraid her with coming to them at last: these nations here spoken of, probably, were such as had been of late years ruined and wasted by the king of Babylon, and their princes cut off; let Egypt know that she has *neighbour's fare*. When she goes to the grave, she does but *migrate ad plures*—migrate to the majority; there are innumerable before her. But it is observable that though Judah and Jerusalem were just about this time, or a little before, utterly ruined and laid waste, yet they are not mentioned here among the nations that welcome Egypt to the pit; for though they suffered the same things that these nations suffered, and by the same hand, yet the kind intentions of their affliction, and its happy issue at last, and the mercy God had yet in reserve for them, altered the property of it; it was not to them a *going down to the pit*, as it was to the heathen; they were not *smitten as others were*, nor *slain according to the slaughter of other nations*, Isa. xxvii. 7. But let us see who they are, that are *gone to the grave* before Egypt, that *lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword*, with whom she must now take up her lodging.

1. There lie the Assyrian empire, and all the princes and mighty men of that monarchy; (v. 22.) *Assur is there, and all her company*; all the countries that were tributaries to, and had dependence upon, that crown. That mighty potentate, who used to lie in state, with his guards and grandees about him, now lies in obscurity, with his *graves about him*, and his soldiers in them, unable any longer to do him service or honour; they are *all of them slain; fallen by the sword*; the number of their months was *cut off in the midst*, and, being

*bloody and deceitful men*, they were not suffered to live out half their days. Their graves were set in the sides of the pit, all in a row, like beds in a common chamber, v. 23. All their company is such, as were *slain, fallen by the sword*; a vast congregation of such who had caused terror in the land of the living; but as the death of those to whom they were a terror put an end to their fears, (in the grave the prisoners rest together, and hear not the voice of the oppressor, Job iii. 18.) so the death of these mighty men puts an end to their terrors; who is afraid of a dead lion? Note, Death will be a king of terrors to those who, instead of making themselves blessings, made themselves terrors, in their generation.

2. There lies the kingdom of Persia, which, perhaps, within the memory of man at that time, had been wasted and brought down; *There is Elam and all her multitude*, the king of Elam and his numerous armies, v. 24, 25. They also had caused their terror in the land of the living, had made a fearful noise and bluster among the nations in their day. But Elam has now a grave by herself, and the graves of the common people round about her, *fallen by the sword*; she has her bed in the midst of the slain, that went down *uncircumcised, unsanctified, unholy*, and not in covenant with God. They have borne their shame with them that go down to the pit; they are fallen under the common disgrace and mortification of mankind, that they die and are buried; nay, they die under particular marks of ignominy, which God and man put upon them. Note, They who cause their terror shall, sooner or later, bear their shame, and be made a terror to themselves. The king of Elam is *put in the midst of them that are slain*. All the honour he can now pretend to is, to be buried in the chief sepulchre.

3. There lies the Scythian power, which, about this time, was busy in the world. Meshech and Tubal, those barbarous northern nations, had lately made a descent upon the Medes, and caused their terror among them, lived among them upon free quarter for some years, making every thing their own that they could lay their hands on; but, at length, Cyaxares, king of the Medes, drew them by a wile into his power, cut off abundance of them, and obliged them to quit his country, v. 26. There lie Meshech and Tubal, and all their multitude; there is a burying-place for them, with their chief commander in the midst of them, *all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword*. These Scythians, dying ingloriously as they lived, are not laid, as the other nations spoken of before, in the bed of honour; (v. 27.) *They shall not lie with the mighty*, shall not be buried in state, as those are, even by consent of the enemy, that are slain in the field of battle, that *go down to their graves with their weapons of war* carried before the hearse, or trailed after it, that have particularly their swords laid under their heads, as if they could sleep the sweeter in the grave when they laid their heads on such a pillow; these Scythians are not buried with these marks of honour, but *their iniquities shall be upon their sons*; they shall, for their iniquity, be left unburied; though they were the terror even of the mighty in the land of the living.

4. There lies the kingdom of Edom, which had flourished long, but, about this time, at least before the destruction of Egypt, was made quite desolate, as was foretold, ch. xxv. 13. Among the sepulchres of the nations, there is Edom, v. 29. There lie, not dignified with monuments or inscriptions, but mingled with common dust, *her kings and all her princes*, her wise statesmen, (which Edom was famous for,) and her brave soldiers; these *with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword*; their might could not prevent it, nay, their might helped to procure it, for that both encouraged them

to engage in war, and incensed their neighbours against them, who thought it necessary to curb their growing greatness. A deal of pains they took to ruin themselves, as many do, who, *with their might*, with all their might, are *laid by them that were slain with the sword*. The Edomites retained circumcision, being of the seed of Abraham. But that shall stand them in no stead, they shall *lie with the uncircumcised*.

5. There lie the *princes of the north, and all the Zidonians*. These were as well acquainted with maritime affairs as the Egyptians were, who relied much upon that part of their strength, but they are *gone down with the slain*, (v. 30.) down to the pit. Now they are *ashamed of their might*, ashamed to think how much they boasted of it, and trusted to it; and, as the *Edomites with their might*, so these *with their terror*, are laid with them that are *slain by the sword*, and are forced to take their lot with them. They *bear their shame with them that go down to the pit*, die in as much disgrace as those that are cut off by the hand of public justice.

Lastly, All this is applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who have no reason to flatter themselves with hopes of tranquillity, when they see how the wisest, and wealthiest, and strongest of their neighbours have been laid waste; (v. 28.) "*Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised*; when God is pulling down the unhumbléd and unreformed nations, thou must expect to come down with them." (1.) It will be some extenuation of the miseries of Egypt, to observe that it has been the case of so many great and mighty nations before; (v. 31.) *Pharaoh shall see them, and be comforted*; it will be some ease to his mind, that he is not the first king that has been slain in battle; his not the first army that has been routed; his not the first kingdom that has been made desolate. Mr. Greenhill observes here, "The comfort which wicked ones have after death, is poor comfort, not real, but imaginary." They will find little satisfaction in having so many fellow-sufferers; the rich man in hell dreaded it. It is only in point of honour that Pharaoh can see, and be comforted. (2.) But nothing will be an exemption from these miseries; for (v. 32.) *I have caused my terror in the land of the living*. Great men have caused their terror, have studied how to make every body fear them, *Oderint dum metuant—Let them hate, so that they do but fear*. But now the great God has caused his terror in the land of the living; and therefore he laughs at theirs, because he sees that *his day is coming*, Ps. xxxvii. 13. In this day of terror, Pharaoh and all his multitude shall be *laid with them that are slain by the sword*.

The view which this prophecy gives us of ruined states, may show us something. [1.] Of this *present world*, and the empire of death in it. Come, and see the calamitous state of human life; see what a *dying world* this is: the *strong die*, the *mighty die*, Pharaoh and all his multitude. See what a *killing world* this is; They are all *slain with the sword*. As if men did not die fast enough of themselves, men are ingenious at finding out ways to destroy one another. It is not only a great pit, but a great cock-pit. [2.] Of the *other world*; though it is the destruction of nations as such, that perhaps is principally intended here, yet here is a plain allusion to the final and everlasting ruin of impenitent sinners, of those that are *uncircumcised in heart*; they are *slain by the sword of divine justice*; their *iniquity is upon them*, and with it they *bear their shame*. Those, Christ's enemies that would not have him to reign over them, *shall be brought forth and slain before him*; though they be as ponpous, though they be as numerous, as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

The prophet is now come off his *circuit*, which he went as judge, in God's name, to try and pass sentence upon the neighbouring nations, and, having finished with them, and read them all their doom, in the eight chapters foregoing, he now returns to the children of his people, and receives further instructions what to say to them. I. He must let them know what office he was in among them as a prophet; that he was a watchman, and had received a charge concerning them, for which he was accountable, v. 1..9. The substance of this we had before, ch. iii. 17, &c. II. He must let them know upon what terms they stand with God, that they were upon their trial, upon their good behaviour; that if a wicked man repent he shall not perish; but that if a righteous man apostatize he shall perish, v. 10..20. III. Here is a particular message sent to those who yet remained in the land of Israel, and (which is very strange) grew secure there, and confident that they should take root there again, to tell them that their hopes would fail them, because they persisted in their sins, v. 21..29. IV. Here is a rebuke to those who personally attended Ezekiel's ministry, but were not sincere in their professions of devotion, v. 30..33.

1. **A** GAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: 3. If, when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; 4. Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him: but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. 6. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. 7. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. 8. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 9. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

The prophet had been, by express order from God, taken off from prophesying to the Jews, just then when the news came that Jerusalem was invested, and close siege laid to it, ch. xxiv. 27. But now that Jerusalem is taken, two years after, he is appointed again to direct his speech to them; and here his commission is renewed. If God had abandoned them quite, he would not have sent prophets to them; nor if he had not had mercy in store for them, would he have showed them such things as these. In these verses we have,

1. The office of a watchman laid down, the trust reposed in him, the charge given him, and the conditions adjusted between him and those that employ him, v. 2.—6.

1. It is supposed to be a public danger, that gives occasion for the appointing of a watchman—when *God brings the sword upon a land*, v. 2. The sword of war, whenever it comes upon a land, is of God's bringing; it is the *sword of the Lord*, of his justice, how unjustly soever men draw it. At such a time, when a country is in fear of a foreign invasion, that they may be informed of all the motions of the enemy, may not be surprised with an attack, but may have early notice of it, in order to their being at their arms, and in readiness to give the invader a warm reception, they *set a man of their coasts*, some likely person, that lives upon the borders of their country, where the threatened danger is expected, and is therefore well acquainted with all the avenues of it, and make him their *watchman*. Thus wise are the children of this world in their generation. Note, One man may be of public service to a whole country. Princes and statesmen are the *watchmen* of a kingdom, that are continually to *employ themselves*, and, if occasion be, as watchmen, to *expose themselves*, for the public safety.

2. It is supposed to be a public trust that is lodged in the watchman, and that he is accountable to the public for the discharge of it. His business is, (1.) To discover the approaches and advances of the enemy; and therefore he must not be blind or asleep, for then he cannot *see the sword coming*. (2.) To give notice of them immediately by sound of trumpet, or, as sentinels among us, by the discharge of a gun, as a signal of danger. A *special trust and confidence* is reposed in him by those that *set him* to be their *watchman*, that he will faithfully do these two things; and they venture their lives upon his fidelity. Now, [1.] If he do his part, if he be betimes aware of all the dangers that fall within his cognizance, and give warning of them, he has discharged his trust, and has not only *delivered his soul*, but earned his wages. If the people do not take warning, if they either will not believe the notice he gives them, will not believe the danger to be so great, or so near, as really it is, or will not regard it, and so are surprised by the enemy in their security, it is their own fault; the blame is not to be laid upon the watchman, but their blood is upon their own head. If any person goes presumptuously into the mouth of danger, though he heard the sound of the trumpet, and was told by it where the danger was, and so the *sword comes*, and *takes him away* in his folly, he is *felo de se*—a suicide; foolish man, he has *destroyed himself*. But, [2.] If the watchman do not do his duty; if he might have seen the danger and did not, but was asleep or heedless, or looking another way; or, if he did *see the danger*, (for so the case is put here,) and shifted only for his own safety, and *blew not the trumpet to warn the people*; so that some are surprised and cut off in their iniquity, (v. 6.) cut off suddenly, without having time to cry, *Lord, have mercy upon me*, time to repent and make their peace with God; (which makes the matter much the worse, that the poor creature is *taken away in his iniquity*;) his blood shall be required *at the watchman's hand*; he shall be found guilty of his death, because he did not *give him warning* of his danger. But if the watchman do his part, and the people do theirs, all is well; both he that *gives warning* and he that *takes warning*, have *delivered their soul*.

II. The application of this to the prophet, v. 7.—9.

1. He is a *watchman to the house of Israel*. He had *occasionally* given warning to the nations about,

but to the *house of Israel* he was a watchman *by office*, for they were the *children of the prophets and the covenant*. They did not *set him for a watchman*, as the *people of the land* did, v. 2. (For they were not so wise for their souls, to secure the welfare of them, as they would have been for the protection of their temporal interests.) But God did it for them; he appointed them a *watchman*.

2. His business as a watchman is, to *give warning* to sinners of their misery and danger by reason of sin. This is the word he must *hear from God's mouth*, and *speak to them*. (1.) God has said, *The wicked man shall surely die*; he shall be miserable; unless he repent, he shall be cut off from God, and all comfort and hope in him; shall be cut off from all good. He shall fall, and lie for ever under the wrath of God, which is the death of the soul, as his favour is its life. The righteous God has said it, and will never unsay it, nor can all the world gainsay it, that *the wages of sin is death*. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, not only against wicked nations, speaking ruin to them as nations, but against wicked persons, speaking ruin to them in their personal capacity, their personal interests which pass into the other world, and last to eternity, as national interests do not. (2.) It is the *will of God* that the *wicked man* should be *warned of this*; *warn them from me*; which intimates that there is a possibility of preventing it, else it were a jest to give warning of it; nay, and that God is desirous it should be prevented. Sinners are *therefore* warned of the wrath to come, that they may *flee from it*, Matth. iii. 7. (3.) It is the *work of ministers* to *give him warning*; to say to the wicked, *It shall be ill with thee*, Isa. iii. 11. God says in general, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*. The minister's business is, to apply this to particular persons, and to say, "*O wicked man, thou shalt surely die*, whoever thou art; if thou go on still in thy trespasses, they will inevitably be thy ruin. O adulterer, O robber, O drunkard, O swearer, O sabbath-breaker, *thou shalt surely die*." And he must say this, not in passion, to provoke the sinner, but in compassion, to *warn the wicked from his way*, warn him to *turn from it*, that he may live. This is to be done by the faithful preaching of the word in public, and by personal application to those whose sins are open.

3. If souls perish through his neglect of his duty, he brings guilt upon himself; if the prophet do not warn the wicked of the ruin that is at the end of his wicked way, that *wicked man shall die in his iniquity*; for though the watchman did not do his part, yet the sinner might have taken warning from the written word, from his own conscience, and from God's judgments upon others, by which his mouth shall be stopped, and God will be justified in his destruction. Note, It will not serve impenitent sinners to plead in the great day, that their watchmen did not give them warning, that they were careless and unfaithful; for though they were so, it will be made to appear that *God left not himself without witness*. But he shall not perish alone in his iniquity, the watchman also shall be called to an account; *His blood will I require at thy hand*. The blind leader shall *fill with the blind follower into the ditch*. See what a desire God has of the salvation of sinners, in that he resents it so ill, if those concerned do not what they can to prevent their destruction. And see what a great deal those ministers have to answer for another day, who palliate sin, and flatter sinners in their evil way, and by their wicked lives countenance and harden them in their wickedness, and encourage them to believe that they shall have peace, though they go on.

4. If he do his duty, he may take the comfort of

it, though he do not see the success of it; (v. 9.) "*If thou warn the wicked of his way, if thou tell him faithfully what will be the end thereof, and call him earnestly to turn from it, and he do not turn, but persist in it, he shall die in his iniquity, and the fair warning given him will be an aggravation of his sin and ruin; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*" Note, It is a comfort to ministers, that they may through grace save themselves, though they cannot be instrumental to save so many as they wish of those that hear them.

10. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? 11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 12. Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. 13. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. 14. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; 15. If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. 16. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. 17. Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the LORD is not equal: but, as for them, their way is not equal. 18. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. 19. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. 20. Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

These verses are the substance of what we had before, (ch. xviii. 20, &c.) and they are so full and express a declaration of the terms on which people stand with God, (as the former were of the terms on which ministers stand,) that it is no wonder that they are here repeated, as those were, though we had the substance of them before. Observe here,

I. The cavils of the people against God's proceedings with them. God was now in his providence contending with them, but their uncircumcised hearts were not as yet humbled, for they were industrious to justify themselves, though thereby they reflected on God. Two things they insisted upon, in their reproaches of God, and in both they added iniquity to their sin, and misery to their punishment.

1. They quarrelled with his promises and favours, as having no kindness or sincerity in them, v. 10. God had *set life before them*, but they plead that he had set it *out of their reach*, and therefore did but mock them with the mention of it. The prophet had said, some time ago, (ch. xxiv. 23.) *Ye shall pine away for your iniquities*; with that word he had concluded his threatenings against Judah and Jerusalem; and this they now upbraided him with, as if it had been spoken *absolutely*, to drive them to despair; whereas it was spoken *conditionally*, to bring them to repentance. Thus are the sayings of God's ministers perverted by men of corrupt minds, who are minded to pick quarrels. He puts them in hopes of life and happiness; and herein they would make him contradict himself; "For" (say they) "*if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, as thou hast often told us they are; and if we must, as thou sayest, pine away in them, and wear out a miserable captivity in a fruitless repentance, how shall we then live?*" If this be our doom, there is no remedy. *We die, we perish, we all perish.*" Note, It is very common for those that have been hardened with presumption when they were warned against sin, to sink into despair when they are called to repent, and to conclude there is no hope of life for them.

2. They quarrelled with his threatenings and judgments, as having no justice or equity in them. They said, *The way of the Lord is not equal*, (v. 17, 20.) suggesting that God was partial in his proceedings, and that with him there was respect of persons, and that he was more severe against sin and sinners than there was cause.

II. Here is a satisfactory answer given to both these cavils.

1. Those that *despaired of finding mercy* with God, are here answered with a solemn declaration of God's readiness to show mercy, v. 11. When they spake of *pinning away in their iniquity*, God sends the prophet to them, with all speed, to tell them that though their case was sad, it was not desperate, but there was yet *hope in Israel*. (1.) It is certain that God has no delight in the ruin of sinners, nor does he desire it; if they will destroy themselves, he will glorify himself in it, but he has no pleasure in it, but would rather they should *turn and live*, for his goodness is that attribute of his which is most his glory, which is most his delight. He would rather sinners should turn and live, than go on and die. He has said it, he has sworn it; that by these two immutable things, in both which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation; we have his word and his oath; and since he could *swear by no greater, he swears by himself; As I live*. They questioned whether they should *live*, though they did repent and reform; Yea, says God, as sure as *I live*, true penitents shall live also; for *their life is hid with Christ in God*. (2.) It is certain that God is sincere, and in earnest, in the calls he gives sinners to repent; *Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way*. To repent is to *turn from our evil way*; this God requires sinners to do; this he urges them to do, by repeated pressing instances; *Turn ye, turn ye*. O that they would be prevailed with to turn, to turn quickly, without delay! This he will enable them to do, if they will but *frame their doings to turn to the Lord*,

Hos. v. 4. For he has said, *I will pour out my Spirit unto you*, Prov. i. 23. And in this he will accept of them; for it is not only what he commands, but what he courts them to. (3.) It is certain that if sinners perish in their impenitency, it is owing to themselves; they die, because they will die; and herein they act most absurdly and unreasonably; *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* God would have heard them, and they would not be heard.

2. Those that despaired of finding justice with God, are here answered with a solemn declaration of the rule of judgment, which God would go by in dealing with the children of men, which carries along with it the evidence of its own equity; he that runs, may read the justice of it. The Jewish nation, as a nation, was now *dead*, it was ruined to all intents and purposes. The prophet must therefore deal with particular persons, and the rule of judging concerning them is much like that concerning a nation, Jer. xviii. 7.—10. If God speak concerning it, to build and to plant; if it do wickedly, he will recall his favours, and leave it to ruin. But if he speak concerning it, to pluck up and destroy, and it repent, he will revoke the sentence, and deliver it. So it is here. In short, the most plausible professors, if they apostatize, shall certainly *perish for ever* in their apostacy from God. And the most notorious sinners, if they *repent*, shall certainly be *happy* for ever in their return to God. This is here repeated again and again, because it ought to be again and again considered, and preached over to our own hearts. This was necessary to be inculcated upon this stupid, senseless people, that said, *The way of the Lord is not equal*; for these rules of judgment are so plainly just, that they need no other confirmation of them than the repetition of them.

(1.) If those that have made a great profession of religion, throw off their profession, quit the good ways of God, and grow loose and carnal, and sensual, and worldly, the profession they made, and all the religious performances with which they had for a great while kept up the credit of their profession, shall stand them in no stead, but they shall certainly *perish in their iniquity*, v. 12, 13, 18.

[1.] God says to the *righteous man*, that he shall *surely live*, v. 13. He says it by his word, by his ministers; he that lives regularly, his own heart tells him, his neighbours tell him, He shall live. Surely such a man as this cannot but be happy. And it is certain, if he proceed and persevere in his righteousness, and if, in order to that, he be upright and sincere in it, if he be really as good as he seems to be, he shall live; he shall continue in the love of God, and be for ever happy in that love.

[2.] Righteous men, who have very good hopes of themselves, and whom others have a very good opinion of, are yet in danger of *turning to iniquity*, by *trusting to their righteousness*. So the case is put here; *If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity*, and come to make a trade of sin; if he not only take a false step, but turn aside into a false way, and persist in it—this may possibly be the case of a righteous man, and it is the effect of his trusting to his own righteousness. Note, Many eminent professors have been ruined by a proud conceitedness of themselves, and confidence in themselves. He trusts to the merit of his own righteousness, and thinks he has already made God so much his Debtor, that now he may venture to *commit iniquity*, for he has righteousness enough in stock to make amends for it; he fancies that whatever evil deeds he may do hereafter, he can be in no danger from them, having so many good deeds beforehand to balance them. Or, He trusts to the strength of his own righteousness; thinks himself now so well established in a course of virtue, that he may thrust himself into any temptation, and it cannot overcome

him, and so by presuming on his own sufficiency he is brought to commit iniquity. By making bold on *the confines of sin*, he is drawn at length into the *depths of hell*. This ruined the Pharisees; they *trusted to themselves that they were righteous*, and that their long prayers, and fasting twice in the week, would atone for their devouring widow's houses.

[3.] If righteous men *turn to iniquity*, and return not to their righteousness, they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, and all the righteousness they have formerly done, all their prayers, and all their alms, shall be forgotten; no mention shall be made, no remembrance had, of their good deeds, they shall be overlooked, as if they had never been. *The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him from the wrath of God*, and the curse of the law, *in the day of his transgression*. When he becomes a traitor and a rebel, and takes up arms against his rightful Sovereign, it will not serve for him to plead, in his own defence, that formerly he was a loyal subject, and did many good services to the government: no, *he shall not be able to live*; the remembrance of his former righteousness shall be no satisfaction either to God's justice or his own conscience, *in the day that he sins*, but rather shall, in the estimate of both, highly aggravate the sin and folly of his apostacy. And therefore *for his iniquity that he committed he shall die*, v. 13. And again, (v. 18.) *He shall even die thereby*; and it is owing to himself.

(2.) If those that have lived a wicked life, repent and reform, forsake their wicked ways and become religious, their sins shall be pardoned, and they shall be justified and saved, if they persevere in their reformation.

[1.] God says to the *wicked*, "*Thou shalt surely die*." The way that thou art in leads to destruction. The wages of thy sin is death, and thine iniquity will shortly be thy ruin." It was said to the righteous man, *Thou shalt surely live*, for his encouragement to proceed and persevere in the way of righteousness; but he made an ill use of it, and was emboldened by it to *commit iniquity*. It was said to the wicked man, *Thou shalt surely die*, for warning to him not to persist in his wicked ways; and he makes a good use of it, and is quickened thereby to return to God and duty. Thus, even the threatenings of the word are to some, by the grace of God, a savour of life unto life, while even the promises of the word become to others, by their own corruption, a savour of death unto death. When God says to the wicked man, *Thou shalt surely die, die eternally*, it is to frighten him, not *out of his wits*, but *out of his sins*.

[2.] There is many a wicked man who was hastening apace to his own destruction, who yet is wrought upon by the grace of God to return and repent, and live a holy life. He *turns from his sin*, (v. 14.) and is resolved that he will have no more to do with it; and, as an evidence of his repentance for wrong done, he *restores the pledge* (v. 15.) which he had taken uncharitably from the poor; *he gives again that which he had robbed* and taken unjustly from the rich. Nor does he only *cease to do evil*, but he *learns to do well*; he *does that which is lawful and right*, and makes conscience of his duty both to God and man. A great change! Since, awhile ago, he neither feared God nor regarded man. But many such amazing changes, and blessed ones, have been wrought by the power of divine grace; he that was going on in the paths of death and the destroyer, now walks in the *statutes of life*, in the way of God's commandments, which *has life in it*, (Prov. xii. 28.) and life at the *end of it*, Matth. xix. 17. And in this good way he perseveres, *without committing iniquity*; though not free from remaining infirmity, yet under the dominion of no iniquity.



He repents not of his repentance, nor returns to the commission of those gross sins which he before allowed himself in.

[3.] He that does thus repent and return, shall escape the ruin he was running into, and his former sins shall be no prejudice to his acceptance with God. Let him not pine away in his iniquity, for if he confess and forsake it, he shall find mercy. He shall surely live, he shall not die, v. 15. Again, (v. 16.) *He shall surely live.* Again, (v. 19.) *He has done that which is lawful and right, and he shall live thereby.* But will not his wickedness be remembered against him? No, he shall not be punished for them, v. 12. *As for the wickedness of the wicked, though it was very heinous, yet he shall not fall thereby, in the day that he turns from his wickedness.* Now that it is become his grief, it shall not be his ruin. Now that there is a settled separation between him and sin, there shall be no longer a separation between him and God. Nay, he shall not be so much as *upbraided with them*, v. 16. *None of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him*, either as a clog to his pardon, or an allay to the comfort of it, or any blemish and diminution to the glory that is prepared for him.

Now lay all this together, and then judge whether the way of the Lord be not equal; whether this will not justify God in the destruction of sinners, and glorify him in the salvation of penitents. The conclusion of the whole matter is, (v. 20.) "*O ye house of Israel, though ye are all involved now in the common calamity, yet there shall be a distinction of persons made in the spiritual and eternal state, and I will judge you every one after his ways.*" Though they were sent into captivity by the lump, good fish and bad enclosed in the same net, yet there he will separate between the precious and the vile, and will render to every man according to his works. Therefore God's way is equal and unexceptionable; but as for the children of thy people, God turns them over to the prophet, as he did to Moses; (Exod. xxxii. 7.) "*They are thy people, I can scarcely own them for mine.*" As for them, *their way is unequal*; this way which they have got of quarrelling with God and his prophets, is absurd and unreasonable. In all disputes between God and his creatures, it will certainly be found that he is in the right, and they are in the wrong.

21. And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. 22. Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came, and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning, and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. 23. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. 25. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? 26. Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye

possess the land? 27. Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword; and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured; and they that be in the forts, and in the caves, shall die of the pestilence. 28. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. 29. Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations, which they have committed.

Here we have,

I. The tidings brought to Ezekiel of the burning of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The city was burnt in the eleventh year of the captivity, and the fifth month, Jer. lii. 12, 13. Tidings hereof were brought to the prophet by one that was an eye-witness of the destruction, in the twelfth year, and the tenth month, (v. 21.) which was a year and almost five months after the thing was done; we may well suppose that, there being a constant correspondence, at this time more than ever, kept up between Jerusalem and Babylon, he had heard the news long before. But this was the first time he had an account of it from a refugee, from one who *escaped*, who could be *particular*, and would be *pathetic*, in the narrative of it. And the sign given him was, the coming of such a one to him as had himself narrowly escaped the flames; (ch. xxiv. 26.) *He that escapes in that day, shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears, to hear it more distinctly than ever, from one that could say, Quæque ipse miserrima vidi—These miserable scenes I saw.*

II. The divine impressions and influences he was under, to prepare him for those heavy tidings; (v. 22.) *The hand of the Lord was upon me before he came, and had opened my mouth to speak to the house of Israel what we had in the former part of this chapter; and now he was no more dumb*, he prophesied now with more freedom and boldness, being by the event proved a true prophet, to the confusion of those that contradicted him. All the prophecies from ch. 24. to this chapter, having relation purely to the nations about, it is probable that the prophet, when he received them from the Lord, did not deliver them by word of mouth, but in writing; for he could not say to the Ammonites, *Say unto Tyrus, Say unto Pharaoh*, &c. so and so, but by letters directed to the persons concerned; as Zacharias, when he could not speak, wrote; and herein he was as truly executing his prophetic office as ever. Note, Even silenced ministers may be doing a great deal of good by writing letters and making visits. But now the prophet's mouth is opened, that he may speak to the children of his people. It is probable that he had, during these three years, been continually speaking to them as a friend, putting them in mind of what he had formerly delivered to them, but that he never spake to them as a prophet, by inspiration, till now, when the hand of the Lord came upon him, renewed his commission, gave him fresh instructions, and opened his mouth, furnished him with power to speak to the people as he ought to speak.

III. The particular message he was intrusted with, relating to those Jews that yet remained in the land of Israel, and inhabited the wastes of that land, v. 24. See what work sin had made; the

cities of Israel were now become the *wastes* of Israel, for they lay all in ruins; some few that had escaped the sword and captivity, still continued there, and began to think of re-settling. This was so long after the destruction of Jerusalem, that it was some time before this, that Gedaliah (a modest, humble man) and his friends were slain; but, probably at this time, Johanan, and the *proud men* that joined with him, were at the height, (Jer. xliii. 2.) and before they came to a resolution to go into Egypt, wherein Jeremiah opposed them, it is probable that the project was to establish themselves in the wastes of the land of Israel, in which Ezekiel here opposed them, and probably despatched the message away by the person that brought him the news of Jerusalem's destruction. Or, perhaps, those here prophesied against might be some other party of Jews, that remained in the land, hoped to take root there, and to be sole masters of it, after Johanan and his forces were gone into Egypt.

Now here we have,

1. An account of the *pride* of these remaining Jews, who dwell in the *wastes of the land of Israel*. Though the providence of God concerning them had been very *humbling*, and still was very *threatening*, yet they were intolerably haughty and secure, and *promised* themselves peace. He that brought the news to the prophet, that Jerusalem was smitten, could not tell him (it is likely) what these people said, but God tells him, *They say, "The land is given us for our inheritance, v. 24.* Our partners being gone, it is now all our own by *survivorship*; or, for want of heirs, it comes to us as *occupants*; we shall now be placed alone in the midst of the earth, and have it all to ourselves." This argues great stupidity under the weighty hand of God, and a reigning selfishness, and narrow-spiritedness; they pleased themselves in the ruin of their country as long as they hoped to find their own account of it; cared not though it were *all waste*, so that they might have the sole property; a poor inheritance to be proud of! They have the impudence to compare their case with Abraham's, glorying in this, *We have Abraham to our father.* "Abraham," say they, "*was one, one family, and he inherited the land, and lived many years in the peaceable enjoyment of it; but we are many, many families, more numerous than he, the land is given us for inheritance.*" (1.) They think they can *make out* as good a title from God to this land as Abraham could; "If God gave this land to him, who was but one worshipper of him, as a reward of his service, much more will he give it to us, who are many worshippers of him, as the reward of our service." This speaks the great conceit they had of *their own merits*, as if they were greater than those of Abraham their father, who yet was not *justified by works*. (2.) They think they can make good the possession of this land against the Chaldeans and all other invaders, as well as Abraham could against those that were competitors with him for it; "If he, who was but one, could hold it, much more shall we, who are many, and have many more at command than his three hundred trained servants." This speaks the confidence they had in *their own might*; they had got possession, and were resolved to keep it.

2. A check to this pride. Since God's providences did neither humble them nor terrify them, he sends them a message sufficient to do both.

(1.) To humble them, he tells them of the *wickedness* they still persisted in, which rendered them utterly unworthy to possess this land, so that they could not expect God should give it them. They had been followed with one judgment after another, but they had not profited by those means of grace so as might be expected; they were still unreformed,

and how could they expect that they should possess the land? "*Shall ye possess the land? What! such wicked people as ye are? How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land?*" Jer. iii. 19. Surely you never reflect upon yourselves, else you would rather wonder that you are in the land of the living than expect to possess this land. For do you not know how bad you are?" [1.] "You make no conscience of forbidden fruit, forbidden food; *you eat with the blood;*" directly contrary to one of the precepts given to Noah and his sons, then when God gave them possession of the earth, Gen. ix. 4. [2.] "Idolatry, that covenant-breaking sin, that sin which the *jealous God* has been in a particular manner provoked by to lay your country waste, is still the sin that most easily besets you, and which you have a strong inclination to. *You lift up your eyes toward your idols,* which is a sign that though perhaps you do not how your knee to them so much as you have done, yet you set your hearts upon them, and hanker after them." [3.] "You are as fierce and cruel and barbarous as ever; *you shed blood, innocent blood.*" [4.] "You confide in your own strength, your own arm, your own bow, and have no dependence on, or regard to, God and his providence; *you stand upon your sword,* (v. 26.) you think to carry all before you, and make all your own, by force of arms." How can they expect the inheritance of Isaac, (as these did,) who are of Ishmael's disposition, that had *his hand against every man*, (Gen. xvi. 12.) and Esau's resolution to *live by his sword?* Gen. xxvii. 40. We met with those, (ch. xxxii. 27.) who, when they died, thought they could not lie easy under ground, unless they had *their swords under their heads*. Here we meet with those who, while they live, think they cannot stand firm above ground, unless they have *their swords under their feet*, as if swords were both the softest pillows, and the strongest pillars; though it was sin that first drew the sword. But, blessed be God, there are those who know better, that *stand upon* the support of the divine power and promise, and lay their heads in the bosom of divine love, *not trusting in their own swords*, Ps. xlv. 3. [5.] "You are guilty of all manner of *abominations*, and, particularly, *you defile every one his neighbour's wife*, which is an abomination of the first magnitude; *and shall ye possess the land? What! such vile miscreants as you?*" Note, They cannot expect to possess the land, nor to enjoy any true comfort or happiness here or hereafter, who live in *rebellion against the Lord*.

(2.) To terrify them, he tells them of the further judgments God had in store for them, which should make them utterly unable to possess this land, so that they could not stand it out against the enemy. Do they say that they shall possess the land? No, God has said it, he has sworn it, *As I live, saith the Lord.* Though he has sworn that he delights not in the death of sinners, yet he has sworn also that those who persist in impenitency and unbelief, *shall not enter into his rest.* [1.] They that are in the cities, here called the *wastes*, shall *fall by the sword*, either by the sword of the Chaldeans, who come to avenge the murder of Gedaliah, or by one another's swords, in their intestine broils. [2.] They that are in the open field, shall be *devoured by wild beasts*, which swarmed of course in the country, when it was dispeopled, and there were none to master them, and keep them under, Exod. xxiii. 29. When the army of the enemy had quitted the country, still there was no safety in it. *Noisome beasts* was one of the *four sore judgments*, ch. xiv. 15. [3.] They that are in the *forts* and in the *caves*, that think themselves safe in artificial or natural fastnesses, because men's eyes cannot discover

them, or men's darts reach them, there the arrows of the Almighty shall find them out; they shall *die of the pestilence*. [4.] The whole land, even the land of Israel, that had been the glory of all lands, shall be *most desolate*, v. 28. *It shall be desolation, desolation*, all over as desolate as desolation itself can make it. The *mountains of Israel*, the fruitful mountains, Zion itself, the holy mountain not excepted, *shall be desolate*, the roads unfrequented, the houses uninhabited, that *none shall pass through*; as it was threatened, (Deut. xxviii. 62.) *Ye shall be left few in number*. [5.] *The pomf of her strength*, whatever she glories in as her *pomf*, and trusts to as her *strength*, shall be made to cease. [6.] The cause of all this was very bad; it is for *all their abominations which they have committed*. It is sin that does all this mischief, that makes nations desolate; and therefore we ought to call it an *abomination*. [7.] Yet the effect of all this will be very good; *Then shall they know that I am the Lord*, am their Lord, and shall return to their allegiance, *when I have made the land most desolate*. Those are untractable, unteachable indeed, that are not made to know their dependence upon God, when all their creature-comforts fail them, and are made desolate.

30. Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. 31. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as my people*, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. 32. And, lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. 33. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

The foregoing verses spake conviction to the Jews who remained in the land of Israel, who were monuments of sparing mercy, and yet returned not to the Lord; in these verses, those are reprov'd who were now in captivity in Babylon, under divine rebukes, and yet were not reformed by them. They are not indeed charged with the same gross enormities that the others are charged with: they made some show of religion and devotion; but their hearts were not right with God. The thing they are here accused of is, *mocking the messengers of the Lord*; one of their measure-filling sins, which brought this ruin upon them, and yet they were not cured of it.

Two ways they mocked the prophet Ezekiel;

I. *By invidious, ill-natured reflections upon him*, privately among themselves, endeavouring by all means possible to render him despicable. The prophet did not know it, but charitably thought that they who spake so well to him to his face, with so much seeming respect and deference, would surely not speak ill of him behind his back. But God comes, and tells him, *The children of thy people are still talking against thee*, (v. 30.) or *talking of thee*, no good, I doubt. Note, Public persons are a common theme or subject of discourse; every one takes a liberty to censure them at pleasure; and faithful ministers know not how much ill is said of them

every day; it is well that they do not; for if they did, it might prove a discouragement to them in their work, not to be easily got over. But God takes notice of all that is said against his ministers; not only what is decreed against them, or sworn against them, not only what is written against them, or spoken with solemnity and deliberation, but of what is *said* against them in common talk, among neighbours when they meet in the evening, *by the walls and in the doors of their houses*; where whatever freedom of speech they use, if they reproach and slander any of God's ministers, God will reckon with them for it; his prophets shall not be made the song of the drunkards always. They had no crime to lay to the prophet's charge, but they loved to talk of him in a careless, scornful, bantering way; they said jokingly, "*Come, and let us hear what is the word that comes forth from the Lord*"; perhaps it will be something new, and will entertain us, and furnish us with matter of discourse." Note, Those have arrived at a great pitch of profaneness, who can make so great a privilege, and so great a duty, as the preaching and hearing of the word of God, a matter of sport and ridicule; yea, though it be not done publicly, but in private conversation among themselves. Serious things should be spoken seriously.

II. *By dissembling with him* in their attendance upon his ministry. Hypocrites mock God, and mock his prophets. But their hypocrisy is *often* before God, and the day is coming when, as here, it *will be laid open*. Observe here,

1. The plausible profession which these people made, and the speciousness of their pretensions. They are like those (Matth. xv. 8.) who *draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him*. (1.) They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the means of grace; *They come unto thee as the people come*. In Babylon they had no temple or synagogue, but they went to the prophet's house, (ch. viii. 1.) and there, it is probable, they spent their *new moons and their sabbaths* in religious exercises, 2 Kings iv. 23. When the prophet was bound, the word of the Lord was not bound; and the people, when they had not the help for their souls that they wished for, were thankful for what they had; it was a reviving in their bondage. Now these hypocrites came, *according to the coming of the people*, as duly and as early as any of the prophet's hearers. Their being said to come *as the people came*, seems to intimate that the reason why they came was, because *other people came*; they did not come out of conscience toward God, but only for company, for fashion-sake, and because it was now the custom of their countrymen. Note, Those that have no inward principle of love to God's ordinances, may yet be found much in the external observation of them. Cain brought his sacrifice as well as Abel; and the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray as well as the publican. (2.) They behaved themselves very decently and reverently in the public assembly; there were none of them whispering or laughing, or gazing about them or sleeping. *But they sit before thee as my people*, with all the shows of gravity, and serenity, and composure of mind. They sit out the time, without weariness, or wishing the sermon done. (3.) They were very attentive to the word preached; "*They are not thinking of something else, but they hear thy words, and take notice of what thou sayest*." (4.) They pretended to have a great kindness and respect for the prophet. Though, behind his back, they could not give him a good word, yet, to his face, *they shewed much love* to him and his doctrine; they pretended to have a great concern lest he should spend himself too much in preaching, or expose himself to the Chal-

deans; for they would be thought to be some of his best friends and well-wishers. (5.) They took a great deal of pleasure in the word; they *delighted to know God's word*, Isa. xlviii. 2. *Herod heard John Baptist gladly*, Mark vi. 20. *Thou art unto them as a very lovely song*. Ezekiel's matter was surprising, his language fine, his expressions elegant, his similitudes apt, his voice melodious, and his delivery graceful; so that they could sit with as much pleasure to hear him preach, as (if I may speak in the language of our times) to see a play or an opera, or to hear a concert of music. Ezekiel was to them as one that had a *pleasant voice*, and could sing well, or *play well on an instrument*. Note, Men may have their fancies pleased by the word, and yet not have their consciences touched, nor their hearts changed; the *itching ear gratified*, and yet not the corrupt nature sanctified.

2. The hypocrisy of these professions and pretensions; it is all a sham, it is all a jest. (1.) They have no cordial affection for the word of God. While they *show much love*, it is only *with the mouth*, from the teeth outward, but *their heart goes after their covetousness*, they are as much set upon the world as ever, as much in love and league with it as ever. Hearing the word is only their diversion and recreation, a pretty amusement now and then for an hour or two. But still their main business is with their farm and merchandise, the bent and bias of their souls are toward them, and their *inward thoughts* are employed in projects about them. Note, Covetousness is the ruining sin of multitudes that make a great profession of religion; it is the love of the world that secretly eats the love of God out of their hearts: *the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are the thorns that choke the seed*, and choke the soul too. And those neither please God nor profit themselves, who, when they are hearing the word of God, are musing upon their worldly affairs. God has his eye on the hearts that do so. (2.) They yield no subjection to it. They *hear thy words*, but it is only a hearing that they *give thee*, for they *will not do them*, v. 31. And again, (v. 32.) they *do them not*. They will not be persuaded by all the prophet can say, either by authority or argument, to cross themselves in any instance, to part with any one beloved sin, or apply themselves to any one duty that is against the grain to flesh and blood. Note, There are many who take pleasure in hearing the word, but make no conscience of doing it; and so they build upon the sand, and deceive themselves.

Lastly, Let us see what will be in the end hereof; *Shall their unbelief and carelessness make the word of God of no effect?* By no means. (1.) God will confirm the prophet's word, though they *contemn it*, and make light of it, v. 33. What he says *will come to pass*, and not one jot or one tittle shall fall to the ground. Note, The curses of the law, though they may be bantered by profane wits, cannot be baffled. (2.) They themselves shall rue their folly when it is too late. When it comes to pass, they *shall know*, shall know to their cost, know to their confusion, that *a prophet has been among them*, though they made no more of him than as one that had a *pleasant voice*. Note, Those who will not consider that a prophet is *among them*, and who improve not the day of their visitation while it is continued, will be made to remember that a prophet *has been among them*, when the things that belong to their peace are *hid from their eyes*. The day is coming when vain and worldly men will have other thoughts of things than now they have, and will feel a weight in that which they made light of. They shall know that *a prophet has been among them*, when they see the event exactly answer the prediction, and the prophet himself shall

be a witness against them, that they had fair warning given them, but would not take it. When Ezekiel is gone, whom now they *speak against*, and *there is no more any prophet*, nor any to show them how long, then they will remember that once they had a prophet, but knew not how to use him well. Note, Those who will not know the worth of mercies by the improvement of them, will justly be made to know the worth of them by the want of them; as they who should desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, which now they slighted, and might not see it.

## CHAP. XXXIV.

The iniquities and calamities of God's Israel had been largely and pathetically lamented before, in this book. Now, in this chapter, the *shepherds of Israel*, their rulers both in church and state, are called to an account, as having been very much accessory to the sin and ruin of Israel, by their neglecting to do the duty of their place. Here is, I. A high charge exhibited against them for their negligence, their unskilfulness and unfaithfulness in the management of public affairs, (v. 1..6.) and again, v. 8. II. Their discharge from their trust, for their insufficiency and treachery, v. 7..10. III. A gracious promise that God would take care of his flock, though they did not, and that it should not always suffer as it had done, by their mal-administrations, v. 11..16. IV. Another charge exhibited against those of the flock that were fat and strong, for the injuries they did to those that were weak and feeble, v. 17..22. V. Another promise, that God would in the fulness of time send the Messiah, to be the great and good Shepherd of the sheep, who should redress all grievances, and set every thing to rights with the flock, v. 23..31.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, *Wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves!* should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3. Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: *but ye feed not the flock.* 4. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up *that which was broken*, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost, but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. 5. And they were scattered, because *there is no shepherd*: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek *after them*.

The prophecy of this chapter is not dated, nor any of those that follow it, till chap. xl. It is most probable that it was delivered after the completing of Jerusalem's destruction, when it would be very seasonable to inquire into the causes of it.

I. The prophet is ordered to *prophesy against the shepherds of Israel*—the princes and magistrates, the priests and Levites, the great Sanhedrim or council of state, or whoever they were that had the direction of public affairs, in a higher or lower sphere; the kings especially, for there were two of them now captives in Babylon, who, as well as the people, must have their transgressions showed them,

that they might repent, as Manasseh in his captivity. God has something to say to the *shepherds*, for they are but under shepherds, accountable to him who is the great *Shepherd of Israel*, Ps. lxxx. 1. And that which he says is, *Wo to the shepherds of Israel!* Though they are *shepherds*, and *shepherds* of Israel, yet he must not spare them, must not flatter them. Note, If men's dignity and power do not, as they ought, keep them from sin, they will not serve to exempt them from reproof, to excuse their repentance, or to secure them from the judgments of God if they do not repent. We had a *wo to the pastors*, Jer. xxiii. 1. God will in a particular manner reckon with them if they be false to their trust.

11. He is here directed what to charge the shepherds with, in God's name, as the ground of God's controversy with them; for it is not a causeless quarrel. Two things they are charged with,

1. That all their care was to advance and enrich themselves, and to make themselves great. Their business was to take care of those that were committed to their charge; *Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?* No doubt they should, they betray their trust if they do not. Not that they are to put the meat into their mouths, but to provide it for them, and bring them to it. But *these* shepherds made this the least of their care, they *fed themselves*, contrived every thing to gratify and indulge their own appetite, and to make themselves rich and great, fat and easy. They made sure of the profits of their places, they did *eat the fat, the cream*; (so some;) for *he that feeds a flock eats of the milk of it*; (1 Cor. ix. 7.) and they made sure of the best of the milk. They made sure of the fleece, and *clothed themselves with the wool*, getting into their hands as much as they could of the estates of their subjects, yea, and *killed them that were well fed*, that what they had might be fed upon, as Naboth was put to death for his vineyard. Note, There is a *wo* to those who are in public trusts, but consult only their own private interest, and are more inquisitive about the benefice than about the office, what money is to be got than what good is to be done. It is an old complaint, *All seek their own, and too many more than their own*.

2. That they took no care for the benefit and welfare of those that were committed to their charge; *Ye feed not the flock*. They neither knew how to do it, so ignorant were they, nor would they take any pains to do it, so *lazy and slothful* were they; nay, they never desired or designed it, so *treacherous and unfaithful* were they.

(1.) They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were *distempered*, did not *strengthen* them, or *heal* them, or *bind* them up, v. 4. When any of the flock were sick or hurt, worried or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died; they never looked after them. The princes and judges took no care to right those that suffered wrong, or to shelter injured innocence. They took no care of the poor, to see them provided for; they might starve, for them. The priests took no care to instruct the ignorant, to rectify the mistakes of those that were in error, to warn the unruly, or to comfort the feeble-minded. The ministers of state took no care to check the growing distempers of the kingdom, which threatened the vitals of it. Things were amiss, and out of course, every where, and nothing was done to rectify them.

(2.) They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were *dispersed*, that were *driven away* by the enemies that invaded the country, and were forced to seek for shelter where they could find a place; or that *wandered* of choice upon the *mountains and hills*, (v. 6.) where they were exposed to the beasts of prey, and became *meat to them*, v. 5.

Every one is ready to seize a waif and stray. Some went abroad and begged, some went abroad and traded, and thus the country became thin of inhabitants, and was weakened and impoverished, and wanted hands both in the fields of corn and in the fields of battle, both in harvest and in war; *My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth*, v. 6. And they were never inquired after, were never encouraged to return to their own country; *None did seek or search after them*. Nay, with *force and cruelty they ruled them*, which drove more away, and discouraged those that were driven away from all thoughts of returning. Their case is bad, who have reason to expect better treatment among strangers than in their own country. It may be meant of those of the flock that went astray from God and their duty; and the priests, that should have taught the good knowledge of the Lord, used no means to convince and reclaim them, so that they became an easy prey to seducers. Thus were they *scattered, because there was no shepherd*, v. 5. There were those that called themselves *shepherds*, but really they were not. Note, Those that do not do the work of shepherds, are unworthy of the name. And if those that undertake to be shepherds, are *foolish shepherds*, (Zech. xi. 15.) if they are proud and above their business, idle and do not love their business, or faithless and unconcerned about it, the case of the flock is as bad as if it were without a shepherd. Better no shepherd than such shepherds. Christ complains that his flock were *as sheep having no shepherd*, when yet the Scribes and Pharisees sat in *Moses's seat*, Matth. ix. 36. It is ill with the patient when his physician is his worst disease; ill with the flock when the shepherds drive them away, and disperse them, *by ruling them with force*.

7. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; 8. *As I live*, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock: 9. Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; 10. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, *I am* against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more: for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. 11. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, *I, even I*, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. 12. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep *that are scattered*; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall

their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. 16. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Upon reading the foregoing articles of impeachment drawn up, in God's name, against the shepherds of Israel, we cannot but look upon the shepherds with a *just indignation*, and upon the flock with a *tender compassion*. God, by the prophet, here expresses both in a high degree; and the shepherds are called upon (v. 7, 9.) to *hear the word of the Lord*, to hear this word. Let them *hear* how little he regards them who made much of themselves, and how much he regards the flock which they made nothing of; both will be humbling to them. Those that will not *hear the word of the Lord* giving them their direction, shall be made to hear the word of the Lord reading them their doom. Now see here,

1. How much *displeased* God is at the shepherds. Their crimes are repeated, v. 8. God's flock became a *prey* to the deceivers first that drew them to idolatry, and then to the destroyers that carried them into captivity; and these shepherds took no care to prevent either the one or the other, but were as if there had been no *shepherds*; and therefore God says it, (v. 10.) and confirms it with an oath; (v. 8.) *I am against the shepherds*. They had a commission from God to feed the flock, and made use of his name in what they did, expecting he would stand by them; "No," says God, "so far from that, *I am against them*." Note, It is not our having the name and authority of shepherds, that will engage God for us, if we do not the work enjoined us, and be not faithful to the trust reposed in us. God is *against them*, and they shall know it; for, 1. They shall be made to account for the manner in which they have discharged their trust; "*I will require my flock at their hands*, and charge it upon them, that so many of them are missing." Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for in the judgment-day, who take upon them the care of souls, and yet take no care of them. Ministers must *watch* and work, as those that *must give account*, Heb. xiii. 17. 2. They shall be deprived *officio et beneficio*—both of the work and of the wages. *They shall cease from feeding the flock*, from pretending to feed it. Note, It is just with God to take out of men's hands that *power* which they have *abused*, and that *trust* which they have *betrayed*. But if this were all their punishment, they could bear it well enough, therefore it is added, "*Neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more*, for *I will deliver my flock from their mouth*, which, instead of protecting, they had made a prey of." Note, Those that are enriching themselves with the spoils of the public, cannot expect that they shall always be suffered to do so. Nor will God always permit his people to be trampled upon by those that should support them, but will find a time to deliver them from the shepherds their false friends, as well as from the lions their open enemies.

II. How much *concerned* God is for the flock; he speaks as if he were the more concerned for them, because he saw them thus neglected, for *with him the fatherless finds mercy*. Precious promises are

made here upon the occasion, which were to have their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, and their re-establishment in their own land. Let the shepherds *hear this word of the Lord*, and know that they have no part or lot in the matter. But let the poor sheep hear it, and take the comfort of it. Note, Though magistrates and ministers fail in doing their part, for the good of the church, yet God will not fail in doing his; he will take the flock into his own hand, rather than the church shall come short of any kindness he has designed for it. The under shepherds may prove careless, but the Chief Shepherd *neither slumbers nor sleeps*. They may be false, but God *abides faithful*.

1. God will *gather* his sheep together that were *scattered*, and bring them back to the fold that had *wandered* from it; "*I, even I*, who alone can do it, will do it, and will have all the glory of it. *I will both search my sheep, and find them out*, (v. 11.) as a *shepherd* does, (v. 12.) and bring them back as he does the stray sheep, upon his shoulders, *from all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day*." There are cloudy and dark days, windy and stormy ones, which scatter God's sheep; which send them hither and thither, to divers and distant places, in quest of secrecy and safety. But, (1.) Wherever they are, the eye of God will *find them out*; for his eyes run to and fro through the earth, in favour of them. *I will seek out my sheep*; and not one that belongs to the fold, though driven ever so far off, shall be lost. The Lord knows them that are his; he *knows their work*, and *where they dwell*, (Rev. ii. 13.) and where they are hidden. (2.) When his time is come, his arms will *fetch them home*; (v. 13.) *I will bring them out from the people*. God will both incline their hearts to come by his grace, and will by his providence open a door for them, and remove every difficulty that lies in the way. They shall not return one by one, clandestinely stealing away, but they shall return in a body; "*I will gather them from the countries* into which they are dispersed; not only the most considerable families of them, but every particular person, v. 16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away*." This was done when so many thousand Jews returned triumphantly out of Babylon, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and others. When those that have gone astray from God into the paths of sin, are brought back by repentance, when those that erred come to the acknowledgment of the truth, when God's *outcasts* are gathered and restored, and religious assemblies, that were dispersed, rally again, upon the ceasing of persecution, and when the churches have rest and liberty, then this promise has a further accomplishment.

2. God will *feed* his people as the *sheep of his pasture*, that had been famished. God will bring the returning captives safe to their own land, (v. 13.) *will feed them upon the mountains of Israel*, and that is a *good pasture*, and a *fat pasture*; (v. 14.) there shall their *feeding* be; and there shall be *their fold*; and it is a *good fold*. There God will not only *feed them*, but *cause them to lie down*; (v. 15.) which denotes a *comfortable rest*, after they had tired themselves with their wanderings; and a *constant, continuing residence*; they shall not be driven out again from these green pastures, as they have been, nor shall they be disturbed, but shall lie down in a sweet repose, and there shall be *none to make them afraid*. Ps. xxiii. 2. *He makes me to lie down in green pastures*. Compare this with the like promise, (Jer. xxiii. 3, 4.) when God restored them not only to the milk and honey of their own land, to the enjoyment of its fruits, but to the privileges of his sanctuary on mount Zion, the chief of the moun



tains of Israel; when they had an altar and a temple again, and the benefit of a settled priesthood, then they were *fed in a good pasture*.

3. He will succour those that are hurt, will *bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick*, will comfort those that *mourn in Zion* and with *Zion*. If ministers, who should speak peace to those who are of a sorrowful spirit, neglect their duty, yet the Holy Ghost the Comforter will be faithful to his office. But, as it follows, the *fat and the strong shall be destroyed*. He that has rest for disquieted saints, has terror to speak to presumptuous sinners. *As every valley shall be filled, so every mountain and hill shall be brought low*, Luke iii. 5.

17. And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats. 18. *Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?* 19. And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. 20. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God unto them, Behold I, *even I*, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. 21. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; 22. Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. 23. And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even my servant David*; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. 25. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. 26. And I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season: there shall be showers of blessing. 27. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. 28. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beasts of the land devour them: but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. 29. And I will raise up for them a Plant of renown, and they shall be no more

consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. 30. Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God *am* with them, and that they, *even* the house of Israel, *are* my people, saith the Lord God. 31. And ye, my flock of my pasture, *are* men, and I *am* your God, saith the Lord God.

The prophet has no more to say to the shepherds, but he has now a message to deliver to the *flock*. God had ordered him to speak tenderly to them, and to assure them of the mercy he had in store for them. But here he is ordered to make a difference between some and others of them, to separate between the precious and the vile, and then to give them a promise of the Messiah, by whom this distinction should be effectually made, partly at his first coming, for, *for judgment he came into this world*, (John xi. 39.) *to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away*, Luke i. 53. But this distinction shall be completely made at his second coming, when he shall, as it is here said, *judge between cattle and cattle, as a shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats, and shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left*, (Matth. xxv. 32, 33.) which seems to have reference to this. We have here,

I. Conviction spoken to those of the flock that were *fat and strong*, the *rams and the he-goats*, v. 17. Those that, though they had not power, as *shepherds* and rulers, to oppress with, yet, being rich and wealthy, made use of the opportunity which this gave them, to bear hard upon their poor neighbours. Those that have *much*, would have *more*, and, if they set to it, *will* have more, so many ways have they of encroaching upon their poor neighbours, and forcing from them *the one ewe-lamb*, 2 Sam. xii. 4. Do not the rich *oppress* the poor merely with the help of their riches, and *draw them before the judgment-seats*? Jam. ii. 6. Poor servants and tenants are hardly used by their rich lords and masters. The *rams* and the *he-goats* not only kept all the good pasture to themselves, ate the fat and drank the sweet, but they would not let the poor of the flock have any comfortable enjoyment of the little that was left them; they *trod down the residue of the pastures, and fouled the residue of the waters*, so that the flock was fain to eat that which they had *trodden* into the dirt, and drink that which they had *muddied*, v. 18, 19. This intimates that the great men, not only by extortion and oppression made and kept their neighbours poor, and scarcely left them enough to subsist on, but were so vexatious to them, that what little coarse fare they had, was embittered to them. And this *seemed a small thing* to them; they thought there was no harm in it, as if it were the privilege of their quality to be injurious to all their neighbours. Note, Many that live in pomp and at ease themselves, care not what straits those about them are reduced to, so they may but have every thing to their mind. Those that *are at ease*, and the *proud*, grudge that any body should live by them with any comfort.

But this was not all; they not only robbed the poor, to make them poorer, but were troublesome to the sick and weak of the flock; (v. 21.) they *thrust with side and shoulder* those that were feeble, (for the weakest goes to the wall,) and *pushed the diseased with their horns*, because they knew they could be too hard for them, when they durst not meddle with their match. It has been observed concerning sheep, that if one of the flock be sick and faint, the rest will secure it as they can,

and shelter it from the scorching heat of the sun; but these, on the contrary, were most injurious to the diseased. Those that they could not serve themselves of, they did what they could to rid the country of, and so scattered them abroad, as if the poor, whom Christ says we must have always with us, were public nuisances, not to be relieved, but sent far away from us. Note, It is a barbarous thing to add affliction to the afflicted. Perhaps these rams and he-goats are designed to represent the Scribes and Pharisees, for they are such troublers of the church as Christ himself must come to deliver it from; (v. 23.) they devoured widows' houses, took away the key of knowledge, corrupted the pure water of divine truths, and oppressed the consciences of men with the traditions of the elders; besides, they were continually vexatious and injurious to the poor of the flock that waited on the Lord, Zech. xi. 11. Note, It is no new thing for the flock of God to receive a great deal of damage and mischief from those that are themselves of the flock, and in eminent stations in it, Acts xx. 30.

II. Comfort spoken to those of the flock that are poor and feeble, and that wait for the consolation of Israel; (v. 22.) "*I will save my flock, and they shall no more be spoiled as they have been by the beasts of prey, by their own shepherds, or by the rams and he-goats among themselves.*" Upon this occasion, as is usual in the prophets, comes in a prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom, and the exceeding great and precious benefits which the church should enjoy under the protection and influence of that kingdom. Observe,

1. What is here foretold concerning the Messiah himself. (1.) He shall have his commission from God himself; *I will set him up, v. 23. I will raise him up, v. 29.* He sanctified and sealed him, appointed and anointed him. (2.) He shall be the great Shepherd of the sheep, who shall do that for his flock which no one else could do. He is the one Shepherd, under whom Jews and Gentiles should be one fold. (3.) He is God's Servant, employed by him and for him, and doing all in obedience to his will, with an eye to his glory; his Servant, to re-establish his kingdom among men, and advance the interests of that kingdom. (4.) He is David; one after God's own heart, set as his King upon the holy hill of Zion, made the head of the corner; with whom the covenant of royalty is made, and to whom God would give the throne of his father David. He is both the Root and Offspring of David. (5.) He is the Plant of renown, because a righteous Branch, (Jer. xxiii. 5.) a Branch of the Lord, that is beautiful and glorious, Isa. iv. 2. He has a name above every name, a throne above every throne, and may therefore well be called a Branch of renown. Some understand it of the church, the planting of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 3. *Its name shall be remembered,* (Ps. xlv. 17.) and Christ's in it.

2. Concerning the great charter by which the kingdom of the Messiah should be incorporated, and upon which it should be founded; (v. 25.) *I will make with them a covenant of peace.* The covenant of grace is a covenant of peace. In it God is at peace with us, speaks peace to us, and assures us of peace, of all good, all the good we need to make us happy. The tenour of this covenant is; "*I the Lord will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them, (v. 24.) will own them, and will be owned by them; in order to this, my Servant David shall be a Prince among them, to reduce them to their allegiance, to receive their homage, and to reign over them, in them, and for them.*" Note, Those, and those only, that have the Lord Jesus for their Prince, have the Lord Jehovah for their God. And then they, even the house of Israel, shall be my people. If we take God to be our God, he will take us to be his people.

From this covenant between God and Israel there results communion; "*I the Lord their God am with them, to converse with them; and they shall know it, and have the comfort of it.*"

3. Concerning the privileges of those that are the faithful subjects of this kingdom of the Messiah, and interested in the covenant of peace. These are here set forth figuratively, as the blessings of the flock. But we have a key to it, v. 31. They that belong to this flock, though they are spoken of as sheep, are really men; men that have the Lord for their God, and are in covenant with him. Now to them is promised,

(1.) That they shall enjoy a holy security, under the divine protection. Christ, our good Shepherd, has caused the evil beasts to cease out of the land, (v. 25.) having vanquished all our spiritual enemies, broken their power, and triumphed over them; the roaring lion is not a roaring devouring lion to them; *they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, nor the heathen a terror to them; neither shall the beasts of the land devour them;* sin and Satan, death and hell, are conquered. And then *they shall dwell safely, not only in the folds, but in the fields, in the wilderness, in the woods, where the beasts of prey are;* they shall not only dwell there, but they shall sleep there; which denotes not only that the beasts being made to cease, there shall be no danger, but, their consciences being purified and pacified, they shall be in no apprehension of danger; not only safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of evil. Note, Those may lay them down and sleep securely, sleep at ease, that have Christ for their Prince; for he will be their Protector, and make them to dwell in safety. None shall hurt them, nay, none shall make them afraid. If God be for us, who can be against us? *Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed.* Through Christ, God delivers his people not only from the things they have reason to fear, but from their fear even of death itself, from all that fear that has torment. This safety from evil is promised; (v. 27.) *They shall be safe in their land, in no danger of being invaded and enslaved, though their great plenty be a temptation to their neighbours to desire their land; and that which shall make them think themselves safe is, their confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God; They shall know that I am the Lord.* All our disquieting fears arise from our ignorance of God, and mistakes concerning him; their experience of his particular care concerning them encourages their confidence in him; "*I have broken the bands of their yoke, with which they have been brought, and held down, under oppression, and have delivered them out of the hands of those that served themselves of them.* Whence they shall argue, He that has delivered, does and will, therefore will we dwell safely." This is explained, and applied to our gospel-state, (Luke i. 74.) *That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, as those may do, that serve him in faith.*

(2.) That they shall enjoy a spiritual plenty of all good things, the best things, for their comfort and happiness; *They shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, v. 29.* Famine and scarcity, when Israel was punished with that judgment, turned as much to their reproach among the heathen as any other, because the fruitfulness of Canaan was so much talked of. But now *they shall not bear that shame of the heathen any more.* For the showers shall come down in their season, even showers of blessings, v. 26. Christ is a Shepherd that will feed his people; and they shall go in and out, and find pasture. [1.] They shall not be consumed with hunger; for they shall not be put off with the world for a portion, which is not bread, which satisfies not, and which occasions those that are put off with it to

be consumed with hunger. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called *beggarly* elements, for there was little in them, compared with the Christian institutes *wherewith the mower fills his hand, and he that binds sheaves, his bosom*. They that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, shall not be consumed with that hunger, for *they shall be filled*. And he that drinks of the water that Christ gives him, the still waters by which he leads his sheep, shall *never thirst*. [2.] *Showers of blessings* shall come upon them, *v. 26, 27*. The heavens shall yield their dews, the *trees of the field* also shall *yield their fruit*. The *seat of this plenty is God's hill*, his holy hill of Zion, for on that mountain, in the gospel-church, it is, that God has *made to all nations a feast*; to that *those* must join themselves, who would partake of gospel-benefits. The cause of this plenty is, the *showers that come down in their season*, that descend upon the mountains of Zion; the graces of Christ, his doctrine that drops as the dew; the graces of Christ, and the gifts and comforts of his Spirit, by which we are made fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The *instances* of this plenty are, the blessings of heaven poured down upon us, and the productions of grace brought forth by us; our comfort in God's favour, and God's glory in our fruit-bearing. The *extent* of this plenty is very large, to all the *places round about my hill*; for *out of Zion shall go forth the law*, shall go forth light to a dark world, and the river that shall water a dry and desert world; all that are in the neighbourhood of Zion, shall fare the better for it; and the nearer the church, the nearer its God. And *lastly*, The *effect of this plenty*, is, *I will make them a blessing*, eminently and exemplarily blessed, patterns of happiness, Isa. xix. 24. Or, They shall be blessings to all about them, diffusively useful. Note, Those that are the *blessed of the Lord* must study to make themselves *blessings to the world*. He that is *good*, let him *do good*; he that has received the gift, the grace, let him minister the same.

Now this promise of the Messiah and his kingdom spake much comfort to those to whom it was then made, for they might be sure that God would not utterly *destroy* their nation, how low soever it might be brought, as long as that *blessing was in the womb of it*, Isa. lxxv. 8. But it speaks much more comfort to us, to whom it is fulfilled, who are the sheep of this good Shepherd, are fed in his pastures, and *blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things* by him.

## CHAP. XXXV.

It was promised, in the foregoing chapter, that when the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, should come, especially the time for sending the Messiah, and setting up his kingdom in the world, God would cause the enemies of the church to cease, and the blessings and comforts of the church to abound. This chapter enlarges upon the former promise, concerning the destruction of the enemies of the church; the next chapter upon the latter promise, the replenishing of the church with blessings. *Mount Seir*, that is, *Edom*, is the enemy prophesied against in this chapter, but fitly put here, as in the prophecy of Obadiah, for all the enemies of the church; for as they all walked in the way of Cain that hated Abel, so they all walked in the way of Esau, who hated Jacob, but over whom Jacob, by virtue of a particular blessing, was to have dominion. Now here we have, I. The sin charged upon the Edomites, and that was, their spite and malice to Israel, *v. 5, 10, 13*. II. The ruin threatened, that should come upon them for this sin. God will be against them, (*v. 3*.) and then their country shall be laid waste, (*v. 4*.) depopulated, and made quite desolate, (*v. 6, 9*.) and left so when other nations that had been wasted, should recover themselves, *v. 14, 15*.

1. **M**OREOVER, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and

prophes; against it, 3. And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out my hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate. 4. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. 5. Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end: 6. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. 7. Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out, and him that returneth. 8. And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword. 9. I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Mount Seir was mentioned as partner with Moab in one of the threatenings we had before; (*ch. xxv. 8*.) but here it is convicted and condemned by itself, and has woes of its own. The prophet must boldly *set his face against Edom*, and *prophesy* particularly against it; for the God of Israel has said, *O mount Seir, I am against thee*. Note, Those that have God against them, have the word of God against them, and the face of his ministers, nor dare they prophesy any good to them, but evil. The prophet must tell the Edomites that God has a controversy with them, and let them know,

1. What is the cause and ground of that controversy, *v. 5*. God espouses his people's cause, and will plead it; takes what is done against them as done against himself, and will reckon for it; and it is upon their account that God now contends with the Edomites. (1.) Because of the *enmity* they had against the people of God, that was rooted in the heart; "Thou hast had a *perpetual hatred* to them, to the very name of an Israelite." The Edomites kept up an *hereditary* malice against Israel, the same that Esau bore to Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing. Esau had been reconciled to Jacob, had embraced and kissed him; (*Gen. xxxiii.*) and we do not find that ever he quarrelled with him again. But the posterity of Esau would never be reconciled to the seed of Jacob, but hated them with a perpetual hatred. Note, Children will be more apt to imitate the vices, than the virtues, of their parents; and to tread in the steps of their sin than in the steps of their repentance. Parents should therefore be careful not to set their children any bad example, for though, through the grace of God, they may return, and prevent the mischief of what they have done amiss to themselves, they may not be able to obviate the bad influence of it upon their children. It is strange how deeply rooted national antipathies sometimes are, and how long they last; but it is not to be wondered at, that profane Edomites hate pious Israelites, since the old *enmity* that was put between the *seed of the woman* and the seed of the serpent (*Gen. iii. 15*.) will continue to the end. *Marvel not if the world hate you*. (2.) Because of the *injuries* they had done to the people

of God; they shed their blood by the force of the sword, in the time of their calamity; they did not attack them as fair and open enemies, but laid wait for them, to cut off those of them that had escaped; (Obad. 14.) or, they drove them back upon the sword of the pursuers, by which they kill. It was cowardly, as well as barbarous, to take advantage of their distress; and for neighbours, with whom they had lived peaceably, to smite them secretly, when strangers openly invaded them. It was in the time that their iniquity had an end, when the measure of it was full, and destruction came. Note, Even those that suffer justly, and for their sins, are yet to be pitied, and not trampled upon. If the father corrects one child, he expects the rest should tremble at it, not triumph in it.

2. What should be the effect and issue of that controversy. If God stretch out his hand against the country of Edom, he will make it most desolate, v. 3. *Desolation and desolation.* (1.) The inhabitants shall be slain with the sword; (v. 6.) *I will prepare thee unto blood.* Edom shall be gradually weakened, and so be the more easily conquered, and the enemy shall gather strength, the more effectually to subdue it. Thus preparation is in the making a great while before for this destruction. *Thou hast not hated blood;* it implies, "Thou hast delighted in it, and thirsted after it. Those that do not keep up a rooted hatred of sin, when a temptation to it is very strong, will be in danger of yielding to it. Some read it, *"Unless thou hatest blood,"* that is, "unless thou dost repent, and put off this bloody disposition, blood shall pursue thee." And then it is an intimation that the judgment may yet be prevented by a thorough reformation. *If he turn not, he will whet his sword,* Ps. vii. 12. But if he turn, he will lay it by. *Blood shall pursue thee,* the guilt of the blood which thou hast shed, or the judgment of blood; thy bloodthirsty enemies shall pursue thee, which way soever thou seekest to make thy escape. A great and general slaughter shall be made of the Idumeans, such as had been foretold; (Isa. xxxiv. 6.) *the mountains and hills, the valleys and rivers, shall be filled with the slain,* v. 8. The pursuers shall overtake those that flee, and shall give no quarter, but put them all to the sword. Note, When God comes to make inquisition for blood, those that have shed the blood of his Israel shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. *Satia te sanguine quem sitiisti—Glut thyself with blood after which thou hast thirsted.* (2.) The country shall be laid waste. The cities shall be destroyed, (v. 4.) *the country made desolate;* (v. 7.) for God will cut off from both him that passes out, and him that returns; and when the inhabitants are cut off, that should keep the cities in repair, they will decay, and go into ruins; and when those are cut off that should till the land, that will soon be overrun with briars and thorns, and become a wilderness. Note, Those that help forward the desolations of Israel, may expect to be themselves made desolate. And that which completes the judgment is, that Edom shall be made perpetual desolations, (v. 9.) and the cities shall never return to their former state, nor the inhabitants of them come back from their captivity and dispersion. Note, Those that have a perpetual enmity to God and his people, as the carnal mind has, can expect no other than to be made a perpetual desolation. Implacable malice will justly be punished with irreparable ruin.

10 Because thou hast said, These two nations, and these two countries, shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the LORD was there: 11. Therefore, as I live,

saith the Lord God, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy, which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee. 12. And thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume. 13. Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard them. 14. Thus saith the Lord God, When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate. 15. As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Here is, 1. A further account of the sin of the Edomites, and their bad conduct toward the people of God. We find the church complaining of them for setting on the Babylonians, and irritating them against Jerusalem, saying, *Raze it, raze it,* down with it, down with it; (Ps. cxxxvii. 7.) inflaming a rage that needed no spur; here it is further charged upon them, that they triumphed in Jerusalem's ruin, and in the desolations of the country. Many blasphemies they spake against the mountains of Israel, saying, with pride and pleasure, *They are laid desolate,* v. 12. Note, The troubles of God's church, as they give proofs of the constancy and fidelity of its friends, so they discover and draw out the corruptions of its enemies, in whom there then appears more brutish malice than one would have thought of.

Now their triumphing in Jerusalem's ruin is here said to proceed, (1.) From a sinful passion against the people of Israel; from anger and envy, and hatred against them, (v. 11.) that perpetual hatred spoken of, v. 5. Though they were not a match for them, and therefore could not do them a mischief themselves, yet they were glad when the Chaldeans did them a mischief. (2.) From a sinful appetite to the land of Israel. They pleased themselves with hopes that when the people of Israel were destroyed, they should be let into the possession of their country, which they had so often grudged and envied them. They thought they could make out something of a title to it, *ob defectum sanguinis—for want of other heirs.* If Jacob's issue fail, they think that they are next in the entail, and that the remainder will be to his brother's issue; *"These two nations of Judah and Israel shall be mine.* Now is the time for me to put in for them;" however, they hope to come in as first occupants, being near neighbours; *We will possess it,* when it is deserted; *Ceditur occupanti—Let us get possession, and that will be title enough.* Note, Those have the spirit of Edomites who desire the deaths of others, because they hope to get by them, or are pleased with their failing, because they expect to come into their business. When we see the vanity of the world in the disappointments, losses, and crosses that others meet with in it, instead of showing ourselves, upon such an occasion, greedy of it, we should rather be made thereby to sit more loose to it, and both take our affections off it, and lower our expectations from it. But in this case of the Edomites' coveting the land of Israel, and gaping

for it, there was a particular affront to God, when they said, "*These lands are given us to devour, and we shall have our bellies full of their riches.*" God says, *You have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me*; for they expected possession upon a vacancy, because Israel was driven out, *whereas the Lord was still there*, v. 10. His temple indeed was burnt, and the other tokens of his presence were gone; but his promise to give that land to the seed of Jacob for an inheritance, was not made void, but remained in full force and virtue; and by that promise he did in effect still keep possession for Israel, till they should in due time be restored to it. That was Immanuel's land; (Isa. viii. 8.) in that land he was to be born, and therefore that people shall continue in it, of whom he is to be born, till he has passed his time in it, and then let who will take it; *The Lord is there*, the Lord Jesus is to be there; and therefore Israel's discontinuance of possession is no defeasance of their right, but it shall be kept for them, and they shall have, hold, and enjoy it by virtue of the divine grant, till the promise of this Canaan shall by the Messiah be changed into the promise of a far better. Note, It is a piece of presumption highly offensive to God, for Edomites to lay claim to those privileges and comforts that are peculiar to God's chosen Israel, and are reserved for them. It is *blasphemy against the mountains of Israel*, the holy mountains, to say, because they are for the present made a prey of, and trodden under foot of the Gentiles, (Rev. xi. 2.) even the holy city itself, that therefore the Lord has forsaken them, their God has forgotten them. The apostle will by no means admit such a thought as this, that *God hath cast away his people*, Rom. xi. 1. No, though they are cast down for a time, they are not cast off for ever. Those reproach the Lord who say they are.

The notice God took of the barbarous insolence of the Edomites, and the doom passed upon them for it; *I have heard all thy blasphemies*, v. 12. And again, (v. 13.) *You have multiplied your words against me; and I have heard them*, I have observed them, I have kept an account of them. Note, In the multitude of words, not one escapes God's cognizance; let men speak ever so much, ever so fast, though they multiply words, which they themselves regard not, but forget immediately, yet none of them are lost in the crowd, not the most idle words; but God hears them, and will be able to charge the sinner with them. All the haughty and hard speeches particularly which are spoken against the Israel of God, the words which are magnified, (as it is in the margin, v. 13.) as well as the words which are multiplied, God takes notice of. For as the most trifling words are not below his cognizance, so the most daring are not above his rebuke; *I have heard all thy blasphemies*. This is a good reason why we should bear reproach as if we heard it not, because *God will hear*, Ps. xxxviii. 13, 15. God has heard the Edomites' blasphemy, let them therefore hear their doom, v. 14, 15. It was a national sin; the blasphemies charged upon them were the sense and language of all the Edomites, and therefore shall be punished with a national desolation. And (1.) It shall be a distinguishing punishment. As God has peculiar favours for Israelites, so he has peculiar plagues for Edomites; so that "*When the whole earth rejoices, I will make thee desolate*; when other nations have their desolations repaired to their joy, thine shall be perpetual," v. 9. (2.) The punishment shall answer to the sin; "*As thou didst rejoice in the desolation of the house of Israel*, God will give thee enough of desolation, since thou art so fond of it, *thou shalt be desolate; I will make thee so.*" Note, Those who, instead of weeping with the mourners, make a jest of their grievances, may

justly be made to weep like the mourners, and themselves to feel the weight, to feel the smart, of those grievances which they set so light by. Some read v. 14. so as to complete the resemblance between the sin and the punishment; *The whole earth shall rejoice when I make thee desolate, as thou didst rejoice when Israel was made desolate*. Those that are glad at the death and fall of others, may expect that others will be glad of their death, of their fall.

Lastly, In the destruction of the enemies of the church, God designs his own glory, and we may be sure that he will not come short of his design. (1.) That which he intends is, to manifest himself as a just and jealous God, firm to his covenant, and faithful to his people and their injured cause; (v. 11.) *I will make myself known among them when I have judged thee*. The Lord is, and will be, known by the judgments which he executes. (2.) His intention shall be fully answered; not only his own people shall be made to know it to their comfort, but even the Edomites themselves, and all the other enemies of his name and people, shall know that he is the Lord, v. 4, 9, 15. As the works of creation and common providence demonstrate that there is a God, so the care taken of Israel shows that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is that God alone, the true and living God.

### CHAP. XXXVI.

We have done with mount Seir, and left it desolate, and likely to continue so, and must now turn ourselves, with the prophet, to the mountains of Israel, which we find desolate too, but hope, before we have done with the chapter, to leave in better plight. Here are two distinct prophecies in this chapter; I. Here is one that seems chiefly to relate to the temporal estate of the Jews, wherein their present deplorable condition is described, and the triumphs of their neighbours in it; but it is promised that their grievances shall be all redressed, and that in due time they shall be settled again in their own land, in the midst of peace and plenty, v. 1-5. II. Here is another that seems chiefly to concern their spiritual estate; wherein they are reminded of their former sins, and God's judgments upon them, to humble them for their sins, and under God's mighty hand, v. 16-20. But it is promised, 1. That God would glorify himself in showing mercy to them, v. 21-24. 2. That he would sanctify them by giving them his grace, and fitting them for his service; and this for his own name's sake, and in answer to their prayers, v. 25-38.

1. **A**LSO, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD: 2. Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy had said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession: 3. Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people: 4. Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about; 5. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen,

and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all *their* heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. 6. Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I have lifted up my hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. 8. But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. 9. For behold, I *am* for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: 10. And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, *even* all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: 11. And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better *unto you* than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 12. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, *even* my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them *of men*. 13. Thus saith the Lord God; Because they say unto you, Thou *land* devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; 14. Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord God. 15. Neither will I cause *men* to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord God.

The prophet had been ordered to set his face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, ch. vi. 2. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people; but now that God is returning in mercy to them, he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, v. 1. And again, (v. 4.) *Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord*; and what he says to them, he says to the hills, to the rivers, to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, in the country, and to the cities that are forsaken, (v. 4.) and again, v. 6. The people were gone, some one way, and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains, and valleys; these the Chaldeans could not carry away with them; *The earth abides for ever*. Now, to show the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place; which if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would not have called upon it to hear the word of the Lord, nor would, *as at this time, have showed it such things as these*. Here is,

1. The compassionate notice God takes of the present deplorable condition of the land of Israel. It is become both a *prey* and a *derision* to the heathen that are round about, v. 4. 1. It is become a *prey* to them; and they are all enriched with the plunder of it. When the Chaldeans had conquered them, all their neighbours flew to the spoil as to a shipwreck, every one thinking all his own that he could lay his hands on; (v. 3.) *They have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession to the heathen*; to the residue of them, even such as had themselves narrowly escaped the like desolation. No one thought it any crime to strip an Israelite: *Turba Romae sequitur fortunam ut semper—The mob of Rome still praise the elevated, and despise the fallen*. It is the common cry, when a man is down, *Down with him*. 2. It is become a *derision* to them. They took all they had, and laughed at them when they had done. *The enemy said, "Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession, v. 2. Neither the antiquity, nor the dignity, nor the sanctity, nor the fortifications, of the land of Israel are its security, but we are become masters of it all."* The more honours that land had been adorned with, and the greater figure it had made among the nations, the more pride and pleasure did they take in making a spoil of it; which is an instance of a base and sordid spirit; for the more *glorious* the prosperity was, the more *piteous* is the adversity. God takes notice of it here as an aggravation of the present calamity of Israel; *Ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people, v. 3.* All the talk of the country about was concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation; and every one that spake of it had some peevish, ill-natured reflection or other upon them. They were the *scorning of them that were at ease, and the contempt of the proud*, Ps. exxiii. 4. There are some that are noted for *talkers*, that have something to say of every body, but cannot find in their hearts to speak well of any body; God's people, among such *people*, were sure to be a *reproach* when the crown was fallen from their head. Thus it was the lot of Christianity, in its suffering days, to be *every where spoken against*.

II. The expressions of God's just displeasure against those who triumphed in the desolations of the land of Israel, as many of its neighbours did, even the residue of the brethren, and Idumea particularly.

Let us see, 1. How they dealt with the Israel of God; they carved out large possessions to themselves out of their land; out of God's land; for so indeed it was; *"They have appointed my land into their possession, (v. 5.) and so not only invaded their neighbour's property, but intrenched upon God's prerogative."* It was the holy land which they laid their sacrilegious hands upon. They did not own any dependence upon God, as the God of that land, nor acknowledge any remaining interest that Israel had in it, but *cast it out for a prey*, as if they had won it in a lawful war. And this they did without any dread of God and his judgments, and without any compassion for Israel and their calamities, but with the *joy of all their hearts*, because they got by it, and with *despiteful minds* to Israel that lost by it. Increasing wealth, by right or wrong, is *all the joy of a worldly heart*; and the calamities of God's people all the joy of a *despiteful mind*. And those that had not an opportunity of making a *prey* of God's people, made a reproach of them; so that they were *the shame of the heathen, v. 6.* Every body ridiculed them, and made a jest of them; and the truth is, they had by their own sin made themselves vile; so that God was righteous herein, but men were unrighteous and very barbarous.

2. How God would deal with them who were



thus in word and deed abusive to his people. He has *spoken against the heathen*; he has passed sentence upon them, he has determined to reckon with them for it, and this in the *fire of his jealousy*, both for his own honour, and for the honour of his people, v. 5. Having a *love for both, strong as death*, he has a *jealousy for both, cruel as the grave*. They spake in their malice against God's people, and he will speak in his jealousy against them; and it is easy to say which will speak most powerfully. God will speak in his *jealousy and in his fury*, v. 6. Fury is not in God; but he will exert his power against them, and handle them as severely as men do when they are in a fury. He will so *speak to them in his wrath as to vex them in his sore displeasure*. What he says, he will stand to, for it is backed with an oath. He has *lifted up his hand*, and sworn by himself, has sworn, and will not repent. And what is it that is said with so much heat, and yet with so much deliberation? It is this, (v. 7.) *Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame*. Note, The righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach upon God's people, will, sooner or later, have it *turned upon themselves*; perhaps in this world, either their follies or their calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach; at furthest, in that day, when all the impenitent shall *rise to shame and everlasting contempt*.

III. The promise of God's favour to his Israel, and assurances given of great mercy God had in store for them. God takes occasion from the outrage and insolence of their enemies, to show himself so much the more concerned for them, and ready to do them good; as David hoped that God would recompense him good for Shimei's cursing him. *Let them curse, but bless thou*. In this way as well as others, the enemies of God's people do them real service, even by the injuries they do them, against their will, and beyond their intention. We shall have no reason to complain, if, the more unkind men are, the more kind God is; if, the more kindly he speaks to us by his word and Spirit, the more kindly he acts for us in his providence. The prophet must say to the *mountains of Israel*, which were now *desolate and despised*, that God is *for them*, and will *turn to them*, v. 9. As the curse of God reaches the *ground for man's sake*, so does the blessing. Now that which is promised is,

1. That their rightful owners should return to the possession of them; *My people Israel are at hand to come*, v. 8. Though they are at a great distance from their own country, though they are *dispersed* in many countries, and though they are *detained* by the power of their enemies, yet they shall *come again to their own border*, Jer. xxxi. 17. The time is *at hand* for their return. Though there were above forty years of the seventy, (perhaps fifty,) yet remaining, it is spoken of as *near*, because it is *sure*, and there were some among them that should live to see it. *A thousand years are with God but as one day*. The mountains of Israel are now *desolate*; but God will *cause men to walk upon them again, even his people Israel*, not as travellers passing over them, but as inhabitants, not tenants, but freeholders; *They shall possess thee*, not for term of life, but for themselves and their heirs; *thou shalt be their inheritance*. It was a type of the heavenly Canaan, to which all God's children are heirs, every Israelite indeed, and into which they shall shortly be all brought together, out of the countries where they are now scattered.

2. That they should afford a plentiful, comfortable maintenance for their owners, at their return. When the land had *enjoyed her sabbaths* for so many years, it should be so much the more fruitful after-

ward, as we should be after rest, especially a sabbath-rest; *Ye shall be tilled and sown*, (v. 9.) and shall *yield your fruit to my people Israel*, v. 8. Note, It is a blessing to the earth, to be made serviceable to men, especially to good men, that will *serve God with cheerfulness* in the use of those good things which the earth *serves up* to them.

3. That the people of Israel should have not only a comfortable sustenance, but a comfortable settlement in their own land; *The cities shall be inhabited, the wastes shall be builded*, v. 10. *And I will settle you after your old estates*, v. 11. Their own sin had *unsettled* them, but now God's favour shall *re-settle* them. When the prodigal son is become a penitent, he is settled again in his father's house, according to his former estate; Bring hither the *first robe*, and put it on him. Nay, *I will do better unto you now than at your beginnings*. There is more joy for the sheep that is brought back than there would have been if it had never gone astray. And God sometimes multiplies his people's comforts in proportion to the time that he has afflicted them. Thus God blessed the latter end of Job more than his *beginning*, and *doubled* to him all he had.

4. That the people, after their return, should be *fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land*, so that it should not only be inhabited again, but as thickly inhabited, and as well peopled, as ever. God will bring back to it *all the house of Israel, even all of it*; observe what an emphasis is laid upon that, (v. 10.) *all whose spirits God stirred up* to return; and those only were reckoned of the *house of Israel*, the rest had cut themselves off from it; or, though but few, in comparison, returned at first, yet afterward, at divers times, they all returned; and then (says God) *I will multiply these men*, (v. 10.) *multiply man and beast; and they shall increase*, v. 11. Note, God's kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom; and his church, though for a time it may be diminished, shall recover itself, and be again replenished.

5. That the reproach long since cast upon the land of Israel by the evil spies, and of late revived, that it *was a land that ate up the inhabitants* of it by famine, sickness, and the sword, should be quite rolled away, and there should never be any more occasion for it. Canaan was got into a bad name. It had of old *spued out the inhabitants*, (Lev. xviii. 28.) the natives, the Aborigines, which was turned to its reproach by those that should have put another construction upon it, Numb. xiii. 32. It had of late *devoured* the Israelites, and *spued* them out too; so that it was commonly said of it, It is a land, which, instead of supporting its nations or tribes that inhabit it, *bereaves* them, *overthrows* them, and *causes them to fall*; it is a tenement which breaks all the tenants that come upon it. This character it had got among the neighbours; but God now promises that it shall be so no more; *Thou shalt no more bereave them of men*, (v. 12.) *shalt devour men no more*, v. 14. But the inhabitants shall live to a good old age, and not have the number of their months cut off in the midst. Compare this with that promise, Zech. viii. 4. Note, God will take away the reproach of his people by taking away that which was the occasion of it. When the nation is made to flourish in peace, plenty, and power, then they *hear no more the shame of the heathen*, (v. 15.) especially when it is reformed; when sin, which is the reproach of any people, particularly of God's professing people, is taken away, then they *hear no more the reproach of the people*. Note, When God returns in mercy to a people that return to him in duty, all their grievances will soon be redressed, and their honour retrieved.

16. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 17. Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land,

they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. 18. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols *wherewith* they had polluted it: 19. And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. 20. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land. 21. But I had pity for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. 22. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. 24. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

When God promised the poor captives a glorious return, in due time, to their own land, it was a great discouragement to their hopes, that they were *unworthy*, utterly unworthy, of such a favour; therefore, to remove that discouragement, God here shows them that he would do it for them purely for *his own name's sake*, that he might be glorified in them and by them; that he might manifest and magnify his mercy and goodness, that attribute which of all others is most *his glory*. And the restoration of that people being typical of our redemption by Christ, this is intended further to show that the ultimate end aimed at in our salvation, to which all the steps of it were made subservient, was, the glory of God; to this end Christ directed all he did, in that short prayer, *Father, glorify thy name*; and God declared it was his end in all he did, in the immediate answer given to that prayer, by a voice from heaven; *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*, John xii. 28. Now observe here,

I. How God's name had suffered both by the sins and by the miseries of Israel; and this was more to be regretted than all their sorrow, which they had brought upon themselves; for the honour of God lies nearer the hearts of good men than any interests of their own.

1. God's glory had been injured by the sin of Israel when they were in their own land, v. 17. It was a good land, a holy land, a land that had the eye of God upon it. *But they defiled it by their own way, their wicked way; that is our own way, the way of our own choice; and we ourselves must bear the blame and shame of it.* The sin of a people *defiles* their land; renders it *abominable* to God, and *uncomfortable* to themselves; so that they cannot have any holy communion with him or with one

another. What was *unclean* might not be made use of; by the abuse of the gifts of God's bounty to us we forfeit the use of them; and the mind and conscience being defiled with guilt, no comfort is allowed us, *nothing is pure* to us. Their way in the eye of God was like the pollution of a woman during the days of her separation, which shut her out from the sanctuary, and made every thing she *touch*ed ceremonially *unclean*, Lev. xv. 19. Sin is that *abominable thing* which the Lord *hates*, and which he cannot endure to look upon. *They shed blood, and worshipped idols*, (v. 18.) and with those sins *defiled the land*. For this, God *poured out his fury* upon them, *scattered them among the heathen*; their own land was sick of them, and they were sent into other lands. Herein God was righteous, and was *justified* in what he did; none could say that he did them any wrong, nay, he did justice to his own honour, for he *judged them according to their way and according to their doings*, v. 19. And yet, the matter being not rightly understood, he was not *glorified* in it; for the enemies did say, as Moses pleaded the Egyptians would say, if he had destroyed them in the wilderness, *that for mischief he brought them forth*. Their neighbours considered them rather as a *holy* people than as a *sinful* people; and therefore took occasion from the calamities they were in, instead of glorifying God, as they might justly have done, to *reproach* him, and put contempt upon him; and God's name was *continually every day blasphemed* by their oppressors, Isa. lii. 5.

2. When they entered into the land of the heathen, God had no glory by them there; but, on the contrary, his holy name was profaned, v. 20. (1.) It was profaned by the *sins* of Israel; they were no credit to their profession wherever they went, but, on the contrary, a reproach to it. *The name of God and his holy religion was blasphemed through them*, Rom. ii. 24. When those that pretended to be in relation to God, in covenant and communion with him, were found corrupt in their morals, slaves to their appetites and passions, dishonest in their dealings, and false to their words, and the trusts reposed in them, the *enemies of the Lord* had thereby *great occasion* given them to *blaspheme*, especially when they quarrelled with their God for correcting them, than which nothing could be more scandalous. (2.) It was profaned by the *sufferings* of Israel; for from them the enemies of God took occasion to reproach God, as unable to protect his own worshippers, and to make good his own grants. They said, in scorn, "*These are the people of the land, these wicked people; you see he could not keep them in their obedience to his precepts; these miserable people, you see he could not keep them in the enjoyment of his favours.* These are the people that came out of *Jehovah's* land, they are the very scum of the nations. Are these they that had statutes so righteous, whose lives are so unrighteous? Is this the nation that is so much celebrated for a *wise and understanding people*, and that is said to have *God so nigh unto them*? Do these belong to that brave, that holy nation, who appear here so vile, so abject?" Thus God sold his people, and did not *increase his wealth by their price*, Ps. xlv. 12. The reproach they were under reflected upon him.

II. Let us see how God would retrieve his honour, secure it, and advance it, by working a great reformation upon them, and then working a great salvation for them. He would have *scattered them among the heathen, were it not that he feared the wrath of the enemy*, Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. But though they were unworthy of his compassion, yet *he had pity for his own holy name*, and a thousand pities it was that that should be trampled upon and abused. He looked with compassion on his own honour, which lay bleeding among the heathen, on that

jewel which was trodden into the dirt, which *the house of Israel*, even in the land of their captivity, *had profaned*, v. 21. In pity to that, God brought them out from the heathen, because their sins were more scandalous there than they had been in their own land. "Therefore I will gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land, v. 24. *Not for your sake*, because you are worthy of such a favour, for you are most unworthy, but *for my holy name's sake*, (v. 22.) that I may sanctify my great name," v. 23. Observe, by the way, God's holy name is his great name; his holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself; nor does any thing make a man truly great but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name as a holy name, for he will sanctify it; "I will sanctify my name which you have profaned." When God performs that which he has sworn by his holiness, then he sanctifies his name. The effect of this shall be very happy; *The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes and yours.* When God proves his own holy name, and his saints praise it, then he is sanctified in them, and this contributes to the propagating of the knowledge of him. Observe, 1. God's reasons of mercy are all fetched from within himself, he will bring his people out of Babylon, not for their sakes, but *for his own name's sake*, because he will be glorified. 2. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; therefore he will sanctify his name by the pardon of sin, because it has been profaned by the commission of sin.

25. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. 27. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. 28. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29. I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. 30. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. 31. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations. 32. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. 33. Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. 34. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. 35. And they

shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced, and are inhabited. 36. Then the heathen, that are left round about you, shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. 37. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. 38. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

The people of God might be discouraged in their hopes of a restoration, by the sense not only of their unworthiness of such a favour, (which was answered, in the foregoing verses, with this, that God, in doing it, would have an eye to his own glory, not to their worthiness,) but of their unfitness for such a favour, being still corrupt and sinful; and that is answered, in these verses, with a promise that God would by his grace prepare and qualify them for the mercy, and then bestow it on them. And this was in part fulfilled in that wonderful effect which the captivity in Babylon had upon the Jews there, that it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. But it is further intended as a draught of the covenant of grace, and a specimen of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in heavenly things by that covenant. As, (ch. xxxiv.) after a promise of their return, the prophecy insensibly slid into a promise of the coming of Christ, the great Shepherd, so here it insensibly slides into a promise of the Spirit, and his gracious influences and operations; which we have as much need of for our sanctification as we have of Christ's merit for our justification.

1. God here promises that he will work a good work in them, to qualify them for the good work he intended to bring about for them, v. 25.—27. We had promises to the same purport, ch. xi. 18.—20. (1.) That God would cleanse them from the pollutions of sin; (v. 25.) *I will sprinkle clean water upon you*; which signifies both the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify that, and to take away the sense of guilt, (as those that were sprinkled with the water of purification were thereby discharged from their ceremonial uncleanness,) and the grace of the Spirit sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations and dispositions, as Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping in Jordan. Christ was himself clean, else his blood could not have been cleansing to us; and it is a holy Spirit that makes us holy; *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.* And, (v. 29.) *I will save you from all your uncleanness.* Sin is defiling, idolatry particularly is so; it renders sinners odious to God, and burthensome to themselves; when guilt is pardoned, and the corrupt nature sanctified, then we are cleansed from our filthiness, and there is no other way of being saved from it. This God promises his people here, in order to his being sanctified in them, v. 23. We cannot sanctify God's name, unless he sanctify our hearts; nor live to his glory, but by his grace. (2.) That God would give them a new heart; a disposition of mind excellent in itself, and vastly different from what it was before. God will work an inward change, in order to a uni-

versal change. Note, All that have an interest in the new covenant, and a title to the new *Jerusalem*, have a new heart and a new spirit, and these are necessary in order to their walking in *newness of life*. This is that *divine nature* which believers are by the promises made partakers of. (3.) That, instead of a *heart of stone*, insensible and inflexible, unapt to receive any divine impressions, and to return any devout affections, God would give a *heart of flesh*, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and complying in every thing with the will of God. Note, Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul as the turning of a dead stone into living flesh. (4.) That since, beside our inclination to sin, we complain of an inability to do our duty, God will *cause them to walk in his statutes*, will not only show them the way of his statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom, and will, and active powers, for every good work. In order to this, he will *put his Spirit within them*; as a Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier. Note, God does not force men to walk in his statutes by external violence, but causes them to walk in his statutes by an internal principle. And observe what use we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us, and put within us; *Ye shall keep my judgments*. If God will do his part according to the promise, we must do ours according to the precept. Note, The promise of God's grace to enable us for our duty, should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to his precepts as our rule, and then his precepts must send us back to his promises for strength, for without his grace we can do nothing.

2. God here promises that he will *take them into covenant with himself*. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, *v. 28. Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God*. It is not, "If you will be my people, I will be your God," (though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God, unless we be to him a people,) but he has chosen us, and loved us first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as the reward; not of merit, not of works; "*Ye shall be my people, I will make you so, I will give you the nature and spirit of my people, and then I will be your God*." And this is the foundation and top-stone of a believer's happiness; it is heaven itself, *Rev. xxi. 3, 7*.

3. He promises that he will *bring about all that good for them*, which the exigence of their case calls for. When they are thus prepared for mercy, (1.) Then they shall return to their possessions, and be settled again in them; (*v. 28.*) *Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers*. God will, in bringing them back to it, have an eye not to any merit of theirs, but to the promise made to the fathers; for therefore he gave it them at first, *Deut. vii. 7, 8. Therefore he is gracious, because he has said that he will be so*. This shall follow upon the blessed reformation God would work among them; (*v. 33.*) "*In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, and so shall have made you meet for the inheritance, I will cause you to dwell in the cities, and so put you in possession of the inheritance*." This is God's method of *mercy indeed*, first to part men from their sins, and then to restore them to their comforts. (2.) Then they shall enjoy a plenty of all good things; when they are saved *from their uncleanness*, from their sins which kept good things from them, then *I will call for the corn, and will increase it, v. 29*. Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still growing; and when he speaks the word,

the fruit both of *the tree* and of *the field*, shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply, the productions shall multiply for their maintenance; for he that sends *moueth* will send *meat*. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any other a *reproach* to them, that they should be starved in a land so famed for fruitfulness. But now *I will lay no famine upon you*; and none are under that rod, without having it laid on by him. Then they shall receive *no more reproach of famine*, shall never be again upbraided with that; nor shall it ever be said that God is a Master that keeps his servants to *short allowance*. Nay, they shall not only be cleared from the reproach of famine, but they shall have the credit of abundance. The land that had long lain *desolate in the sight of all that passed by*, that looked upon it, some with contempt and some with compassion, shall again be *tilled*, (*v. 34.*) and, having long lain fallow, it will now be the more fruitful. Observe, God will *call for the corn*, and yet they must *till the ground* for it. Note, Even promised mercies must be laboured for; for the promise is not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, our industry and endeavour. And such a blessing will God command on the *hand of the diligent*, that all who pass by shall take notice of it with wonder, *v. 35*. They shall say, "See what a blessed change here is, how *this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden*; the desert turned again into a paradise." Note, God has honours in reserve for his people to be crowned with, sufficient to balance the contempt they are now loaded with; and in them he will be *honoured*. This wonderful increase both of the people of the land and of its products is compared (*v. 38.*) to the large *flocks* of cattle that are brought to Jerusalem, to be sacrificed at one of the solemn feasts. Even the cities that now lie waste shall be filled with *flocks of men*, not like the flocks with which the pastures are covered over, (*Ps. lxxv. 13.*) but like the *holy flock* which is brought to the courts of the Lord's house. Note, Then the increase of the numbers of a people is honourable and comfortable indeed, when they are all dedicated to God as a holy flock, to be presented to him for *living sacrifices*. Crowds are a lovely sight in God's temple.

4. He shows what shall be the *happy effects of this blessed change*. (1.) It shall have a happy effect upon the people of God themselves, for it shall bring them to an ingenuous repentance for their sins; (*v. 31.*) *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves*. See here what *sin* is; it is an *abomination*, a loathsome thing; that abominable thing which the Lord hates. See what is the *first step* toward repentance; it is *remembering our own evil ways*, reflecting seriously upon the sins we have committed, and being particular in recapitulating them. We must remember against ourselves not only our gross enormities, *our own evil ways*, but our defects and infirmities, *our doings that were not good*, not so good as they should have been; not only our direct violations of the law, but our coming short of it. See what is evermore a companion of true repentance, and that is, *self-loathing*, a holy shame and confusion of face; "*You shall loathe yourselves in your own sight*, seeing how loathsome you have made yourselves in the sight of God." Self-love is at the bottom of sin, which we cannot but blush to see the absurdity of; but our quarrelling with ourselves is in order to our being, upon good grounds, reconciled to ourselves. And lastly, see what is the most powerful inducement to an evangelical repentance, and that is, a sense of the mercy of God; when God settles them in the midst of plenty, *then they shall loathe themselves for their iniquities*. Note, The goodness of

God should overcome our badness, and lead us to repentance. The more we see of God's readiness to receive us into favour upon our repentance, the more reason we shall see to be ashamed of ourselves that we could ever sin against so much love. That heart is hard indeed, that will not be thus melted. (2.) It shall have a happy effect upon their neighbours, for it shall bring them to a more clear knowledge of God; (v. 36.) "*Then the heathen that are left round about you, that spake ignorantly of God, (for so all those do that speak ill of him,) when they saw the land of Israel desolate, shall begin to know better, and to speak more intelligently of God, being convinced that he is able to rebuild the most desolate cities, and to replant the most desolate countries; and that though the course of his favours to his people may be obstructed for a time, they shall not be cut off for ever. They shall be made to know the truth of divine revelation, by the exact agreement which they shall discern between God's word which he has spoken to Israel, and his works which he has done for them; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.*" With us, saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God.

5. He proposes these things to them, not as the recompense of their merits, but as the return of their prayers.

(1.) Let them not think that they have deserved it; *Not for your sakes do I this, be it known to you;* (v. 22, 32.) no, *be you ashamed and confounded for your own ways.* God is doing this, all this which he has promised; it is as sure to be done as if it were done already, and present events have a tendency towards it. But then, [1.] They must renounce the merit of their own good works, and be brought to acknowledge that it is not for their sakes that it is done; so when God brought Israel into Canaan the first time, an express caveat was entered against this thought; (Deut. ix. 4.—6.) *It is not for thy righteousness.* It is not for the sake of any of their good qualities or good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them. No, in showing mercy, he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts, but for his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed; *Be it known to you, it is not for your sakes;* which intimates that we are apt to entertain a high conceit of our own merits, and are with difficulty persuaded to disclaim a confidence in them. But, one way or other, God will make all his favourites to know and own that it is his grace, and not their goodness, his mercy, and not their merit, that made them so; and that therefore not unto them, not unto them, but unto him, is all the glory due. [2.] They must repent of the sin of their own evil ways. They must own that the mercies they receive from God, are not only not merited, but that they are a thousand times forfeited; and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works, that they must be ashamed and confounded for their evil ways, and then they are best prepared for mercy.

(2.) Yet let them know that they must desire and expect it; (v. 37.) *I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel.* God has spoken, and he will do it, and he will be sought unto for it. He requires that his people should seek unto him, and he will incline their hearts to do it, when he is coming toward them in ways of mercy. [1.] They must pray for it, for by prayer God is sought unto, and inquired after. What is the matter of God's promises, must be the matter of our prayers. By asking for the mercy promised we must give glory to the Donor, express a value for the gift, own our dependence, and put honour upon prayer, which God has put honour upon. Christ himself must ask, and then God will give him the heathen for his inheritance; must pray the Father, and then he will

send the Comforter; much more must we ask, that we may receive. [2.] They must consult the oracles of God, and thus also God is sought unto, and inquired after. The mercy must be, not an act of providence only, but a child of promise; and therefore the promise must be looked at, and prayer made for it with an eye of faith fastened upon the promise, which must be both the guide and the ground of our expectations. Both these ways we find God inquired of by Daniel, in the name of the house of Israel, then when he was about to do those great things for them; he consulted the oracles of God, for he understood by books, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, both what was to be expected, and when; and then he set his face to seek God by prayer, Dan. ix. 2, 3. Note, Our communion with God must be kept up by the word and prayer in all the operations of his providence concerning us, and in both he must be inquired of.

## CHAP. XXXVII.

The threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, which we had in the former part of this book, were not so terrible, but the promises of their restoration and deliverance for the glory of God, which we have here in the latter part of the book, are as comfortable; and as those were illustrated with many visions and similitudes, for the awakening of a holy fear, so are these, for the encouraging of an humble faith. God had assured them, in the foregoing chapter, that he would gather the house of Israel, even all of it, and would bring them out of their captivity, and return them to their own land; but there were two things that rendered this very unlikely. 1. That they were so dispersed among their enemies, so destitute of all helps and advantages which might favour or further their return, and so dispirited likewise in their own minds; upon all these accounts they are here, in vision, compared to a valley full of the dry bones of dead men; which should be brought together and raised to life. The vision of this we have, (v. 1.—10.) and the explication of it, with its application to the present case, v. 11.—14. 11. That they were so divided among themselves, too much of the old enmity between Judah and Ephraim remaining even in their captivity. But as to this, by a sign of two sticks made one in the hand of the prophet, is foreshown the happy coalition that should be, at their return, between the two nations of Israel and Judah, v. 15.—22. In this there was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Samaritans, in Christ and his church. And so the prophet slides into a prediction of the kingdom of Christ, which should be set up in the world with God's tabernacle in it, and of the glories and graces of that kingdom, v. 23.—28.

1. **T**HE hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, 2. And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. 4. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 7. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied there was a

noise, and, behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was no breath in them.* 9. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. 10. So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. 11. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts. 12. Therefore prophecy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13. And ye shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves. 14. And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the Lord.

Here is,

I. The *vision of a resurrection* from death to life, and it is a glorious resurrection. This is a thing so utterly unknown to nature, and so contrary to its principles, (*A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus—From privation to possession there is no return.*) that we could have no thought of it but *by the word of the Lord*; and that it is certain by that word, that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, some have urged from this vision; "For" (say they) "otherwise it would not properly be made a sign for the confirming of their faith in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, as the coming of the Messiah is mentioned for the confirming of their faith touching a former deliverance," Is. i. vii. 14. But whether it be a confirmation or no, it is, without doubt, a most lively representation of a threefold resurrection, beside that which it is primarily intended to be the sign of. 1. The resurrection of souls from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life, by the power of divine grace going along with the word of Christ, John v. 24, 25. 2. The resurrection of the gospel-church, or any part of it, from an afflicted, persecuted state, especially under the yoke of the New Testament Babylon, to liberty and peace. 3. The resurrection of the body at the great day, especially the bodies of believers that shall rise to life eternal. Let us observe the particulars of this vision.

(1.) The deplorable condition of these dead bones; the prophet was made, [1.] To take an exact view of them. By a prophetic impulse and a divine power he was, in vision, carried out and set *in the midst of a valley*, probably that plain spoken of, ch. iii. 22. where God then *talked with him*; and it was *full of bones*, of dead men's bones; not piled up on a heap, as in a charnel-house, but scattered

upon the face of the ground, as if some bloody battle had been fought here, and the slain left unburied till all the flesh was *devoured or putrefied*, and nothing left but the bones, and those disjointed from one another and dispersed. He *passed by them round about*, and he observed not only that they were very many, (for there are multitudes gone to the congregation of the dead,) but that, *lo, they were very dry*, having been long exposed to the sun and wind. The bones that had been *moistened with marrow*, (Job xxi. 24.) when they have been any while dead, lose all their moisture, and are dry as dust; the body is now fenced with bones, (Job x. 11.) but then they will themselves be defenceless. The Jews in Babylon were like those dead and dry bones, unlikely ever to come together, to be so much as a skeleton, less likely to be formed into a body, and least of all to be a living body. However, they lay *unburied in the open valley*, which encouraged the hopes of their resurrection, as of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 8, 9. The bones of Gog and Magog shall be buried, (ch. xxxix. 12, 15.) for their destruction is final; but the bones of Israel are in the *open valley*, under the eye of Heaven, for there is *hope in their end*. [2.] He was made to own their case deplorable, and not to be helped by any power less than that of God himself; (v. 3.) "Son of man, *can these bones live?* Is it a thing likely? Canst thou devise how it should be done? Can thy philosophy reach to put life into dry bones, or thy politics to restore a captive nation?" "No," says the prophet, "I know not how it should be done, but *thou knowest*." He does not say, "They cannot live," lest he should seem to limit the Holy One of Israel; but, "Lord, thou knowest whether they can, and whether they shall; if thou dost not put life into them, it is certain that they cannot live." Note, God is perfectly acquainted with his own power and his own purposes, and will have us to refer all to them, and to see and own that his wondrous works are such as could not be effected by any counsel or power but his own.

(2.) The means used for the bringing of these dispersed bones *together*, and these dead and dry bones *to life*. It must be done by prophecy. Ezekiel is ordered to *prophecy upon these bones*; (v. 4. and again, v. 9.) *Prophecy to the wind*. So he *propheesied as he was commanded*, v. 7, 10. [1.] He must preach, and he did so; and the dead bones lived by a power that went along with the word of God which he preached. [2.] He must pray, and he did so; and the dead bones were made to live in answer to prayer: for a *spirit of life* entered into them. See the efficacy of the word and prayer, and the necessity of both, for the raising of dead souls. God bids his ministers *prophecy upon the dry bones*; Say unto them, *Live*; yea, say unto them, *Live*; and they do as they are commanded, calling to them again and again; *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord*. But we call in vain, still they are dead, still they are very dry; we must therefore be earnest with God in prayer for the working of the Spirit with the word; *Come, O breath*, and breathe upon them. God's grace can save souls without our preaching, but our preaching cannot save them without God's grace, and that grace must be sought by prayer. Note, Ministers must faithfully and diligently use the means of grace, even with those that there seems little probability of gaining upon. To *prophecy upon dry bones* seems as great a penance as to *water a dry stick*; and yet, whether they will hear or forbear, we must discharge our trust, must *prophecy as we are commanded*, in the name of him *who raises the dead*, and is the Fountain of life.

(3.) The wonderful effect of these means. Those that *do as they are commanded*, as they are commis-



sioned, in the face of the greatest discouragements, need not doubt of success, for God will own and enrich his own appointments.

[1.] Ezekiel looked down, and prophesied upon the bones in the valley, and they became human bodies. First, That which he had to say to them was, that God would infallibly raise them to life: *Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Ye shall live, v. 5.* and again, *Ye shall live, v. 6.* And he that speaks the word, will thereby do the work; he that says, *They shall live*, will make them alive. He will clothe them with skin and flesh, (v. 6.) as he did at first, Job x. 11. He that made us so fearfully and wonderfully, and curiously wrought us, can in like manner new-make us, for his arm is not shortened. Secondly, That which was immediately done for them was, that they were moulded anew into shape. We may well suppose it was with great liveliness and vigour that the prophet prophesied, especially when he found what he said began to take effect. Note, The opening, sealing, and applying of the promises, are the ordinary means of our participation of a new and divine nature. As Ezekiel prophesied in this vision, there was a noise, a word of command, from heaven, seconding what he said; or, it signified the motion of the angels that were to be employed as the ministers of the Divine Providence in the deliverance of the Jews, and we read of the noise of their wings, (Ezek. i. 24.) and the sound of their going, 2 Sam. v. 24. And behold, a shaking, or commotion, among the bones; even dead and dry bones begin to move, when they are called to hear the word of the Lord. This was fulfilled when, upon Cyrus's proclamation of liberty, those whose spirits God had stirred up, began to think of making use of that liberty, and getting ready to be gone; when there was a noise, behold, a shaking; when David heard the sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry-trees, then he bestirred himself; then there was a shaking. When Paul heard the voice saying, *Why persecutest thou me?* Behold, a shaking of the dry bones; he trembled and was astonished. But this was not all, *The bones came together bone to his bone*, under a divine direction; and though there are in man a multitude of bones, yet of all the bones of all those numerous slain not one was missing, not one missed its way, not one missed its place, but, as it were by instinct, each knew and found its fellow; the dispersed bones came together, and the displaced bones were knit together; the divine power supplying that to these dry bones, which in a living body every joint supplies. Thus shall it be in the resurrection of the dead; the scattered atoms shall be arranged and marshalled in their proper place and order, and every bone come to his bone, by the same wisdom and power by which the bones were first formed in the womb of her that is with child. Thus it was in the return of the Jews; they that were scattered in several parts of the province of Babylon, came to their respective families, and all as it were by consent, to the general rendezvous, in order to their return. By degrees sinews and flesh came upon these bones, and the skin covered them, v. 8. This was fulfilled when the captives got their effects about them, and the men of their place helped them with silver and gold, and whatever they needed for their remove, Ezra i. 4. But still there was no breath in them; they wanted spirit and courage for such a difficult and hazardous enterprize as this was of returning to their own land.

[2.] Ezekiel then looked up, and prophesied to the wind, or breath, or spirit, and said, *Come, O breath, and breathe upon these slain*; as good have been still dry bones, as dead bodies; but as for God, his work is perfect; he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; therefore breathe upon them that they

may live. In answer to this request, the breath immediately came into them, v. 10. Note, The spirit of life is from God; he at first in the creation breathed into man the breath of life, and so he will, at last in the resurrection. The dispirited, despairing captives were wonderfully animated with resolution to break through all the discouragements that lay in the way of their return, and applied themselves to it with all imaginable vigour. And then they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army; not only living men, but effective men, fit for service in the wars, and formidable to all that gave them any opposition. Note, With God nothing is impossible. He can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and out of dead and dry bones levy an exceeding great army to fight his battles and plead his cause.

II. The application of this vision to the present calamitous condition of the Jews in captivity, *These bones are the whole house of Israel*, both the ten tribes and the two. See in this what they are, and what they shall be.

1. The depth of despair to which they are now reduced, v. 11. They all give up themselves for lost and gone; they say, "*Our bones are dried, our strength exhausted, our spirits gone, our hope is all lost*, every thing we looked for succour and relief from fails us, and we are cut off for our parts. Let who will cherish some hope, we see no ground for any." Note, When troubles continue long, hopes have been frustrated, and all creature-confidences fail, it is not strange if the spirits sink; and nothing but an active faith in the power, promise, and providence of God, will keep them from dying away quite.

2. The height of prosperity, to which, notwithstanding this, they shall be advanced. "*Therefore, because things are come thus to the last extremity, prophesy to them*, and tell them, now is God's time to appear for them, Jehovah-jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, v. 12.—14. Tell them," (1.) "*That they shall be brought out of the land of their enemies, where they are as it were buried alive; I will open your graves.*" Those shall be restored, not only whose bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, (Ps. cxli. 7.) but who are buried in the grave; though the power of the enemy is like the bars of the pit, which one would think it impossible to break through, strong as death, and cruel as the grave, yet it shall be conquered; God can bring his people up from the depths of the earth, Ps. lxxi. 20. (2.) "*That they shall be brought into their own land, where they shall live in prosperity. I will bring you into the land of Israel, (v. 12.) and place you there, (v. 14.) and will put my Spirit in you, and then ye shall live.*" Note, Then God puts spirit in us to good purpose, and so that we shall indeed live, when he puts his Spirit in us. And (lastly) in all this God will be glorified; *Ye shall know that I am the Lord, (v. 13.) that I have spoken it, and performed it, v. 14.* Note, God's quickening the dead redounds more than any thing to his honour, and to the honour of his word, which he has magnified above all his name; and will magnify more and more by the punctual accomplishment of every tittle of it.

15. The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 16. Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: 17. And join them one to another into one stick, and they shall become one in

thy hand. 18. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou *meanest* by these? 19. Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand. 20. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thy hand before their eyes. 21. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: 22. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: 23. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. 24. And David my servant *shall be king* over them: and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever. 26. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Here are more exceeding great and precious promises made of the happy state of the Jews after their return to their own land; but they have a further reference to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the glories of gospel-times.

1. It is here promised, that Ephraim and Judah shall be happily united in brotherly love and mutual serviceableness; so that, whereas, ever since the desertion of the ten tribes from the house of David under Jeroboam, there had been continual feuds and animosities between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and it is to be feared, there had been some clashing between them even in the land of their

captivity, (Ephraim upon all occasions envying Judah, and Judah vexing Ephraim,) now it should be no longer, but there should be a coalition between them, and, notwithstanding the old differences that had been between them, they should agree to love one another, and to do one another all good offices. This is here illustrated by a sign; the prophet was to take *two sticks*, and write upon one, *For Judah*, including Benjamin, those of the *children of Israel* that were his companions; upon the other, *For Joseph*, including the rest of the tribes, v. 16. These two sticks must be so framed as to fall into *one in his hand*, v. 17. The people took notice of this, and desired him to tell them the meaning of it, for they knew he did not play with sticks for his diversion, as children do. Those that would know the meaning, should ask the meaning, of the word of God, which they read and hear, and of the instituted signs by which spiritual and divine things are represented to us; the minister's lips should keep the knowledge hereof, and the people should ask it at their mouth, Mal. ii. 7. It is a necessary question for grown people, as well as children, to ask, *What mean ye by this service*, by this sign? Exod. xii. 26. The meaning was, that Judah and Israel should be *come one in the hand of God*, v. 19. (1.) They shall be one; one nation, v. 22. They shall have no separate interests, and, consequently, no divided affections. There shall be no mutual jealousies and animosities, no remembrance, no remains, of their former discord. But there shall be a perfect harmony between them; a good understanding one of another, a good disposition one to another, and a readiness to all good offices and services for one another's credit and comfort. They had been two sticks crossing and thwarting one another, nay, beating and bruising one another; but now they shall become one, supporting and strengthening one another. *Vis unita fortior*—Force added to force is proportionally more efficient. Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is to see Judah and Israel, that had long been at variance, now dwelling together in unity. Then they shall become acceptable to their God, amiable to their friends, and formidable to their enemies, Isa. xi. 13, 14. (2.) They shall be one in God's hand; by his power they shall be united, and being by his hand brought together, his hand shall keep them together, so that they shall not fly off, to be separated again. They shall be one in his hand, for his glory shall be the centre of their unity, and his grace the cement of it. In him, in a regard to him, and in his service and worship, they shall unite, and so shall become one. Both sides shall agree to put themselves into his hand, and so they shall be one. *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio, inter se conveniunt*—Those who agree in a third, agree with each other. Note, Those are best united, that are one in God's hand; whose union with each other results from their union with Christ, and their communion with God through him, Eph. i. x. One in us, John xvii. 21. (3.) They shall be one in their return out of captivity; (v. 21.) I will take them from among the heathen, and gather them on every side, and bring them together incorporated into one body to their own land. They shall be one in their separation from the heathen with whom they had mingled themselves: they shall both agree to part from them, and take their affections off from them, and no longer to comply with their usages, and then they will soon agree to join together in walking according to the rule of God's word. Their having been joint sufferers will contribute to this blessed comprehension, when they begin to come to themselves, and to consider things. Put many pieces of metal together into the furnace, and when they are melted, they will run all together. Likewise their being joint-sharers in the favour of

God, and the great and common deliverance wrought out for them all, should help to unite them. God's loving them all was a good reason why they should love one another. Times of common joy, as well as times of common suffering, should be healing, loving times. (4.) They shall all be the subjects of one king, and so they shall become one. The Jews, after their return, were under one government, and not divided as formerly. But this certainly looks further, to the kingdom of Christ; he is that one King, in allegiance to whom all God's spiritual Israel shall cheerfully unite, and under whose protection they shall all be gathered. All believers unite in *one Lord, one faith, and one baptism*. And the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, their becoming one fold under Christ the one great Shepherd, is doubtless the union that is chiefly looked at in this prophecy. By Christ the partition-wall between them was taken down, and the enmity slain, and of them *twain* was made *one new man*, Eph. ii. 14, 15.

2. It is here promised that the Jews shall by their captivity be cured of their inclination to idolatry; this shall be the happy fruit of that affliction, even the taking away of their sin; (v. 23.) *Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols*, those detestable, defiling things, no, nor with any of their former transgressions. Note, When one sin is sincerely parted with, all sin is abandoned too, for he that hates sin, as sin, will hate all sin. And those that are cured of their *spiritual idolatry*, their inordinate affection to the world and the flesh, that no longer make a god of their money, or their belly, have a happy blow given to the root of *all their transgressions*. Two ways God will take to cure them of their idolatry; (1.) By bringing them out of the way of temptation to it; *"I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned"*, because there they met with the occasion of sin and allurements to it." Note, It is our wisdom to avoid the places where we have been overcome by temptations to sin, not to remain in them, or return to them, but to *save ourselves* out of them, as we would out of infected places; See Zech. ii. 7. Rev. xviii. 4. And it is a great mercy when God, in his providence, *saves us out of the dwelling-places where we have sinned*, and keeps us from harm, by keeping us out of harm's way; in answer to our prayer, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. (2.) By changing the disposition of their mind; *"I will cleanse them"*; (v. 28.) *I will sanctify them*, will work in them an aversion to the pollutions of sin, and a complacency in the pleasures of holiness; and then you may be sure they will not defile themselves any more with their idols." Whom God has *cleansed* he will *keep clean*.

3. It is here promised that they shall be the *people of God*, as *their God*, and the *subjects and sheep* of Christ their *King and Shepherd*. These promises we had before, and they are here repeated, (v. 23, 24.) for the encouragement of the faith of Israel; *They shall be my people*, to serve me, and *I will be their God*, to save them, and to make them happy. *David my Servant shall be king over them*, to fight their battles, to protect them from injury, and to rule them, and overrule all things that concern them *for their good*. He shall be *their Shepherd*, to guide them, and provide for them; Christ is David, Israel's King of old; and those whom he subdues to himself, and makes willing in the day of his power, he makes *to walk in his judgments, and to keep his statutes*.

4. It is here promised that *they shall dwell comfortably*, v. 25, 26. They shall dwell in the land of Israel; for where else should Israelites dwell? And many things will concur to make their dwelling agreeable. (1.) They shall have it by *covenant*; they shall come in again upon their old title, by vir-

tue of the grant made unto *Jacob, God's servant*. As Christ was David, God's *Servant*, so the church is Jacob, his *servant* too; and the members of the church shall come in for a share, as *born in God's house*. He will make a *covenant of peace* with them, (v. 26.) and, in pursuance of that *covenant*, he will *place them, and multiply them*. Note, Temporal mercies are *then* doubly sweet, when they come from the promise of the covenant, and not merely from common providence. (2.) They shall come to it by prescription; *"It is the land wherein your fathers have dwelt"*, and for that reason you cannot but have a special kindness for it, which God will graciously gratify." It was the inheritance of their ancestors, and therefore shall be theirs; they are *beloved for their fathers' sakes*. (3.) They shall have it *entailed* upon them and *the heirs of their body*, and shall have their families built up, so that it shall not be lost for want of heirs. *They shall dwell therein* all their time, and never be turned out of possession, and they shall leave it for an inheritance *to their children, and their children's children for ever*, who shall enjoy it when they are gone, the prospect of which will be a satisfaction to them. (4.) They shall live under a good government, which will contribute very much to the comfort of their lives; *My servant David shall be their Prince for ever*. This can be no other than Christ, of whom it was said, when he was brought into the world, *He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, Luke i. 33. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of all Christ's faithful subjects, that as his *kingdom is everlasting*, so he is an *everlasting King*, he lives to reign for ever; and, as sure and as long as he lives and reigns, they shall live and reign also. (5.) The charter by which they hold all their privileges, is indefeasible. God's covenant with them shall be an *everlasting covenant*; so the covenant of grace is, for it secures to us an everlasting happiness.

5. It is here promised that God will *dwell among them*; and this will make them dwell comfortably indeed; *I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore: my tabernacle also shall be with them*, v. 26, 27. (1.) They shall have the tokens of God's special presence with them, and his gracious residence among them. God will in very deed *dwell with them upon the earth*, for where his sanctuary is, he is; when they profaned his sanctuary, he took it from them, (Isa. lxiv. 11.) but now that they are purified, God will dwell with them again. (2.) They shall have opportunity of conversing with God, of hearing from him, speaking to him, and so keeping up communion with him, which will be the comfort of their lives. (3.) They shall have the means of grace. By the oracles of God in his tabernacle they shall be made wiser and better, and all their children shall be taught of the Lord. (4.) Thus their covenant-relation to God shall be improved, and the bond of it strengthened; *"I will be their God, and they shall be my people, and they shall know it by having my sanctuary among them, and shall have the comfort of it."*

6. Both God and Israel shall have the honour of this among the heathen, v. 26. Now the heathen observe how Israel had profaned their own crown by their sins, and God has profaned it by his judgments; but then when Israel is reformed, and God is returned in mercy to them, the very heathen shall be made to know that *the Lord sanctifies Israel*, has a title *to them*, and an interest *in them*, more than other people, because his *sanctuary is*, and shall be, *in the midst of them*. Note, God designs the sanctification of those among whom he sets up his sanctuary. And blessed and holy are they who, enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, give such proofs and evidences of their sanctification, that the heathen may know it is no less than the almighty

grace of God that sanctifies them. Such have God's sanctuary *in the midst of them*, the kingdom of God *within them*, in the principles of the spiritual life, and shall have it so for evermore in the enjoyments of an *eternal life*.

## CHAP. XXXVIII.

This chapter, and that which follows it, are concerning Gog and Magog, a powerful enemy to the people of Israel, that should make a formidable descent upon them, and put them into a consternation; but their army should be routed, and their design defeated; and this prophecy, it is most probable, had its accomplishment some time after the return of the people of Israel out of their captivity; whether in the struggles they had with the kings of Syria, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, or perhaps in some other way not recorded, we cannot tell. If the sacred history of the Old Testament had reached as far as the prophecy, we should have been better able to understand these chapters, but, for want of that key, we are locked out of the meaning of them. God had by the prophet assured his people of happy times after their return to their own land; but lest they should mistake the promises which related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the spiritual privileges of that kingdom, as if from them they might promise themselves an uninterrupted temporal prosperity, he here tells them, as Christ told his disciples, to prevent the like mistake, that in the world they shall have tribulation, but they may be of good cheer, for they shall be victorious at last. This prophecy here of Gog and Magog, is, without doubt, alluded to in that prophecy which relates to the latter days, and which seems to be yet unfulfilled, *Rev. xx. 8*. That Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against the camp of the saints; as the Old Testament prophecies of the destruction of Babylon are alluded to, *Rev. xviii*. But in both, the Old Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in the Jewish church, as the New Testament prophecies shall have when the time comes in the Christian church. In this chapter, we have intermixed, I. The attempt that Gog and Magog should make upon the lands of Israel, the vast army they should bring into the field, and their vast preparations, *v. 4. . 7*. Their project and design in it, *v. 8. . 13*. God's hand in it, *v. 14*. II. The great terror that this should strike upon the land of Israel, *v. 15, 16, 18. . 20*. III. The divine restraint that these enemies should be under, and the divine protection that Israel should be under, *v. 2. . 4*. And again, *v. 14*. IV. The defeat that should be given to those enemies by the immediate hand of God (*v. 21. . 23*.) which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

1. **AND** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 4. And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: 6. Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands; and many people with thee. 7. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. 8. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years

thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. 9. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou and all thy bands, and many people with thee. 10. Thus saith the Lord God, It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: 11. And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unvalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, 12. To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thy hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. 13. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

The critical expositors have enough to do here to inquire out Gog and Magog; we cannot pretend either to add to their observations, or to determine their controversies; Gog seems to be the king, and Magog the kingdom; so that Gog and Magog are like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Some think they find them afar off, in Scythia, Tartary, and Russia. Others think they find them nearer the land of Israel, in Syria, and Asia the Less. Ezekiel is appointed to prophesy against Gog, and to tell him that *God is against him*, *v. 2, 3*. Note, God does not only see those that are now the enemies of his church, and set himself against them, but he foresees those that will be so, and lets them know by his word that he is against them too, and yet is pleased to make use of them to serve his own purposes, for the glory of his own name; surely *their wrath shall praise him*, and the remainder thereof he will restrain, *Ps. lxxvi. 10*. Let us observe here,

I. The confusion which God designed to put this enemy to; it is remarkable, that this is put first in the prophecy; before it is foretold that God will bring him forth against Israel, it is foretold that God will put hooks into his jaws, and turn him back, (*v. 4*.) that they might have assurance of their deliverance before they had the prospect given them of their danger. Thus tender is God of the comfort of his people, thus careful that they may not be frightened; even before the trouble begins, he tells them it will end well.

II. The undertaking which he designed to engage him in, in order to this defeat and disappointment.

1. The nations that shall be confederate in this enterprise against Israel, are many, and great, and mighty; (*v. 5, 6*.) Persia, Ethiopia, &c. Antiochus had an army made up of all the nations here named, and many others. These people had been at variance with one another, and yet in combination

against Israel. How are they increased that trouble God's people!

2. They are well furnished with arms and ammunition, and bring a good train of artillery into the field; *horses and horsemen*, (v. 4.) bravely equipped with *all sorts of armour, bucklers and shields* for defence, and *all handling swords* for offence. Orders are given to make all imaginable preparation for this expedition; (v. 7.) "*Be thou fireprepared, and do thou prepare.*" See what warlike preparations thou hast already in store, and, lest that should not suffice, make further preparation, *thou and all thy company.*" Let Gog himself be a guard to the rest of the confederates. As commander in chief, let him engage to take care of them and their safety; let him pass his word for their security, and take them under his particular protection. The leaders of an army, instead of exposing their soldiers needlessly and presumptuously, and throwing away their lives upon desperate undertakings, should study to be a guard to them, and, whenever they send them forth in danger, should contrive to *support and cover* them. This call to *prepare* seems to be ironical; *Do thy worst, but I will turn thee back*; like that Isa. viii. 9. *Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.*

3. Their design is against the *mountains of Israel*, (v. 8.) against the land that is brought back from the sword. It is not long since it was harassed with the sword of war, and it has been *always wasted*, more or less, with one judgment or other; it is but newly gathered out of many people, and brought forth out of the nations; it has enjoyed comparatively but a short breathing-time, has scarcely recovered any strength since it was brought down by war and captivity; and therefore its neighbours need not fear its being too great, nay, and therefore it is very barbarous to pick a quarrel with it so soon. It is a people that dwell safely, all of them, in unvalled villages, very secure, and having neither bars nor gates, v. 11. It is a certain sign that they intend no mischief to their neighbours, for they fear no mischief from them. It cannot be thought that they will offend others, who do not take care to defend themselves; and it aggravates the sin of these invaders. It is base and barbarous to devise evil against thy neighbour, while he dwells securely by thee, and has no distrust of thee, Prov. iii. 29. But see here how the clouds return after the rain in this world, and what little reason we have ever to be secure till we come to heaven. It is not long since Israel was brought back from the sword of one enemy, and behold, the sword of another is drawn against it; former troubles will not excuse us from further troubles; but when we think we have put off the harness, at least for some time, by a fresh and sudden alarm we may be called to gird it on again; and therefore we must never boast, or be off our guard.

4. That which the enemy has in view, in forming his project, is, to enrich himself, and to make himself master, not of the country, but of the wealth of it, to *spoil and plunder* it, and make a prey of it; At the same time that God intends to bring this matter about, *things shall come into the mind* of this enemy, and he shall think an evil thought, v. 10. Note, All the mischief men do, and particularly the mischief they do to the church of God, arises from evil thoughts that come into their mind; ambitious thoughts, covetous thoughts, spiteful thoughts to those that are good, for the sake of their goodness. It came into Antiochus's mind what a singular people these religious Jews were, and how their worship witnessed against and condemned the idolatries of their neighbours, and therefore, in enmity to their religion, he would plague them. It came into his mind what a wealthy

people they were, that they had gotten cattle and goods in the midst of the land, (v. 12.) and withal how weak they were, and how unable to make any resistance, and how easy it would be to carry off what they had, and now much glory this rapine would add to his victorious sword; these things coming into his mind, and one evil thought drawing on another, he came at last to this resolve, (v. 11, 12.) "*I will go up to the land of unvalled villages*; yea, that I will, it will cost me nothing to make them all my own; I will go, and disturb them that are at rest, without giving them any notice; not to crush their growing greatness, or chastise their insolence, or make reprisals upon them for any wrong they have done us; (they had none of these pretences to make war upon them;) but purely to take a spoil, and to take a prey," (v. 12.) in open defiance to all the laws of justice and equity, as much as the highwayman's killing the traveller, that he may take his money. These were the thoughts that came into the mind of this wicked prince, and God knew them; nay, he knew them before they came into his mind, for he understands our thoughts afar off, Ps. cxxxix. 2.

5. According to the project thus formed, he pours in all his forces upon the land of Israel; and finds those that are ready to come in to his assistance, with the same prospects; (v. 9.) "*Thou shalt ascend, and come like a storm*, with all the force and fury and fierceness imaginable, and thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, to darken it, and to threaten it. Thou, and not only all thy bands, all the force thou canst bring into the field, but many people with thee," (such as are spoken of, v. 13.) "*Sheba and Dedan, the Arabians and Edomites, and the merchants of Tarshish, of Tyre and Sidon, and other maritime cities, they and their young lions* that are greedy of spoil and live upon it, they shall say, *Art thou come to take the spoil of this land?*" Yes, he is. And therefore they wish him success; or perhaps they envy him, or grudge it him. "*Art thou come for riches, who art thyself so rich already?*" Or, knowing that God was on Israel's side, they thus ridicule his attempts, foreseeing that they would be baffled, and that he would be disappointed of the prey he promised himself. Or, if he be come to take the prey, they will come, and join with him, and add to his forces. When Lysias, who was general of Antiochus's army, came against the Jews, the neighbouring nations joined with him, (1 Mac. iii. 41.) to share in the guilt, in hopes to share in the prey. When thou savest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.

14. Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God, In that day when my people of Israel dwell safely, shalt thou not know it? 15. And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: 16. And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. 17. Thus saith the Lord God, Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years, that I would bring

thee against them? 18. And it shall come to pass at the same time, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, *that my fury shall come up in my face.* 19. For in my jealousy, *and in the fire of my wrath, have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;* 20. So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that *are upon the face of the earth,* shall shake at my presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. 21. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. 22. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that *are with him,* an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. 23. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I *am the LORD.*

The latter part of the chapter is a repetition of the former; the dream is doubled, for the thing is certain, and to be very carefully regarded.

I. It is here again foretold that this spiteful enemy should make a formidable descent upon the land of Israel; (v. 15.) *Thou shalt come out of the north parts* (Syria lay on the north of Canaan) *with a mighty army, shalt come like a cloud, and cover the land of my people Israel,* v. 16. These words, (v. 14.) *When my people Israel dwell safely, shalt thou not know it?* may be taken two ways; either, 1. As speaking his inducements to this attempt. "Thou shalt have intelligence brought thee, how *securely,* and therefore how *carelessly,* the people of Israel dwell, which shall give rise to thy project against them; for when thou knowest not only what a *rich,* but what an *easy* prey they are likely to be, thou wilt soon determine to fall upon them." Note, God's providence is to be acknowledged in the *occasion,* the small *occasion,* perhaps, that is given, and that not designedly neither, to those *first thoughts* from which great enterprises take their original. God, to bring about his own purposes, lets men know that which yet he knows they will make bad use of; as here. Or, 2. As speaking his disappointment in this attempt; which here, as before, the prophecy begins with; "*When my people Israel dwell safely,* not in their own apprehension only, but in reality, forasmuch as they dwell safely under the divine protection, shalt not thou be made to know it by the fruitlessness of thine endeavours to destroy them? Thou shalt soon find that there is *no enchantment against Jacob,* that *no weapon formed against them shall prosper;* thou shalt know to thy cost, shalt know to thy shame, that though they have no *walls,* nor *bars,* nor *gates,* they have God himself, a *Wall of fire, round about him,* and that he who *touches them, touches the apple of his eye;* whosoever meddles with them, meddles to his own hurt." And it is for the de-

monstrating of this to all the world that God will bring this mighty enemy against his people. They that *gathered themselves against Israel,* said, *Let us take the spoil, and take the prey,* but they *knew not the thoughts of the Lord,* Mic. iv. 11, 12. *I will bring thee against my land;* This is strange news, that God will not only permit his enemies to come against his own children, but will himself *bring them;* but, if we understand what he aims at, we shall be well reconciled even to this, it is, that *the heathen may know me to be the only living and true God, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog,* in thy defeat and destruction *before their eyes;* that all the nations may see, and say, *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens, for the help of his people.* Note, God therefore brings his people into danger and distress, that he may have the honour of bringing about their deliverance; and therefore suffers the enemies of his church to prevail awhile, though they profane his name by their sin, that he may have the honour of prevailing at last, and sanctifying his own name in their ruin. Now it is said, This shall be *in the latter days,* in the latter days of the Old Testament church; so the mischief that Antiochus did to Israel, was; but in the *latter days* of the New Testament church, another like enemy should arise, that should in like manner be defeated. Note, Effectual securities are treasured up in the word of God against the troubles and dangers the church may be brought into a great while hence, even in the latter days.

II. Reference is herein had to the predictions of the former prophets; (v. 17.) *Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time, of whom Moses spake in his prophecy of the latter days?* (Deut. xxxii. 43.) *He will render vengeance to his adversaries;* and David, (Ps. ix. 15.) *The heathen are sunk down into the pit that they made;* and often elsewhere in the Psalms. This is the leviathan of whom Isaiah spake, (Isa. xxvii. 1.) that congress of the nations of which Joel spake, Joel iii. 1. Many of the prophets had perhaps *spoken* particularly of this event, though it be not *written;* as they all had spoken, and written too, that which is applicable to it. Note, There is an amiable, admirable harmony and agreement between the Lord's prophets, though they lived in several ages, for they were all guided by one and the same Spirit.

III. It is here foretold that this furious, formidable enemy should be utterly cut off in this attempt upon Israel, and that it should issue in his own ruin. This is supposed by many to have its accomplishment in the many defeats given by the Maccabees to the forces of Antiochus, and the remarkable judgments of God executed upon his own person, for he died of sore diseases. But these things are here foretold, as usual, in figurative expressions, which we are not to look for the literal accomplishment of, and yet they might be fulfilled nearer the letter than we know of.

1. God will be *highly displeased* with this bold invader; *When he comes up in pride and anger against the land of Israel,* and thinks to carry all before him with a high hand, then *God's fury shall come up in his face;* which is an allusion to the manner of men whose colour rises in their faces when some high affront is offered them, and they are resolved to show their resentments of it, v. 18. God will speak against them in his *jealousy* for his people, and in the *fire of his wrath* against his and their enemies, v. 19. See how God's permitting sin, his laying occasions of sin before men, and his making use of it to serve his own purposes, consist with his hatred of sin, and his displeasure against it. God brings this enemy against his land, letting him know what an *easy prey* it might be, and determining thereby to glorify himself; and yet, *when*



he comes against the land, God's fury comes up, and he speaks to him in the fire of his wrath. If any ask, Why does he thus find fault? For who has resisted his will? It is easy to answer, *Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*

2. His forces shall be put into the greatest confusion and consternation imaginable; (v. 19.) *There shall be a great shaking of them in the land of Israel*, a universal concussion, (v. 20.) such as shall affect the *fishes and fowls, the beasts and creeping things*, and much more the men that are upon the face of the earth, who sooner receive impressions of fear; there shall be such an earthquake as shall throw down the mountains, those natural heights, and the steep places, towers and walls, those artificial heights, they shall all fall to the ground. Some understand this of the fright which the land of Israel should be put into by the fury of the enemy. But it is rather to be understood of the fright which the enemy should be put into by the wrath of God; all those things which they both raise themselves, and stay themselves, upon, shall be shaken down, and their hearts shall fail them.

3. He shall be routed, and utterly ruined; both earth and heaven shall be armed against him. (1.) The earth shall muster up its forces to destroy him. If the people of Israel have not strength and courage to resist him, God will call for a sword against him, v. 21. And he has swords always at command, that are bathed in heaven, Isa. xxxv. 5. Throughout all the mountains of Israel, where he hoped to meet with spoil to enrich him, he shall meet with swords to destroy him, and rather than fail, every man's sword shall be against his brother, as in the day of Midian, Ps. lxxxiii. 9. The great men of Syria shall undermine and overthrow one another, shall accuse one another, shall fight duels with one another. Note, God can, and often does, make the destroyers of his people to be their own destroyers, and the destroyers of one another. However, he will himself be their Destroyer, will take the work into his own hand, that it may be done thoroughly; (v. 22.) *I will plead against him with pestilence and blood.* Note, Whom God acts against he pleads against; he shows them the ground of his controversy with them, that their mouths may be stopped, and he may be clear when he judges. (2.) The artillery of heaven shall also be drawn out against them; *I will rain upon him an overflowing rain*, v. 22. He comes like a storm upon Israel, v. 9. But God will come like a storm upon him; will rain upon him great hailstones, as upon the Canaanites, (Josh. x. 11.) fire and brimstone, as upon Sodom, and a horrible tempest, Ps. xi. 6. Thus the Gog and Magog in the New Testament shall be devoured with fire from heaven, and cast into the lake of brimstone, Rev. xx. 9, 10. That will be the everlasting portion of all the impenitent, implacable enemies of God's church and people.

4. God, in all this, will be glorified. The end he aimed at, (v. 16.) shall be accomplished; (v. 23.) *Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself.* Note, In the destruction of sinners, God makes it to appear that he is a great and holy God, and he will do so to eternity. And if men do not magnify and sanctify him as they ought, he will magnify himself, and sanctify himself; and this we should desire and pray for daily, *Father, glorify thine own name.*

## CHAP. XXXIX.

This chapter continues and concludes the prophecy against Gog and Magog; in whose destruction God erows his favour to his people Israel, which shines very bright after the scattering of that black cloud in the close of this chapter. Here is, I. An express prediction of the utter destruction of Gog and Magog, agreeing with what we had before, v. 1..7. II. An illustration

of the vastness of that destruction, in three consequences of it; the burning of their weapons, (v. 8..10.) the burying of their slain, (v. 11..16.) and the feasting of the fowls with the dead bodies of those that were unburied, v. 17..22. III. A declaration of God's gracious purposes concerning his people Israel, in this and his other providences concerning them, and a promise of further mercy that he had yet in store for them, v. 23..29.

1. **T**HEREFORE, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; 2. And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 3. And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. 4. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field, to be devoured. 5. Thou shalt fall upon the open field; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. 6. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles; and they shall know that I am the LORD. 7. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

This prophecy begins, as that before, ch. xxxviii. 3, 4. *I am against thee, and I will turn thee back;* for there is need of line upon line, both for the conviction of Israel's enemies, and the comfort of Israel's friends. Here, as there, it is foretold that God will bring this enemy from the north parts, as formerly the Chaldeans were fetched from the north, Jer. i. 14. (*Omne malum ab aquilone—Every evil comes from the north*), and, long after the Roman empire was overrun by the northern nations; that he will bring him upon the mountains of Israel; (v. 2.) first, as a place of temptation, where the measures of his iniquity shall be filled up, and then, as a place of execution, where his ruin shall be completed. And that is it which is here enlarged upon.

1. His soldiers shall be *disarmed*, and so disabled to carry on their enterprise. Though the men of might may find their hands, yet to what purpose, when they find it is put out of their power to do mischief, when God shall smite their bow out of their left hand, and their arrow out of their right? v. 3. Note, The weapons formed against Zion shall not prosper.

2. He and the greatest part of his army shall be slain in the field of battle; (v. 4.) *Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel;* there they sinned, and there they shall perish, even upon the holy mountains of Israel, for there brake he the arrows of the bow, Ps. lxxvi. 3. The mountains of Israel shall be moistened, and fattened, and made fruitful, with the blood of the enemies. "Thou shalt fall upon the open field, (v. 5.) and shalt not be able even there to make thine escape." Even upon the mountains he shall not find a pass that he shall

be able to maintain, and upon the *open field* he shall not find a road that he shall be able to make his escape by. He, and his *bands*, his regular troops, and the people that are *with him*, that follow the camp to share in the plunder, these shall all *fall with him*. Note, Those that *cast in their lot* among wicked people, (Prov. i. 14.) that they *may have one purse* with them, must expect to *take their lot with them*, and fare as they fare, taking the worse with the better. There shall be such a general slaughter made, that but a *sixth part* shall be left, (v. 2.) the other five shall all be cut off. Never was army so totally routed as this. And, for its greater infamy and reproach, their bodies shall be a feast to the birds of prey, v. 4. Compare v. 17. *Thou shalt fall, for I have spoken it*. Note, Rather shall the most illustrious princes, (Antiochus was called *Epiphanes, the illustrious*;) and the most numerous armies, *fall to the ground*, than any word of God; for he that has spoken, will *make it good*.

3. His country also shall be made desolate; *I will send a fire on Magog*, (v. 6.) and among them that dwell carelessly, or confidently, in the *isles*, the nations of the Gentiles. He designed to destroy the land of Israel, but shall not only be defeated in that design, but shall have his own destroyed by some fire, some consuming judgment or other. Note, Those who invade other people's rights, justly lose their own.

4. God will by all this advance the honour of his own name, (1.) Among his *people Israel*; they shall hereby know more of God's name, of his power and goodness, his care of them, his faithfulness to them; his providence concerning them shall lead them into a better acquaintance with him; every providence should do so, as well as every ordinance; *I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people*. In Judah is God known; but those that know much of God, should know more of him; we should especially increase in the knowledge of his name as a *holy name*. Know him as a God of perfect purity and rectitude, and that hates all sin. And then it follows, *I will not let them pollute my holy name any more*. Note, Those that rightly know God's holy name, will not dare to *profane it*; for it is through ignorance of it that men *make light of it*; and *make bold* with it. And this is God's method of dealing with men; first, to enlighten their understandings, and by that means to influence the whole man; he first makes us to *know his holy name*, and so keeps us from *polluting* it, and engages us to honour it. And this is here the blessed effect of God's glorious appearances on the behalf of his people. Thus he completes his favours, thus he sanctifies them, thus he makes them blessings indeed; by them he instructs his people, and reforms them. *When the Almighty scattered kings for her, she was white as snow in Salmon*, Ps. lxxviii. 14. (2.) Among the *heathen*; those that never knew it, or would not own it, shall know that *I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel*. They shall be made to know by dear-bought experience, that he is a God of power, and his people's God and Saviour; and it is in vain for the greatest potentates to contend with him; none ever hardened their heart against him, and prospered.

8. Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this *is* the day whereof I have spoken. 9. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven

years. 10. So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down *any* out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God. 11. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea; and it shall stop the *noses* of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog, and all his multitude; and they shall call it, The valley of Hamon-gog. 12. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. 13. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown, the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God. 14. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land, to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. 15. And the passengers that pass through the land, when *any* seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. 16. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land. 17. And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord God, Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, *even* a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. 18. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God. 21. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. 22. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.

Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment in the latter days, yet it is here spoken of as if it were already accomplished, because it is certain; (v. 8.) "*Behold, it is come, and it is done*; it is as sure to be done, when the time is come, as if it were done already; *this is the day whereof I have long and often spoken*, and though it has been long in

coming, yet at length *it is come.*" Thus it was said unto John, (Rev. xxi. 6.) *It is done.*

To represent the routing of the army of Gog as very great, here are three things specified as the consequences of it. It was God himself that gave them the defeat; we do not find that the people of Israel drew a sword, or struck a stroke; but,

I. They shall *burn their weapons*; their bows and arrows, which fell out of their hands, (v. 3.) their shields and bucklers, their javelins, spears, leading-staves, truncheons and half-pikes, every thing that is combustible. They shall not lay them up in their armories, or reserve them for their own use, lest they should be tempted to put a confidence in them, but they shall burn them; not all at once, for a bonfire, (to what purpose would be that waste?) but, as they had occasion, to use them for fuel in their houses, instead of other fire-wood, so that they should have no occasion to *take wood out of the field or forests*, for seven years together; (v. 10.) such vast quantities of weapons shall there be left upon the open field, where the enemy fell, and in the roads, which they passed in their flight. The weapons were dry, and fitter for fuel than green wood; and by saving the wood in their coppices and forests, they give it time to grow. Though the mountains of Israel produce plenty of all good things, yet it becomes the people of Israel to be good husbands of their plenty, and to save what they can for the benefit of those that come after them, as Providence shall give them opportunity to do so. We may suppose that when they who dwelt in the cities of Israel came forth to *spoil those who spoiled them*, and make reprisals upon them, they found upon them silver, and gold, and ornaments; yet no mention is made of any thing particularly that they converted to their own use, but the wood of the weapons for fuel, which is one of the necessities of human life; to teach us to think it enough if we be well supplied with those, though we have but little of the delights and gaieties of it, and of those things which we may very well *live without*. And, every time they put fuel to the fire, and warmed themselves at it, they would be put in mind of the number and strength of their enemies, and the imminent peril they were in of falling into their hands, which would help to enlarge their hearts in thankfulness to that God who had so wonderfully, so seasonably, delivered them. As they sat by the fire with their children about them, (their *fire-side*,) they might from it take occasion to tell them what great things God had done for them.

II. They shall *bury their dead*. Usually, after a battle, when many are slain, the enemy desire time to bury their own dead. But here the slaughter shall be so general, that there shall not be a sufficient number of the enemies left alive to bury the dead; and besides, the slain lie so dispersed on the mountains of Israel, that it would be a work of time to find them out. And therefore it is left to the house of Israel to bury them as a piece of triumph in their overthrow.

1. A place shall be appointed on purpose for the burying them, the valley of the passengers, on the east of the sea, either the salt sea, or the sea of Tiberias, a valley through which there was great passing and repassing of travellers between Egypt and Chaldea; there shall be such a multitude of dead bodies, putrefying above ground, with such a loathsome stench, that the travellers who go that way, shall be forced to *stop their noses*. See what vile bodies ours are; when the soul has been a little while from them, the smell of them becomes offensive, no smell more nauseous, or more noxious. There, therefore, where the greatest number lay slain, shall the burying-place be appointed. In the place where the tree falls, there let it lie. And it

shall be called, *The valley of Hamon-gog*, that is, of the multitude of Gog; for that was the thing which was in a particular manner to be had in remembrance. How numerous the forces of the enemies were which God defeated and destroyed for the defence of his people Israel!

2. A considerable time shall be spent in burying them, no less than *seven months*; (v. 12.) which is a further intimation that the *slain of the Lord* in this action should be many; and that great care should be taken by the house of Israel to leave none unburied, that so they might *cleanse the land* from the ceremonial pollution it contracted by the lying of so many dead corpses unburied in it; for the prevention of which it was appointed that those who were *hanged on a tree*, should be *speedily taken down, and buried*, Deut. xxi. 23. This is an intimation that times of eminent deliverances should be times of reformation. The more God has done for the *saving of a land from ruin*, the more the inhabitants should do for the *cleansing of the land from sin*.

3. Great numbers shall be employed in this work; *All the people of the land* shall be ready to lend a helping hand to it, v. 13. Note, Every one should contribute the utmost he can in his place toward the cleansing of the land from the pollutions of it, and from every thing that is a reproach to it. Sin is a common enemy which every man should take up arms against. *In publico discrimine unusquisque homo miles est—In the season of public danger every man becomes a soldier*. And whoever shall assist in this work, it shall be to them a *renown*; though the office of grave-makers, or common scavengers of the country, seem but mean, yet, when it is for the cleansing and purifying of the land from dead works, it shall be mentioned to their honour. Note, Acts of humanity add much to the renown of God's Israel; it is a credit to religion, when those that profess it are ready to every good work; and a good work it is to bury the dead, yea, though they be strangers and enemies to the commonwealth of Israel, for even they shall rise again. *It shall be a renown to them in the day when God will be glorified*. Note, It is for the glory of God when his Israel do that which adorns their profession; others will see their good works, and glorify their Father, Matth. v. 16. And when God is honoured, he will put honour upon his people. His glory is their renown.

4. Some particular persons shall make it their business to search out the dead bodies, or any part of them that should remain unburied. The people of the land will soon grow weary of burying the pollutions of the country, and therefore they shall appoint *men of continual employment*, that shall apply themselves to it, and do nothing else till the land be thoroughly cleansed; for otherwise, that which is every one's work, would soon become nobody's work. Note, Those that are engaged in public work, especially for the cleansing and reformation of a land, ought to be men of *continual employments*, men that will stick to what they undertake, and go through with it, men that will apply themselves to it; and those that will do good according to their opportunities, will find themselves *continually employed*.

5. Even the passengers shall be ready to give information to those whose business it is to cleanse the land of what public nuisances they meet with, which call for their assistance; They that *pass through the land*, though they will not stay to bury the dead themselves, lest they should contract a ceremonial pollution, will yet give notice of these that they find unburied. If they but discover a bone, they will set up a sign, that the buriers may come, and bury it; and that, till it is buried, others may

take heed of touching it; for which reason their sepulchres among the Jews were whited, that people might keep at a distance from them. Note, When good work is to be done, every one should lend a hand to further it, even the *passengers* themselves, who must not think themselves unconcerned in a common calamity, or a common iniquity, to put a stop to it.

Those whose work it is to cleanse the land must not countenance any thing in it that is defiling; though it were not the body, but only the *bone*, of a man, that was found unburied, they must encourage those who will give information of it, *private information*, by a sign, concealing the informer, that they may take it away, and bury it out of sight. Nay, after the end of seven months, which was allowed them for this work, when all is taken away that appeared at first view, they shall search for more, that what is hidden may be brought to light; they shall search out iniquity till they find none. In memory of this, they shall give a new name to their city. It shall be called *Hamonah*—*The multitude*. O what a multitude of our enemies have we of this city buried! Thus shall they cleanse the land, with all this care, with all this pains, v. 16. Note, After conquering there must be cleansing. Moses appointed those Israelites that had been employed in the war with the Midianites, to purify themselves, Numb. xxxi. 24. Having received special favours from God, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.

III. The birds and beasts of prey shall rest upon the carcasses of the slain while they remain unburied, and it shall be impossible to prevent it, v. 17, &c. We find a great slaughter represented by this figure, Rev. xix. 17, &c. which is borrowed from this.

1. There is a general invitation given, v. 17. It is to the fowl of every wing, and to every beast of the field, from the greatest to the least, that preys upon carcasses, from the eagle to the raven, from the lion to the dog; let them all gather themselves on every side, here is meat enough for them, and they are all welcome. Let them come to God's sacrifice, to his feast; so the margin reads it. Note, The judgments of God, executed upon sin and sinners, are both a sacrifice and a feast; a sacrifice to the justice of God, and a feast to the faith and hope of God's people. When God brake the head of *leviathan*, he gave him to be meat to Israel, Ps. lxxiv. The righteous shall rejoice as at a feast, when he sees the vengeance, and shall wash his foot, as at a feast, in the blood of the wicked. This sacrifice is upon the mountains of Israel; these are the high places, the altars, where God has been dishonoured by the idolatries of the people, but where he will now glorify himself in the destruction of his enemies.

2. There is great preparation made; They shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, v. 18, 19. (1.) It is the flesh and blood of men that they shall be treated with. This has sometimes been an instance of the rebellion of the inferior creatures against man their master, which is an effect of his rebellion against God his Maker. (2.) It is the flesh and blood of great men, here called rams, and bullocks, and great goats, all of them fatlings of Bashan. It is the blood of the princes of the earth that they shall regale themselves with. What a mortification is this to the princes of the blood, as they call themselves, that God can make that blood, that royal blood which swells their veins, a feast for the birds and beasts of prey! (3.) It is the flesh and blood of wicked men, the enemies of God's church and people, that they are invited to. They had accounted the Israel of God as sheep for the slaughter, and now they shall themselves be so accounted; they had thus used the dead bodies of God's servants.

(Ps. lxxix. 2.) or would have done, and now it shall come upon themselves.

3. They shall all be fed, they shall all be feasted to the full; (v. 19, 20.) You shall eat fat, and drink blood, which are satiating, surfeiting things. The sacrifice is great, and the feast upon the sacrifice is accordingly; You shall be filled at my table. Note. God keeps a table for the inferior creatures; he provides food for all flesh; the eyes of all wait upon him, and he satisfies their desires, for he keeps a plentiful table. And if the birds and beasts shall be filled at God's table, which he has prepared for them, much more shall his children be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. They shall be filled with horses and chariots; that is, those who ride in the chariots, mighty men, and men of war, who triumphed over nations, are now themselves triumphed over by the ravens of the valley and the young eagles, Prov. xxx. 17. They thought to have made an easy prey of God's Israel, and now they are themselves an easy prey to the birds and beasts. See how evil pursues sinners even after death. This exposing of their bodies to be a prey is but a type and sign of those terrors, which, after death, shall prey upon their consciences, (which the poetical fictions represented by a vulture continually pecking at the heart,) and this shame but an earnest of the everlasting shame and contempt they shall rise to.

IV. This shall redound very much both to the glory of God and to the comfort and satisfaction of his people.

1. It shall be much for the honour of God, for the heathen shall hereby be made to know that he is the Lord; (v. 21.) All the heathen shall see and observe my judgments that I have executed, and thereby my glory shall be set among them. This principle shall be admitted and established among them more than ever, that the God of Israel is a great and glorious God. He is known to be so even among the heathen, that have not, or read not, his written word, by the judgments which he executes.

2. It shall be much for the satisfaction of his people; for they shall hereby be made to know that he is their God; (v. 22.) The house of Israel shall know, abundantly to their comfort, that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward. (1.) He will be so from that day and forward. God's present mercies are pledges and assurances of further mercies. If God evidence to us that he is our God, he assures us that he will never leave us; This God is our God for ever and ever. (2.) They shall know it with more satisfaction from that day and forward. They had sometimes been ready to question whether the Lord was with them or no; but the events of this day shall silence their doubts, and, the matter being thus settled and made clear, it shall not be doubted of for the future. As boasting in themselves is hereby for ever excluded, so boasting in God is hereby for ever secured.

23. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies; so fell they all by the sword. 24. According to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions, have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. 25. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; 26. After

that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses, whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made *them* afraid.

27. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; 28. Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. 29. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter going before, and has reference not only to the predictions concerning Gog and Magog, but to all the prophecies of this book concerning the captivity of the house of Israel, and then concerning their restoration and return out of their captivity.

1. God will let the heathen know the meaning of his people's troubles, and rectify *their* mistake concerning them, who took occasion from the troubles of Israel to reproach the God of Israel, as unable to protect them, and untrue to his covenant with them. When God, upon their reformation and return to him, turned again their captivity, and brought them back to their own land, and, upon their perseverance in their reformation, wrought such great salvations for them, as that from the attempts of Gog upon them, then it will be made to appear, even to the heathen that will but consider and compare things, that there was no ground at all for their reflection; that Israel went into captivity, not because God could not protect them, but because they had by sin forfeited his favour, and thrown themselves out of his protection; (v. 23, 24.) *The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, that iniquity which they learned from the heathen their neighbours; because they trespassed against God.* That was the true reason why God hid his face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies. It was according to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions. Now the evincing of this will not only silence their reflections on God, but will redound greatly to his honour; when the troubles of God's people are over, and we see the end of them, we shall better understand them than we did at first. And it will appear much for the glory of God, when the world is made to know, 1. That God punishes sin even in his own people, because he hates it most in those that are nearest and dearest to him, Amos iii. 2. It is the praise of justice to be impartial. 2. That, when God gives up his people for a prey, it is to correct them and reform them, not to gratify their enemies, Isa. x. 7.—xlii. 24. Let not them therefore exalt themselves. 3. That no sooner do God's people humble themselves under the rod, than he returns in mercy to them.

II. God will give his own people to know what great favour he has in store for them, notwithstanding the troubles he had brought them into; (v. 25, 26.) *Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob.*

1. *Why now?* Now God will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; (1.) Because it is time for him to stand up for his own glory, which suffers in their sufferings; *Now will I be jealous for my holy name,* that that may no longer be reproached. (2.) Because they now repent of their sins; They

*have borne their shame, and all their trespasses;* when sinners repent, and take shame to themselves, God will be reconciled, and put honour upon them. It is particularly pleasing to God, that these penitents look a great way back in their penitential reflections, and are ashamed of all their trespasses which they were guilty of, *when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.* The remembrance of the mercies they enjoyed in their own land, and the divine protection they were under there, shall be improved as an aggravation of the sins they committed in that land; they dwelt safely, and might have continued to dwell so, and none should have given them any disquiet or disturbance, if they had continued in the way of their duty. Nay, *therefore they trespassed,* because *they dwelt safely;* outward safety is often a cause of inward security, and that is an inlet to all sin, Ps. lxxiii. Now this they are willing to bear the shame of, and acknowledge that God has justly brought them into a land of trouble, where *every one makes them afraid,* because they had trespassed against him in a land of peace, where *none made them afraid.* And when they thus humble themselves under humbling providences, God will bring again their captivity; and,

2. *What then?* When God has gathered them out of their enemies' hands, and brought them home again;

(1.) Then God will have *the praise of it;* I will be sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, v. 27. As God was reproached in the reproach they were under during their captivity, so he will be sanctified in their reformation, and the making of them a holy people again, and will be glorified in their restoration, and the making of them a happy glorious people again.

(2.) Then they shall have *the benefit of it;* (v. 28.) *They shall know that I am the Lord their God.* Note, The providences of God concerning his people, that are designed for their good, have the grace of God going along with them, to teach them to eye God as *the Lord,* and *their God,* in all; and then they do them good. They shall see him as the Lord, and their God. [1.] In their calamities, that it was he who caused them to be led into captivity; and therefore they must not only submit to his will, but endeavour to answer his end in it. [2.] In their comfort, that it is he who has gathered them to their own land, and left none of them among the heathen. Note, By the variety of events that befall us, if we look up to God in all, we may come to acquaint ourselves better with his attributes and designs.

(3.) Then God and they will never part, v. 29. [1.] God will *pour out his Spirit* upon them, to prevent their departures from him, and returns to folly again, and to keep them close to their duty. And then, [2.] He will *never hide his face any more from them,* will never suspend his favour as he had done: he will never turn from doing them good, and, in order to that, he will effectually provide that they shall never turn from doing him service. Note, The indwelling of the Spirit is an infallible pledge of the continuance of God's favour. He will *hide his face* no more from those on whom he has *poured out his Spirit.* When therefore we pray that God would never cast us away from his presence, we must as earnestly pray that, in order to that, he would never take his Holy Spirit away from us, Ps. li. 11.

## CHAP. XL.

The waters of the sanctuary which this prophet saw in vision, (ch. xlvii. 1.) are a proper representation of this prophecy. Hitherto, the waters have been sometimes but to the ankles, in other places to the knees, or to the loins, but now the waters are risen and are become a river which cannot be passed over. Here is one con-

inued vision, beginning at this chapter, to the end of the book, which is justly looked upon to be one of the most difficult portions of scripture in all the book of God. The Jews will not allow any to read it till they are 30 years old, and tell those who do read it, that, though they cannot understand every thing in it, *when Elias comes, he will explain it*. Many commentators, both ancient and modern, have owned themselves at a loss what to make of it, and what use to make of it. But because it is hard to be understood, we must not *therefore* throw it by, but humbly *search* concerning it, get as far as we can into it, and as much as we can out of it, and, when we despair of satisfaction in every difficulty we meet with, bless God that our salvation does not depend upon it, but that things necessary are plain enough; and wait till God shall reveal even this unto us. These chapters are the more to be regarded, because the two last chapters of the *Revelation* seem to have a plain allusion to them, as *Rev.* 20. has to the foregoing prophecy of Gog and Magog. Here is the vision of a glorious temple; (in this chapter, and ch. xli, and xlii.) of God's taking possession of it, (ch. xliii.) orders concerning the priests that are to minister in this temple: (ch. xliiv.) the division of the land, what portion should be allotted for the sanctuary, what for the city, and what for the prince, both in his government of the people and his worship of God, (ch. xlv.) and further instructions for him and the people, ch. xlii. After the vision of the holy waters, we have the borders of the holy land, and the portions assigned to the tribes, and the dimensions and gates of the holy city, ch. xlvii, xlviii. Some make this to represent what *had been* during the flourishing state of the Jewish church, how glorious Solomon's temple was in its best days; that the captives might see what they had lost by sin, and might be the more humbled. But that seems not probable. The general scope of it I take to be, 1. To assure the captives that they should not only return to their own land, and be settled there, which had been often promised in the foregoing chapters, but that they should *have*, and therefore should be encouraged to *build*, another temple, which God would own, and where he would meet them, and bless them. That the ordinances of worship should be revived, and the sacred priesthood should there attend; and though they should not have a king to live in such splendour as formerly, yet they should have a prince or ruler (who is often spoken of in this vision) who should counterbalance the worship of God among them, and should himself be an example of diligent attendance upon it, and that prince, priests, and people, should have a very comfortable settlement and subsistence in their own land. 2. To direct them to look further than all this, and to expect the coming of the Messiah, who had before been prophesied of under the name of *David*, because he was the man that projected the building of the temple, and that should set up a spiritual temple, even the gospel-church, the glory of which should far exceed that of Solomon's temple, and which should continue to the end of time. The dimensions of these visionary buildings being so large, (the new temple more spacious than all the old Jerusalem, and the new Jerusalem greater than all the land of Canaan,) plainly intimates, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, that these things cannot be literally, but must be spiritually understood. And the gospel-temple, erected by Christ and his apostles, was so closely connected with the second material temple, was erected so carefully just at the time when that fell into decay, that it might be ready to receive its glories when it resigned them, that it was proper enough that they should both be referred to in one and the same vision. Under the type and figure of a temple and altar, priests and sacrifices, is foreshown the spiritual worship that should be performed in gospel-times, more agreeably to the nature both of God and man; and that perfected at last in the kingdom of glory, in which perhaps these visions will have their full accomplishment; and some think in some happy and glorious state of the gospel-church on this side heaven, in the latter days.

In this chapter, we have, I. A general account of this vision of the temple and city, v. 1.-4. II. A particular account of it entered upon; and a description given, 1. Of the outside wall, v. 5. 2. Of the east gate, v. 6.-19. 3. Of the north gate, v. 20.-23. 4. Of the south gate, (v. 24.-31.) and the chambers and other appurtenances belonging to these gates. 5. Of the inner court, both toward the east and toward the south, v. 32.-38. 6. Of the tables, v. 39.-43. 7. Of the lodgings for the singers and the priests, v. 44.-47. 8. Of the porch of the house, v. 48, 49.

1. **I**N the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the self-same day the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither. 2. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which *was* as the frame of a city on the south. 3. And he brought me thither, and, behold, *there was* a man, whose appearance *was* like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring-reed; and he stood in the gate. 4. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thy heart upon all that I shall shew *thee*; for to the intent that I might shew *them* unto thee *art* thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

Here is, 1. The date of this vision. It was in the 25th year of Ezekiel's captivity, (v. 1.) which some compute to be the 33d year of the first captivity, and is here said to be the 14th year after the city *was smitten*. See how seasonably the clearest and fullest prospects of their deliverance were given, then when they were in the depth of their distress; and an assurance of the return of the morning, then when they were in the midnight of their captivity; "Then the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither to Jerusalem, now that it was in ruins, desolate and deserted"—a pitiable sight to the prophet.

2. The scene where it was laid. The prophet was brought, *in the visions of God, to the land of Israel, v. 2.* And it was not the first time that he had been brought thither in vision; we had him carried to Jerusalem, to see it in its iniquity and shame; (ch. viii. 3.) here he is carried thither, to have a pleasing prospect of it in its glory, though its present aspect, now that it was quite depopulated, was *dis-mal*. He was set upon a very high mountain, as Moses upon the top of Pisgah, to view this land, which was now a second time a land of promise, not yet in possession. From the top of this mountain he saw *as the frame of a city*, the plan and model of it; but this city was a temple as large as a city. The new Jerusalem (*Rev.* xxi. 22.) had *no temple therein*; this here is *all temple*, which comes much to one. It is a city for men to dwell in; it is a temple for God to dwell in; for in the church on earth God dwells with men, in that in heaven men dwell with God. Both these are framed in the counsel of God, framed by infinite wisdom, and all very good.

3. The particular discoveries of this city (which he had at first a general view of) were made to him by a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, (v. 3.) not a created angel, but Jesus Christ, who should be found in fashion as a man, that he might both discover and build the gospel-temple. He brought him to this city, for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with, and access to, the benefits and privileges of God's house. He it is that *shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech.* vi. 13. His appearing like brass intimates both his brightness and his strength. John, in vision, saw *his feet like unto fine brass, Rev.* i. 15.

4. The dimensions of this city, or temple, and the several parts of it, were taken with a line of flax,



and a *measuring-reed*, or *rod*; (v. 3.) as carpenters have both their line and a wooden measure. The temple of God is built by line and rule; and those that would let others into the knowledge of it, must do it by that line and rule. The church is formed according to the scripture; *the pattern in the mount*. That is the *line* and the *measuring-reed* that is in the hand of Christ; with that doctrine and laws ought to be measured, and examined by that; for then *peace is upon the Israel of God*, when they *walk according to that rule*.

5. Directions are here given to the prophet to receive this revelation from the Lord, and transmit it pure and entire to the church, v. 4. (1.) He must carefully observe every thing that was said and done in this vision. His attention is raised and engaged; (v. 4.) "*Behold with thine eyes all that is showed thee*; do not only see it, but look intently upon it; and *hear with thine ears all that is said to thee*, diligently hearken to it, and be sure to *set thine heart upon it*; attend with a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind." What we see of the works of God, and what we *hear* of the word of God, will do us no good, unless we *set our hearts* upon it, as those that reckon ourselves nearly concerned in it, and expect advantage to our souls by it. (2.) He must faithfully declare it to the house of Israel, that they may have the comfort of it; therefore he *receives*, that he may *give*. Thus the *Revelation of Jesus Christ* was lodged in the hands of John, that he might signify it to the churches, Rev. i. 1. And because he is to declare it as a message from God, he must therefore be fully apprised of it himself, and much affected with it. Note, Those who are to preach God's word to others, ought to study it well themselves, and *set their hearts upon it*. Now the reason given why he must both observe it himself and declare it to the house of Israel, is, because to this intent he is *brought hither*, and has it *showed him*. Note, When the things of God are showed us, it concerns us to consider to *what intent* they are *showed us*; and when we are sitting under the ministry of the word, to consider to *what intent* we are *brought thither*, that we may answer the end of our coming, and may not receive the grace of God, in showing us such things, in vain.

5. And, behold, a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring-reed of six cubits *long*, by the cubit; and a hand-breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building one reed, and the height one reed. 6. Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, *which was one reed broad*, and the other threshold of the gate, *which was one reed broad*. 7. And *every little chamber was one reed long*, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers *were five cubits*; and the threshold of the gate, by the porch of the gate within, *was one reed*. 8. He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. 9. Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate *was inward*. 10. And the little chambers of the gate eastward *were three on this side*, and three on that side; they three *were* of one measure:

and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. 11. And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits *and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits*. 12. The space also before the little chambers *was one cubit on this side*, and the space *was one cubit on that side*; and the little chambers *were six cubits on this side*, and six cubits on that side. 13. He measured then the gate from the roof of *one little chamber* to the roof of another: the breadth *was five and twenty cubits*, door against door. 14. He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate. 15. And from the face of the gate of the entrance, unto the face of the porch of the inner gate, *were fifty cubits*. 16. And *there were narrow windows* to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches; and windows *were round about inward*: and upon *each post were palm-trees*. 17. Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, *there were chambers*, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers *were upon the pavement*. 18. And the pavement by the side of the gates, over against the length of the gates, *was the lower pavement*. 19. Then he measured the breadth, from the fore-front of the lower gate unto the fore-front of the inner court without, a hundred cubits eastward and northward. 20. And the gate of the outward court, that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof. 21. And the little chambers thereof *were three on this side*, and three on that side; and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof *was fifty cubits*, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 22. And their windows, and their arches, and their palm-trees, *were after the measure of the gate that looketh towards the east*; and they went up unto it by seven steps; and the arches thereof *were before them*. 23. And the gate of the inner court *was over against the gate toward the north*, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate a hundred cubits. 24. After that he brought me toward the south, and, behold, a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures. 25. And *there were windows in it*, and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length *was fifty cubits*, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 26. And *there were seven steps* to go up to it, and the arches thereof *were before them*: and it had palm-trees, one on

this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

The measuring-reed which was in the hand of the surveyor-general, was mentioned before, v. 3. Here we are told, (v. 5.) what was the exact length of it, which must be observed, because the house was measured by it. It was six *cubits* long, reckoning, not by the common cubit, but the *cubit of the sanctuary*, the sacred cubit, by which it was fit that this holy house should be measured, and that was a hand-breadth, four inches, longer than the common cubit, the common cubit was eighteen inches, this twenty-two, see *ch. xliii.* 13. yet some of the critics contend, that this *measuring-reed* was but six common cubits in length, and one hand-breadth added to the whole. The former seems more probable. Here is an account,

I. Of the *outer wall* of the house, which compassed it round, which was three yards thick, and three yards high, which denotes the separation between the church and the world on every side; and the divine protection which the church is under. If a wall of this vast thickness will not secure it, God himself will be a *Wall of fire* round about it; whoever attack it, it is at their peril.

II. Of the several gates with the chambers adjoining to them. Here is no mention of the outer court of all, which was called the *court of the Gentiles*; some think, because in gospel-times there should be such a vast confluence of Gentiles to the church, that their court should be left *unmeasured*, to signify that the worshippers in that court should be *unnumbered*, Rev. vii. 9, 11, 12.

1. He begins with the *east gate*, because that was the usual way of entering into the lower end of the temple; the holy of holies being at the *west* end, in opposition to the idolatrous heathen that worshipped toward the *east*. Now, in the account of this gate, observe,

(1.) That he went up to it by *stairs*, (v. 6.) for the gospel-church was exalted above that of the Old Testament, and when we go to *worship God*, we must *ascend*; so is the call, Rev. iv. 1. Come up hither; *Sursum corda—Up with your hearts.*

(2.) That the chambers, adjoining to the gates were but *little chambers*, about ten feet square. v. 7. These were for those to lodge in, who attended the service of the house. And it becomes such as are made spiritual priests to God, to content themselves with *little chambers*, and not to seek great things to themselves; so that we may but have a place within the verge of God's court, we have reason to be thankful though it be in a *little chamber*, a mean apartment, though we be but door-keepers there.

(3.) The chambers, as they were each of them *four-square*, denoting their stability and due proportion, and their exact agreement with the rule, (for they were each of them one reed long, and one reed broad,) so they were all of *one measure*, that there might be an *equality* among the attendants on the service of the house.

(4.) The chambers were very *many*; for in our Father's house there are *many mansions*, (John xiv. 2.) in his house above, and in that here on earth. In the secret of his tabernacle shall those be hid, and in a safe pavilion, whose desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life, Ps. xxvii. 4, 5. Some make these chambers to represent the particular congregations of believers, which are parts of the *great temple*, the universal church, which are, and must be, framed by the scripture-line and rule, and which Jesus Christ takes the measure of; that is, takes cognizance of, for he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

(5.) It is said, (v. 14.) *He made also the posts.*

He that now *measured* them was the same that *made* them; for Christ is the Builder of his church, and therefore is best able to give us the knowledge of it. And his reducing them to the rule and standard is called his *making* of them, for no account is made of them further than they agree with that; *To the law, and to the testimony.*

(6.) Here are posts of sixty cubits, which, some think, was literally fulfilled, when Cyrus, in his edict for rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, ordered that the height thereof should be sixty cubits, that is, thirty yards, and more, Ezra vi. 3.

(7.) Here were windows to the *little chambers*, and windows to the *posts and arches*, to the cloisters below, and *windows round about*, (v. 16.) to signify the light from heaven with which the church is illuminated; divine revelation is let into it for instruction, direction, and comfort to those that dwell in God's house; light to work by, light to walk by, light to see themselves and one another by. There were lights to the *little chambers*; even the least, and least considerable parts and members of the church, shall have light afforded them. *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.* But they are *narrow windows*, as those in the temple, 1 Kings vi. 4. The discoveries made to the church on earth are but narrow and scanty, compared with what shall be in the future state, when we shall no longer *see through a glass darkly*.

(8.) Divers *courts* are here spoken of; an outermost of all, then an outer court, then an inner, and then the innermost of all, into which the priests only entered; which, some think, may put us in mind "of the diversities of gifts, and graces, and offices, in the several members of Christ's mystical body here; as also of the several degrees of glory in the courts and mansions of heaven; as there are stars in several spheres, and stars of several magnitudes, in the fixed firmament."—*English Annotations.* Some draw nearer to God than others, and have a more intimate acquaintance with divine things; but to a child of God a day in any of *his courts* is *better than a thousand* elsewhere. These courts had porches, or piazzas, round them, for the shelter of those that attended in them, from wind and weather; for when we are in the way of our duty to God, we may believe ourselves to be under his special protection, that he will graciously provide for us, nay, that he will himself be to us a *Covert from the storm and tempest*, Isa. iv. 5, 6.

(9.) On the posts were *palm-trees* engraven, (v. 16.) to signify that *the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree*, in the courts of God's house, Ps. xcii. 12. The more they are *depressed* with the burthen of affliction, the more strongly do they *grow*, as they say of the *palm-trees*. It likewise intimates the saints' victory and triumph over their spiritual enemies; they have *palms in their hands*; (Rev. vii. 9.) but lest they should drop these, or have them snatched out of their hands, they are here engraven upon the *posts* of the temple as perpetual monuments of their honour; *Thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph.* Nay, believers shall themselves be made pillars in the temple of our God, and shall *go no more out*, and shall have his *name engraven* on them, which will be their brightest ornament and honour, Rev. iii. 12.

(10.) Notice is here taken of the *pavement* of the court, v. 17, 18. The word intimates that the pavement was made of *porphyry-stone*, which was of the colour of *burning coals*; for the brightest and most sparkling glories of this world should be put and kept *under our feet* when we draw near to God, and are attending upon him. The stars are, as it were, the *burning coals*, or stones of a *fiery colour*, with which the pavement of God's celestial temple is laid; and if the pavement of the court be

so bright and glittering, how glorious must we conclude the mansions of that house to be!

2. The gates that looked toward the *north*, (v. 20.) and toward the *south*, (v. 24.) with their appurtenances, are much the same with that toward the *east*, after the measure of the first gate, v. 21. But the description is repeated very particularly. And thus largely was the structure of the tabernacle related in Exodus, and of the temple in the books of Kings and Chronicles, to signify the special notice God *does take*, and his ministers *should take*, of all that belong to his church; his delight is in them, his eye is upon them. He knows all that are his, all his living temples, and all that belongs to them. Observe,

(1.) This temple had not only a gate toward the *east*, to let into it the *children of the east*, that were famous for their wealth and wisdom; but it had a gate to the *north*, and another to the *south*, for the admission of the poor and less civilized nations. The new Jerusalem has twelve *gates*, three towards each quarter of the world; (Rev. xxi. 13.) for many shall come from all parts, to *sit down* there, Matth. viii. 11.

(2.) To those gates they went up *by steps, seven steps*, (v. 22.—26.) which, as some observe, may remind us of the necessity of advancing in grace and holiness, adding one grace to another; going from step to step, *from strength to strength*, still pressing forward toward perfection; upward, upward, toward heaven, the temple above.

27. And *there was* a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south a hundred cubits. 28. And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures; 29. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and *there were* windows in it, and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 30. And the arches round about *were* five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad: 31. And the arches thereof *were* toward the outer court; and palm-trees *were* upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it *had* eight steps. 32. And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures. 33. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, *were* according to these measures; and *there were* windows therein, and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 34. And the arches thereof *were* toward the outward court; and palm-trees *were* upon the posts thereof, and on this side and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps. 35. And he brought me to the north gate, and measured *it* according to these measures: 36. The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length

*was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 37. And the posts thereof *were* toward the outer court; and palm-trees *were* upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps. 38. And the chambers, and the entries thereof, *were* by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt-offering.

In these verses, we have a delineation of the *inner court*; The survey of the outer court ended with the south side of it. This of the inner court begins with the south side, (v. 27.) proceeds to the east, (v. 32.) and so to the north; (v. 35.) for here is no gate either of the outer or inner court toward the *west*; it should seem that in Solomon's temple there were gates westward, for we find porters toward the west, 1 Chron. ix. 24.—xxvi. 18. But Josephus says, that in the second temple there was no gate on the west side. Observe,

1. These gates into the inner court were exactly uniform with those into the outer court; the dimensions the same, the chambers adjoining the same, the galleries or rows round the court the same, the very engravings on the posts the same. The work of grace, and its workings, are the same, for substance, in grown Christians that they are in young beginners, only that the former are got so much nearer their perfection. The faith of all the saints is alike *precious*, though it be not alike *strong*. There is a great resemblance between one child of God and another; for *all they are brethren*, and bear the same image.

2. The ascent into the outer court at each gate was by seven *steps*, but the ascent into the inner court at each gate was by eight *steps*. This is expressly taken notice of, (v. 31, 34, 37.) to signify that the nearer we *approach* to God, the more we should *rise* above this world and the things of it. The people, who worshipped in the outer court, must rise seven *steps* above other people, but the priests, who attended in the inner court, must rise eight *steps* above them; must exceed them at least one step more than they exceed other people.

39. And in the porch of the gate *were* two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering. 40. And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, *were* two tables; and on the other side, which *was* at the porch of the gate, *were* two tables. 41. Four tables *were* on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew *their sacrifices*. 42. And the four tables *were* of hewn stone for the burnt-offering, of a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt-offering and the sacrifice. 43. And within *were* hooks, a hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables *was* the flesh of the offering. 44. And without the inner gate *were* the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which *was* at the side of the north gate; and their prospect

was toward the south; one at the side of the east gate, *having* the prospect toward the north. 45. And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house. 46. And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok, among the sons of Levi, which come near to the Lord to minister unto him. 47. So he measured the court, a hundred cubits long, and a hundred cubits broad, four-square, and the altar that was before the house. 48. And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured *each* post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. 49. The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits: and he brought me by the steps whereby they went up to it; and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

In these verses we have an account,

1. Of the tables that were in the porch of the gates of the *inner court*. We find no description of the altars of burnt-offerings in the midst of that court, till *ch. xliii. 13*. But because the one altar under the law was to be exchanged for a multitude of tables under the gospel, here is *early notice* taken of the tables, at our entrance into the inner court; for till we come to partake of the *table of the Lord*, we are but professors at large; our admission to that is our entrance into the *inner court*. But in this gospel-temple we meet with no altar, till after the glory of the Lord has taken possession of it, for Christ is our *Altar*, that sanctifies every gift. Here were *eight tables* provided, whereon to *slay the sacrifices*, *v. 41*. We read not of any tables for this purpose, either in the tabernacle, or in Solomon's temple. But here they are provided, to intimate the multitude of spiritual sacrifices that should be brought to God's house in gospel-times, and the multitude of hands that should be employed in offering up those sacrifices. Here were the *shambles* for the altar; here were the *dressers* on which they laid the flesh of the sacrifice, the *knives* with which they cut it up, and the *hooks* on which they hung it up, that it might be ready to be offered on the altar, (*v. 43*.) and there also they washed the burnt-offerings, (*v. 38*.) to intimate that before we draw near to God's altar, we must have every thing in readiness; must wash our hands, our hearts, those spiritual sacrifices, and so *compass God's altar*.

2. The use that some of the *chambers* mentioned before, were put to. (1.) Some were for the *singers*, *v. 44*. It should seem, they were first provided for before any other that attend'd this temple-service, to intimate, not only that singing of psalms should still continue a gospel-ordinance, but that the gospel should furnish all that embrace it with abundant matter for joy and praise, and give them occasion to *break forth into singing*, which is often foretold concerning gospel-times, *Ps. xevi. 1.—cxviii. 1*. Christians should be singers. *Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him.* (2.) Others of them were for the *priests*; both those

that kept the *charge of the house*, to cleanse it, and to see that none came into it to pollute it, and to keep it in good repair, (*v. 45*.) and those that kept the *charge of the altar*, (*v. 46*.) that came near to the Lord to minister to him. God will find convenient lodging for all his servants. Those that do the work of his house, shall enjoy the comforts of it.

3. Of the inner court; the court of the priests, which was fifty yards square, *v. 47*. The altar that was before the house, was placed in the midst of this court, over against the three gates, which standing in a direct line with the three gates of the outer court, when the gates were set open, all the people in the outer court might through them be spectators of the service done at the altar. Christ is both our Altar and our Sacrifice, to whom we must look with an eye of faith in all our approaches to God, and he is Salvation in the midst of the earth, (*Ps. lxxiv. 12*.) to be looked unto from all quarters.

4. Of the porch of the house. The temple is called the house, emphatically, as if no other house were worthy to be called so. Before this house there was a porch, to teach us not to rush hastily and inconsiderately into the presence of God, but gradually, that is, gravely, and with solemnity, passing first through the outer court, then the inner, then the porch, ere we enter into the house. Between this porch and the altar was a place where the priests used to pray, *Joel ii. 17*. In the porch, beside the posts on which the doors were hung, there were pillars, probably for state and ornament, like Jachin and Boaz; *He will establish; in him is strength*, *v. 49*. In the gospel-church, every thing is strong and firm, and every thing ought to be kept in its place, and to be done decently and in order.

## CHAP. XLI.

An account was given of the porch of the house, in the close of the foregoing chapter, this brings us to the temple itself; the description of which here given creates much difficulty to the critical expositors, and occasions differences among them. Those must consult them, who are nice in their inquiries into the meaning of the particulars of this delineation; It shall suffice us to observe, I. The dimensions of the house, the posts of it, (*v. 1*.) the door, (*v. 2*.) the wall and the side-chambers, (*v. 5, 6*.) the foundations and wall of the chambers, their doors, (*v. 8, 11*.) and the house itself, *v. 13*. II. The dimensions of the oracle, or most holy place, *v. 3, 4*. III. An account of another building over against the separate place, *v. 12, 15*. IV. The manner of the building of the house, *v. 7, 16, 17*. V. The ornaments of the house, *v. 18, 20*. VI. The altar of incense, and the table, *v. 22*. VII. The doors between the temple and the oracle, *v. 23, 26*. There is so much difference both in the terms and in the rules of architecture between one age and another, one place and another, that it ought not to be any stumbling-block to us, that there is so much in these descriptions dark, and hard to be understood, about the meaning of which the learned are not agreed. To one not skilled in mathematics, the mathematical description of a modern structure would be scarcely intelligible; and yet to a common carpenter or mason among the Jews at that time, we may suppose that all this, in the literal sense of it, was easy enough.

1. AFTERWARD he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle. 2. And the breadth of the door was ten cubits; and the sides of the door were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side; and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits. 3. Then went he inward, and measured the post of

the door two cubits, and the door six cubits, and the breadth of the door seven cubits. 4. So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple; and he said unto me, *This is the most holy place.* 5. After he measured the wall of the house six cubits; and the breadth of *every* side-chamber four cubits, round about the house on every side. 6. And the side-chambers *were* three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall, which *was* of the house for the side-chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house. 7. And *there was* an enlarging and a winding about still upward to the side-chambers; for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house *was still* upward, and so increased *from* the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst. 8. I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side-chambers *were* a full reed of six great cubits. 9. The thickness of the wall, which *was* for the side-chamber without, *was* five cubits; and *that* which *was* left *was* the place of the side-chambers that *were* within. 10. And between the chambers *was* the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side. 11. And the doors of the side-chambers *were* toward the place that *was* left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the place that *was* left *was* five cubits round about.

We are still attending a prophet that is under the guidance of an angel, and therefore attend with reverence, though we are often at a loss to know both what this is, and what it is to us. Observe here,

1. After the prophet had observed the courts, he was at length *brought to the temple*, v. 1. If we diligently attend to the instructions given us in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led further, into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They that are willing to dwell in God's courts, shall at length be brought into his temple. Ezekiel was himself a *priest*, but by the iniquity and calamity of the times was cut short of his birthright-privilege, of ministering in the temple; but God makes up the loss to him, by introducing him into this prophetic, evangelical, celestial temple, and employing him to transmit a description of it to the church, in which he was dignified above all the rest of his order.

2. When our Lord Jesus spake of the destroying of *this temple*, which his hearers understood of this second temple of Jerusalem, he spake of the temple of his body; (John ii. 19, 21.) and with good reason might he speak so ambiguously, when Ezekiel's vision had a joint respect to them both together, including also his mystical body the church, which is called the *house of God*, (1 Tim. iii. 15.) and all the members of that body, which are *living temples*, in whom the Spirit dwells.

3. The very *posts* of this temple, the door-posts,

were as far one from the other, and, consequently, the door was as wide, as *the whole breadth of the tabernacle* of Moses, (v. 1.) Twelve cubits, Exod. xxvi. 16, 22, 25. In comparison with what had been under the law, we may say, *Wide is the gate* which leads into the church; the ceremonial law, that wall of partition which had so much straitened the gate, being taken down.

4. The most holy place was an exact square, twenty cubits each way, v. 4. For the New Jerusalem is exactly four-square, (Rev. xxi. 16.) denoting its stability; for we look for a city that cannot be moved.

5. The upper stories were larger than the lower, v. 7. The walls of the temple were six cubits thick at the bottom, five in the middle story, and four in the highest, which gave room to enlarge the chambers the higher they went; but care was taken that the timber might have *fast hold*; though God builds *high* he builds *firm*; yet so as not to weaken one part for the strengthening of another; they had hold, but not *in the wall of the house*. By this spreading gradually, the *side-chambers* that were *on the height of the house*, in the uppermost story of all, were six cubits; whereas the lowest were but four; they gained a cubit every story. The higher we build up ourselves in our most holy faith, the more should our hearts, those living temples, be enlarged.

12. Now the building that *was* before the separate place, at the end toward the west, *was* seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building *was* five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits.

13. So he measured the house, a hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, a hundred cubits long; 14. Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, a hundred cubits. 15. And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which *was* behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side, and on the other side, a hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court; 16. The door-posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, ceiled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows *were* covered; 17. To that above the door, even unto the inner house and without, and by all the wall round about, within and without, by measure. 18. And *it was* made with cherubims and palm-trees, so that a palm-tree *was* between a cherub and a cherub; and *every* cherub had two faces; 19. So that the face of a man *was* toward the palm-tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side: *it was* made through all the house round about. 20. From the ground unto above the door *were* cherubims and palm-trees made, and *on* the wall of the temple. 21. The posts of the temple *were* squared, *and* the face of the sanctuary; the

appearance of the one as the appearance of the other. 22. The altar of wood was three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood: and he said unto me, This is the table that is before the Lord. 23. And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. 24. And the doors had two leaves *apiece*, two turning leaves; two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other door. 25. And there were made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm-trees, like as were made upon the walls; and there were thick planks upon the face of the porch without. 26. And there were narrow windows and palm-trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and upon the side-chambers of the house, and thick planks.

Here is, 1. An account of a building that was before the separate place, before the temple, *at the end toward the west*, (v. 12.) which is here measured, and compared, (v. 13.) with the measure of the house, and appears to be of equal dimensions with it. This stood in a court by itself, which is measured, v. 15. and its galleries, or chambers, belonging to it, its posts and windows, and the ornaments of them, v. 15.—17. But what use was to be made of this other building, we are not told; perhaps, in this vision, it signified the setting up a church among the Gentiles, not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of quite another nature, and which should soon supersede it.

2. A description of the ornaments of the temple, and the other building. The walls on the inside from top to bottom were adorned with *cherubims and palm-trees*, placed alternately as in Solomon's temple, 1 Kings vi. 29. Each cherub is here said to have two faces; the face of a man toward the palm-tree on one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side, v. 19. These seem to represent the angels, who have more than the wisdom of a man, and the courage of a lion; and in both they have an eye to the palms of victory and triumph, which are set before them, and which they are sure of in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness. And in the assemblies of the saints angels are in a special manner present, 1 Cor. xi. 10.

3. A description of the posts of the doors, both of the temple and of the sanctuary; they were *squared*, (v. 21.) not round like pillars; and the *appearance of the one as the appearance of the other*. In the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, the door of the sanctuary, or most holy, was narrower than that of the temple; but here it was full as broad; for in gospel-times the way into the holiest of all is made more manifest than it had been under the Old Testament, (Heb. ix. 8.) and therefore the door is wider. These doors are described, v. 23, 24. The temple and the sanctuary had each of them their door, and they were *two-leaved*, folding doors.

4. We have here the description of the altar of incense, here said to be an altar of wood, v. 22. No mention is made of its being overlaid with gold; but surely it was intended to be so, else it would not bear the fire with which the incense was to be burned; unless we will suppose that it served only to put the censers upon. Or else it intimates, that

the incense to be offered in the gospel-temple shall be purely spiritual, and the fire spiritual, which will not consume an altar of wood. Therefore this altar is called a table; *this is the table that is before the Lord*. Here, as before, we find the altar turned into a table; for the great sacrifice being now offered, that which we have to do, is, to feast upon the sacrifice at the Lord's table.

5. Here is the adorning of the doors and windows with palm-trees, that they might be of a piece with the walls of the house, v. 25, 26. Thus the living temples are adorned, not with gold or silver, or costly array, but with the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible.

## CHAP. XLII.

This chapter continues and concludes the describing and measuring of this mystical temple, which it is very hard to understand the particular architecture of, and yet more hard to comprehend the mystical meaning of. Here is, 1. A description of the chambers that were about the courts, their situation and structure, v. 1.—13. And the uses for which they were designed, v. 13, 14. II. A survey of the whole compass of ground, which was taken up with the house, and the courts belonging to it, v. 15.—20.

1. **T**HEN he brought me forth into the outer court, the way toward the north, and he brought me into the chamber that was over against the separate place, and which was before the building toward the north. 2. Before the length of a hundred cubits was the north door, and the breadth was fifty cubits. 3. Over against the twenty cubits which were for the inner court, and over against the pavement which was for the outer court, was gallery against gallery in three stories. 4. And before the chambers was a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit: and their doors toward the north. 5. Now, the upper chambers were shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building. 6. For they were in three stories, but had no pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore the building was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground. 7. And the wall that was without over against the chambers, toward the outer court on the fore-part of the chambers, the length thereof was fifty cubits. 8. For the length of the chambers that were in the outer court was fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple were a hundred cubits. 9. And from under these chambers was the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the outer court. 10. The chambers were in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building. 11. And the way before them was like the appearance of the chambers which were toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they; and all their goings-out were both according to their fashions, and



according to their doors. 12. And according to the doors of the chambers that *were* toward the south *was* a door in the head of the way, *even* the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them. 13. Then said he unto me, The north chambers *and* the south chambers, which *are* before the separate place, they *be* holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; for the place *is* holy. 14. When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy *place* into the outer court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they *are* holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to *those things* which *are* for the people.

The prophet has taken a very exact view of the temple and the buildings belonging to it, and is now brought again into the *outer court*, to observe the *chambers* that were in that square.

1. Here is a description of these chambers; which (as that which went before) seems to us very *perplexed* and intricate, through our unacquaintance with the Hebrew language, and the rules of architecture at that time. We shall only observe, in general,

1. That about the temple, which was the place of public worship, there were private chambers, to teach us that our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances will not excuse us from the *duties of the closet*. We must not only worship in the courts of God's house, but must, both before and after our attendance there, enter into our chambers, enter into our closets, and read and meditate, and *pray to our Father in secret*; and a great deal of comfort the people of God have found in their communion with God in solitude.

2. That these chambers were *many*; there were three *stories* of them, and though the higher stories were not so large as the lower, yet they served as well for retirement, *v. 5, 6*. There were *many*, that there might be conveniences for all such devout people as Anna the prophetess, who *departed not from the temple night or day*, Luke ii. 37. *In my Father's house are many mansions*; in his house on earth there are so; multitudes by faith have taken lodgings in his sanctuary, and yet *there is room*.

3. That these chambers, though they were private, yet were near the temple, within *view* of it, within *reach* of it, to teach us to *prefer* public worship before private—(*The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, and so must we,) and to refer our private worship to the public. Our religious performances in our chambers must be to prepare us for the exercises of devotion in public, and to further us in our improvement of them as our opportunities are.

4. That before these chambers there were *walks of five yards broad*, (*v. 4.*) in which those that had lodgings in these chambers might meet for conversation, might walk and talk together for their mutual edification, might communicate their knowledge and experiences. For we are not to spend all our time between the church and the chamber, though a great deal of time may be spent to very good purpose in both; but man is made for society, and

Christians for the communion of saints; and the duties of that communion we must make conscience of, and the privileges and pleasures of that communion we must take the comfort of. It is promised to Joshua, who was High Priest in the second temple, that God will *give him places to walk in among them that stand by*, Zech. iii. 7.

II. Here is the use of these chambers appointed, *v. 13, 14*.

1. They were *for the priests*, that approach unto the Lord, that they may be always near their business, and may not be non-residents; *therefore* they are called *holy chambers*, because they were for the use of them that ministered in holy things, during their ministration. Those that have public work to do for God and the souls of men, have need to be much *in private*, to fit themselves for it. Ministers should spend much time in their chambers, in reading, meditation, and prayer, that their *profiting may appear*; and they ought to be provided with conveniences for this purpose.

2. There the priests were to deposit *the most holy things*, those parts of the offerings which fell to their share; and there they were to *eat them*, they and their families, in a religious manner; for *the place is holy*; and thus they must make a difference between those feasts upon the sacrifice and other meals.

3. There (among other uses) they were to lay their vestments, which God had appointed them to wear when they ministered at the altar; their linen ephods, coats, girdles, and bonnets. We read of the providing of priests' garments after their return out of captivity, Neh. vii. 70, 72. When they had ended their service at the altar, they must lay by those garments, to signify that the use of them should continue only during that dispensation; but they must *put on other garments*, such as other people wear, when they *approached to these things which were for the people*, to do that part of their service which related to the people, to teach them the law and to answer their inquiries. Their holy garments must be *laid up*, that they may be kept clean and decent for the credit of their service.

15. Now, when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east, and measured it round about. 16. He measured the east side with the measuring-reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 17. He measured the north side five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 18. He measured the south side five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed. 19. He turned about to the west side, *and measured* five hundred *reeds*, with the measuring-reed. 20. He measured it by the four sides. it had a wall round about, five hundred *reeds* long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

We have attended the measuring of this mystical temple, and are now to see how far the holy ground on which we tread extends; and that also is here measured, and found to take in a great compass. Observe,

1. What the dimensions of it were. It extended each way 500 reeds, (*v. 16.—19.*) each reed above three yards and a half, so that it reached every way about an English measured mile, which, the ground

lying square, was above four miles round. Thus large were the suburbs, (as I may call them) of this mystical temple; signifying the great extent of the church in gospel-times, when all nations should be *discipled*, and the kingdoms of the world made Christ's kingdoms. Room should be made in God's courts for the numerous forces of the Gentiles that shall flow into them, as was foretold, Isa. xlix. 18.—lx. 4. It is in part fulfilled already in the accession of the Gentiles to the church; and we trust it shall have a more full accomplishment, when the *fulfness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved*.

2. Why the dimensions of it were made thus large. It was to *make a separation*, by putting a very large distance *between the sanctuary and the profane place*; and therefore there was a *wall* surrounding it, to keep off those that were unclean, and to separate between the *precious and the vile*. Note, A *difference is to be put* between common and sacred things, between God's name and other names, between his day and other days, his book and other books, his institutions and other observances; and a *distance to be put* between our worldly and religious actions, so as still to go about the worship of God with a *solemn pause*.

### CHAP. XLIII.

The prophet having given us a view of the mystical temple, the gospel-church, as he received it from the Lord, that it might appear not to be erected in vain, comes to describe, in this and the next chapter, the worship that should be performed in it, but under the type of the Old Testament services. In this chapter, we have, I. Possession taken of this temple, by the glory of God filling it, v. 1..6. II. A promise given of the continuance of God's presence with his people, upon condition of their return to, and continuance in, the instituted way of his worship, and their abandoning of idols and idolatry, v. 7..12. III. A description of the altar of burnt-offerings, v. 13..17. IV. Directions given for the consecration of that altar, v. 18..27. Ezekiel seems here to stand between God and Israel, as Moses the servant of the Lord did, when the sanctuary was first set up.

1. **A**FTERWARD he brought me to the gate, *even the gate that looketh toward the east*: 2. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice *was* like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. 3. And *it was* according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, *even* according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions *were* like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. 4. And the glory of the LORD came into the house, by the way of the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east. 5. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. 6. And I heard *him* speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me.

After Ezekiel had patiently surveyed the temple of God, the greatest glory of this earth, he is admitted to a higher form, and honoured with a sight of the glories of the upper world; it is said to him, *Come up hither*. He has seen the temple, and sees it to be very spacious and splendid; but till the glory of God comes into it, it is but like the dead bodies he had seen in vision, (*ch. xxxvii.*) that had *no breath*, till the Spirit of life entered into them.

Here therefore he sees the *house filled* with God's glory.

1. He has a vision of the *glory of God*, (*v. 2.*) *the glory of the God of Israel*, that God who is in covenant with Israel, and whom they serve and worship. The idols of the heathen have no glory but what they owe to the goldsmith or the painter; but this is the glory of the God of Israel! This glory *came from the way of the east*, and therefore he was brought to the *gate that leads toward the east*, to expect the appearance and approach of it. Christ's *star was seen in the east*, and he is that *other Angel that ascends out of the east*, Rev. vii. 2. For he is the Morning Star, he is the Sun of Righteousness. Two things he observed in this appearance of the glory of God. (1.) The power of his word which he heard; *His voice was like a noise of many waters*, which is heard very far, and makes impressions; the noise of purling streams is grateful, of a roaring sea dreadful, Rev. i. 15.—xiv. 2. Christ's gospel, in the glory of which he shines, was to be proclaimed aloud, the report of it to be heard far; to some it is a savour of life, to others of death, according as they are. (2.) The brightness of his appearance which he saw; *The earth shined with his glory*; for God is Light, and none can bear the lustre of his light, none *has seen or can see it*. Note, That glory of God which shines in the church, shines on the world. When God appeared for David, *the brightness that was before him* dispersed the clouds, Ps. xviii. 12.

This appearance of the glory of God to Ezekiel here, he observed to be the same with the vision he saw, when he first received his commission, (*ch. i. 4.*) *according to that by the river Chebar*; (*v. 3.*) because God is the same, he was pleased to manifest himself in the same manner, for with him is *no variableness*. "It was the same" (says he) "as that which I saw *when I came to destroy the city*, that is, to foretell the city's destruction;" which he did with such authority and efficacy, and the event did so certainly answer the prediction, that he might be said to *destroy it*. As a judge, in God's name, he passed a sentence upon it, which was soon executed. God appeared in the same manner when he sent him to speak words of terror, and when he sent him to speak words of comfort; for in both God is, and will be, glorified. *He kills, and he makes alive; he wounds, and he heals*, Dent. xxxii. 39. To the same hand that *destroyed* we must look for deliverance; *he has smitten, and he will bind up*. *Una eademque manus vulnus operumque tulit—The same hand inflicted the wound, and healed it*.

2. He has a vision of the entrance of this glory into the temple. When he saw this glory, he *felt upon his face*, (*v. 3.*) as not able to bear the lustre of God's glory, or, rather, as one *willing* to give him the glory of it by an humble and reverent adoration. But the Spirit *took him up*, (*v. 5.*) when the *glory of the Lord was come into the house*, (*v. 4.*) that he might see how the house was filled with it. He saw how the glory of the Lord in this same appearance departed from the temple, because it was profaned, to his great grief; now he shall see it return to the temple to his great satisfaction. See *ch. x. 18, 19.—xi. 23*. Note, Though God may forsake his people for a small moment, he will return with everlasting loving-kindness. God's glory *filled the house* as it had filled the tabernacle which Moses set up, and the temple of Solomon, Exod. xl. 34. 1 Kings viii. 10. Now we do not find that ever the Shechinah did in that manner take possession of the second temple, and therefore this was to have its accomplishment in that glory of the divine grace which shines so bright in the gospel-church, and fills it. Here is no mention of a cloud filling the house as formerly, for we now *with open face*

behold the glory of the Lord, in the face of Christ, and not as of old through the cloud of types.

3. He receives instructions more immediately from the glory of the Lord; as Moses did when God had taken possession of the tabernacle; (Lev. i. 1.) *I heard him speaking to me out of the house*, v. 6. God's glory shining in the church, we must from thence expect to receive divine oracles. *The man stood by me*; we could not bear to hear the voice of God any more than to see the face of God, if Jesus Christ did not *stand by us* as Mediator. Or if this was a created angel, it is observable that when God began to speak to Ezekiel, he *stood by*, and gave way; having no more to say. Nay, he stood by the prophet, as a learner with him; for *to the principalities and powers*, to the angels themselves, who desire to look into these things, *is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10. The man *stood by him* to conduct him thither where he might receive further discoveries, ch. xlv. 1.

7. And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, *neither they, nor their kings*, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places; 8. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them; they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. 9. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. 10. Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. 11. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings-out thereof, and the comings-in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof; and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. 12. This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about *shall be most holy*. Behold, this is the law of the house.

God does here, in effect, renew his covenant with his people Israel, upon his retaking possession of the house, and Ezekiel negotiates the matter, as Moses formerly. This would be of great use to the captives at their return, both for direction and encouragement; but it looks further, to those that are blessed with the privileges of the gospel-temple, that they may understand how they are before him on their good behaviour.

1. God, by the prophet, puts them in mind of their former provocations, for which they had long

lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This conviction is spoken to them, to make way for the comforts designed them. Though God *gives, and upbraids not*, it becomes us, when he *forgives*, to upbraid ourselves with our unworthy conduct toward him. Let them now remember therefore,

(1.) That they had formerly *defiled God's holy name*, had profaned and abused all those sacred things by which he had *made himself known* among them, v. 7. *They and their kings* had brought contempt on the religion they professed, and their relation to God, *by their spiritual whoredom*, their idolatry, and by worshipping images, which they called *their kings*, for so Moloch signifies; or lords, for so Baal signifies; but which were really the *carcases of kings*, not only lifeless and useless, but loathsome and abominable as dead carcases, in *their high places*, set up in honour of them. They had defiled God's name by *their abominations*. And what were they? It was in *setting their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts*, adding their own inventions to God's institutions, and urging all to a compliance with them, as if they had been of equal authority and efficacy; *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*; (Isa. xxix. 13.) or, rather, setting up altars to their idols even in the courts of the temple, than which a more impudent affront could not be put upon the Divine Majesty. Thus they set up a separation wall between him and them, which stopped the current of his favours to them, and spoiled the acceptableness of their services to him. See what an indignity sinners do to God, setting up their wills in opposition to his, and thrusting him out from what is his right; and see what injury they do to themselves; for the nearer any come to God with their sins, the further they set him at a distance from them. Some give this sense of it; Though their houses joined close to God's house, their posts and thresholds to his, so that they were in a manner his next neighbours, *there was but a wall between me and them*, (so it is in the margin) so that it might have been expected they should have acquainted themselves with him, and been in care to please him, yet they were not so much as neighbourly. Note, It often proves too true, *The nearer the church, the further from God*. They were, by profession, in covenant with God, and yet they had *defiled the place of his throne*, and of the *soles of his feet*, his temple, where he did both *reside and reign*. Jerusalem is called the *city of the Great King*, (Ps. xlviii. 2.) and his *footstool*, Ps. xcix. 5.—cxviii. 7. Note, When God's ordinances are *profaned*, his holy name is *polluted*.

(2.) That, for this, God had a controversy with them in their late troubles. They could not condemn him, for he had but brought upon them the desert of their sins; *Wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger*. Note, Those that pollute God's holy name, fall under his just displeasure.

2. He calls upon them to repent and reform, and, in order to that, to be ashamed of their iniquities; (v. 9.) "*Now let them put away their whoredom*; now that they have smarted so severely for it, and now that God is returning in mercy to them, and setting up his sanctuary again in the midst of them, now let them cast away their idols, and have no more to do with them, that they may not again forfeit the privileges which they have been taught to know the worth of by the want of them. Let them put away their idols, those loathsome *carcases of their kings, far from me*; from being a provocation to me." This was seasonable counsel now that the prophet had the platform of the temple to set before them; for, (1.) If they see that *platform*, they will surely be ashamed of their sins; (v. 10.) when they see what mercy God has in store for them,

withstanding their utter unworthiness of it, they will be ashamed to think of their disingenuous conduct toward him. Note, The goodness of God to us should lead us to repentance, especially to a penitential shame. Let them *measure the pattern* themselves; and see how much it exceeds the former pattern, and guess by that what great things God has in store for them; and surely it will put them out of countenance to think what the desert of their sins was. And then, (2.) If they be *ashamed* of their sins, they shall surely see more of the platform, v. 11. If they be *ashamed of all that they have done*, upon a general view of the goodness of God, let them have a more distinct, particular account of it. Note, Those that improve what they see and know of the goodness of God, shall see and know more of it. And then, and not till then, we are qualified for God's favours, when we are truly humbled for our own follies. "Show them the form of the house, let them see what a stately structure it will be, and withal show them the ordinances and laws of it." Note, With the foresights of our comforts, it is fit that we should get the knowledge of our duty; with the privileges of God's house we must acquaint ourselves with the rules of it. Show them these ordinances, that they may keep them, and do them. Note, Therefore we are made to know our duty, that we may do it, and be blessed in our deed.

3. He promises that they shall be such as they should be, and then he will be to them such as they would have him to be, v. 7. (1.) The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name. This is pure gospel. The precept of the law says, You must not defile my name: the grace of the gospel says, You shall not. Thus what is required in the covenant, is promised in the covenant, Jer. xxxii. 10. (2.) Then I will dwell in the midst of them for ever; and the same again, v. 9. God secures to us his good will by confirming in us his good work. If we do not defile his name, we may be sure that he will not depart from us.

4. The general law of God's house is laid down, v. 12.) That, whereas formerly only the chancel, or sanctuary, was most holy, now the whole mountain of the house shall be so. The whole limit thereof, including all the courts and all the chambers, shall be as the most holy place; signifying that in gospel-times, (1.) The whole church shall have the privilege of the *holy of holies*, that of a near access to God. All believers have now, under the gospel, boldness to enter into the holiest, (Heb. x. 19.) with this advantage, that, whereas the High Priest entered in the virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, we enter in the virtue of the blood of Jesus, and, wherever we are, we have through him access to the Father. (2.) The whole church shall be under a mighty obligation to press toward the perfection of holiness, as he who has called us is holy. All must now be most holy. Holiness becomes God's house for ever, and in gospel-times more than ever. Behold, this is the law of the house; let none expect the protection of it, that will not submit to this law.

13. And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and a hand-breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar. 14. And from the bottom upon the ground even to the lower settle shall be two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser set-

tle even to the greater settle shall be four cubits, and the breadth one cubit. 15. So the altar shall be four cubits; and from the altar and upward shall be four horns. 16. And the altar shall be twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof. 17. And the settle shall be fourteen cubits long, and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it shall be half a cubit; and the bottom thereof shall be a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east. 18. And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord God, These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. 19. And thou shalt give to the priest the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord God, a young bullock for a sin-offering. 20. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. 21. Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin-offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary. 22. And on the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin-offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse it with the bullock. 23. When thou hast made an end of cleansing it, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. 24. And thou shalt offer them before the Lord, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt-offering unto the Lord. 25. Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin-offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. 26. Seven days shall they purge the altar, and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. 27. And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord God.

This relates to the altar in this mystical temple, and that is mystical too; for Christ is our Altar. The Jews, after their return out of captivity, had an altar long before they had a temple, Ezra iii. 3. But this was an altar in the temple. Now here we have,

I. The measures of the altar, v. 13. It was six yards square at the top, and seven yards square at the bottom; it was four yards and a half high; it had a lower bench or shelf, here called a settle, a

yard from the ground, on which some of the priests stood to minister, and another two yards above that, on which others of them stood, and these were each of them half a yard broad, and had ledges on either side, that they might stand firm upon them. The sacrifices were killed at the table spoken of before, *ch.* xl. 39. What was to be burnt on the altar, was given up to those on the lower bench, and handed by them to those on the higher, and they laid it on the altar. Thus in the service of God we must be assistant to one another.

II. The ordinances of the altar. Directions are here given,

1. Concerning the dedication of the altar at first; *seven days* were to be spent in the dedication of it, and every day sacrifices were to be offered upon it, and particularly a goat for a *sin-offering*, (*v.* 25.) beside a young bullock for a *sin-offering* on the first day; (*v.* 19.) which teaches us in all our religious services to have an eye to Christ the great Sin-offering. Neither our persons nor our performances can be acceptable to God, unless sin be taken away, and that cannot be taken away but by the blood of Christ, which both sanctifies the altar, (for Christ entered by his own blood, *Heb.* ix. 12.) and the gift upon the altar. There were also to be a *bullock* and a *ram* offered for a *burnt-offering*, (*v.* 24.) which was intended purely for the glory of God, to teach us to have an eye to that in all our services; we present ourselves as living sacrifices, and our devotions as spiritual sacrifices, that we and they may be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.

The dedication of the altar is here called the *cleansing and purging* of it, *v.* 20, 26. Christ, our Altar, though he had no pollution to be cleansed from, yet *sanctified* himself; (*John* xvii. 19.) and when we consecrate the altars of our hearts to God, to have the fire of holy love always burning upon them, we must see that they be *purified and cleansed* from the love of the world and the lusts of the flesh. It is observable that there are several differences between the rites of dedication here and those which were appointed, *Exod.* xxix. to intimate that the ceremonial institutions were mutable things, and the changes in them were earnest of their period in Christ. Only here, according to the general law, That all the sacrifices must be seasoned with salt, (*Lev.* ii. 13.) particular orders are given, (*v.* 24.) that the priests shall *cast salt upon the sacrifices*. *Grace* is the *salt* with which all our religious performances must be seasoned, *Col.* iv. 6. An everlasting covenant is called a *covenant of salt*, because it is *incorruptible*. The *glory* reserved for us is *incorruptible* and undefiled; and the *grace* wrought in us is the hidden man of the heart in that *which is not corruptible*.

2. Concerning the constant use that should be made of it, when it was dedicated; From henceforward the priests shall *make their burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon this altar*, *v.* 27. for *therefore* it was *sanctified*, that it might *sanctify the gift* that was offered upon it.

Observe further, (1.) Who were to serve at the altar; the *priests of the seed of Zadok*, *v.* 19. That family was substituted in the room of Abiathar by Solomon, and God confirms it. His name signifies *righteous*, for they are the righteous seed, that are priests to God, through Christ the Lord our Righteousness. (2.) How they should prepare for this service; (*v.* 26.) *They shall consecrate themselves*; shall *fill their hand* with the offerings, in token of the giving up of themselves with their offerings to God and to his service. Note, Before we minister to the Lord in holy things, we must consecrate ourselves by getting our hands and hearts filled with those things. (3.) How they should speed in it; (*v.* 27.)

*I will accept you*. And if God now accept our works, if our services be pleasing to him, it is enough, we need no more. Those that give themselves to God, shall be accepted of God, their persons first, and then their performances, through the Mediator.

## CHAP. XLIV.

In this chapter we have, I. The appropriating of the east gate of the temple to the prince, *v.* 1.-3. II. A reproof sent to the house of Israel for their former profanations of God's sanctuary, with a charge to them to be more strict for the future, *v.* 4.-9. III. The degrading of those Levites that had formerly been guilty of idolatry, and the establishing of the priesthood in the family of Zadok, which had kept their integrity, *v.* 10.-16. IV. Divers laws and ordinances concerning the priests *v.* 17.-31.

1. **T**HEN he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary, which looketh toward the east, and it *was* shut. 2. Then said the LORD unto me, This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. 3. *It is* for the prince; the prince he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD: he shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

The prophet is here brought to review what he had before once surveyed; for though we have often looked into the things of God, they will yet bear to be looked *over again*, such a *consciousness* there is in them. The lessons we have learned we should still repeat to ourselves. Every time we review the sacred fabric of holy things, which we have in the scriptures, we shall still find something new which we did not before take notice of. The prophet is brought a third time to the *east gate*, and finds it shut; which intimates that the rest of the gates were open at all times to the worshippers. But such an account is given of this gate's being shut as puts honour,

1. Upon the God of Israel. It is for the honour of him, that the gate of the inner court, at which his glory entered when he took possession of the house, was ever after *kept shut*, and no man was allowed to enter in by it, *v.* 2. The difference ever after made between this and the other gates, that this was shut when the others were open, was intended both to perpetuate the remembrance of the solemn entrance of the glory of the Lord into the house, (which it would remain a traditional evidence of the truth of,) and also to possess the minds of people with a reverence for the Divine Majesty, and with very awful thoughts of his transcendent glory; which was designed in God's charge to Moses at the bush, *Put off thy shoe from off thy foot*. God will have a way by himself.

2. Upon the prince of Israel, *v.* 3. It is an honour to him, that though he may not enter in by this gate, for no man may; yet, (1.) He shall *sit in this gate* to eat his share of the peace-offerings, that sacred food, *before the Lord*. (2.) He shall *enter by the way of the porch of that gate*, by some little door or wicket, either in the gate, or adjoining to it, which is called the *way of the porch*. This was to signify that God puts some of his glory upon magistrates, upon the princes of his people, for he has said, *Ye are gods*. Some by the prince here understand the High Priest, or the sagan or second priest; and that he only was allowed to enter by this gate, for he was God's representative. Christ is

the High Priest of our profession, who entered himself into the holy place, and *opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.*

4. Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD; and I fell upon my face. 5. And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. 6. And thou shalt say to the rebellious, *even to the house of Israel*, Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, 7. In that ye have brought into my sanctuary, strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, *even my house*, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant, because of all your abominations. 3. And ye have not kept the charge of my holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves. 9. Thus saith the Lord God, No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

This is much to the same purport with what we had in the beginning of *ch. lxi.* As the prophet must look again upon what he had *before seen*, so he must be told again what he had *before heard*. Here, as before, he sees the house *filled with the glory of the Lord*, which strikes an awe upon him, so that he falls prostrate at the sight, the humblest posture of adoration, and the expression of a holy awe; *I fell upon my face, v. 4.* Note, The more we see of the glory of God, the more low we shall lie in our own eyes. Now here,

I. God charges the prophet to take a very particular notice of all he saw, and all that was said to him; (*v. 5.*) "*Mark well, set thine heart, apply thy mind, to the discoveries now made thee.*" 1. "*Behold with thine eyes what is showed thee, particularly the entering in of the house, and every going forth of it, all the inlets and all the outlets of the sanctuary;*" those he must take special notice of. Note, In acquainting ourselves with divine things, we must not aim so much at an abstract speculation of things themselves, as at finding the plain, appointed way of converse and communion with those things, that we may *go in and out and find pasture.* 2. "*Hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee, about the laws and ordinances of the house, which he was to instruct the people in.*" Note, Those who are appointed to be teachers, have need to be very diligent, careful learners, that they may neither forget any of the things they are intrusted with, nor mistake concerning them.

II. He sends them upon an errand to the people, *to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, v. 6.* It is sad to think that *the house of Israel* should deserve this character from him who perfectly knew

them; that a people in covenant with God should be rebellious against him. Who are his subjects, if the house of Israel be rebels! But it is an instance of God's rich mercy, that, though they had been *rebellious*, yet, being the *house of Israel*, he does not cast them off, but sends an ambassador to them, to invite and encourage them to return to their allegiance, which he would not have done if he had been pleased to kill them. The whole race of mankind is fallen under the character here given of the house of Israel; but our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, received gifts for men, *yea, even for the rebellious also; that, as here, the Lord God might dwell among them, Ps. lxxviii. 18.*

1. He must tell them of *their faults*; must show them their rebellions, must show the house of Jacob their sins. Note, Those that are sent to comfort God's people, must first *convince* them, and so prepare them for comfort; *Let it suffice you of all your abominations, v. 6.* Note, It is time for those that have continued long in sin, to reckon it *long enough, and too long*, and to begin to think of taking up in time, and leaving off their evil courses. "*Let the time past of your lives suffice, for by this time, surely, you have surfeited upon your abominations, and are become sick of them,*" 1 Pet. iv. 3.

(1.) That they had *admitted* those to the privileges of the sanctuary, that were not *entitled* to them; whereas God had said, *The stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death*, they had not only *connived* at the intrusion of strangers into the sanctuary, but had themselves *introduced* them; (*v. 7.*) *You brought in strangers uncircumcised in flesh, and therefore under a legal incapacity to enter into the sanctuary—which was a breaking of the covenant of circumcision, throwing down the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the rest of the world.* Yet if these strangers had been devout and good, though they were not circumcised, the crime had not been so great; but they were *uncircumcised in heart* too, unhumbled, unreformed, and strangers indeed to God and all goodness. When they came to offer sacrifice, they brought these with them to feast with them upon *the sacrifice*, because they were fond of their company, and this was one of their *abominations*, wherewith they *polluted God's sanctuary*; it was *giving that which was holy unto dogs*, Matth. vii. 6. Note, The admission of those who are openly wicked and profane to special ordinances, is a polluting of God's sanctuary, and a great provocation to him.

(2.) That they had employed those in the service of the sanctuary, who were not fit for it. Though *none but priests and Levites* were to minister in the sanctuary, yet we may suppose that all who were priests and Levites did not immediately attend there, but chosen men of them, who were best qualified, who were most wise, serious, and conscientious, and most likely to keep the charge of the holy things carefully; but, in making this choice, they had not regard to merit and qualification for the work; "*You have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves, such as you had some favour or affection for, such as you either had got, or hoped to get, money by, or such as would comply with your humours, and would dispense with the laws of the sanctuary to please you; Thus you have not kept the charge of my holy things.*" Note, Those who have the choice of the keepers of the holy things, if, to serve some secular, selfish purpose, they choose such as are unfit and unfaithful, will justly have it laid at their door, that they have betrayed the *holy things* by lodging them in bad hands.

2. He must tell them *their duty*; (*v. 9.*) "*No stranger shall enter into my sanctuary till he has*



first submitted to the laws of it." But lest any should think that this excluded the penitent, believing Gentiles from the church, the stranger here is described to be one that is *uncircumcised in heart*, not in sincerity consenting to the covenant, nor putting away the filth of the flesh; whereas the believing Gentiles were *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, Col. ii. 11. This circumcision of the heart, in the *spirit*, not in the *letter*, was what the unbelieving Jews were strangers to, and unconcerned about, while yet they were zealous to keep out of the sanctuary uncircumcised Gentiles, witness their rage against Paul when they did but suspect him to have brought *Greeks into the temple*, Acts xxi. 28.

10. And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. 11. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, *having* charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt-offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. 12. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up my hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity. 13. And they shall not come near unto me to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed: 14. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein. 15. But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God. 16. They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

The Master of the house, being about to set up house again, takes account of his servants the priests, and sees who are fit to be *turned out* of their places, and who to be *kept in*, and takes a course with them accordingly.

1. Those who had been *treacherous* are degraded and *put lower*. Those Levites or priests who were carried down the stream of the apostasy of Israel formerly, who *went astray from God after their idols*, (v. 10.) who had complied with the idolatrous kings of Israel or Judah, who *ministered to them before their idols*, (v. 12.) bowed with them in the house of Rimmon, or set up altars for them, as Uriah did for Ahaz, and so *caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity*, led them to sin, and hardened them in sin; for if the priests go astray, many will follow *their pernicious ways*. Perhaps in Ba-

bylon some of the Jewish priests had complied with the idolaters of the place, to the great scandal of their religion. Now these priests who had thus prevaricated, were justly put under the marks of God's displeasure; or if they were dead, (as it is probable that they were, if the crime were committed before the captivity,) the iniquity was visited upon their children. Or perhaps it was the whole family of Abiathar that had been guilty of this trespass, which was now called to account for it. And,

(1.) They are sentenced to be deprived, in part, of their office, and from the dignity of priests are put down into the condition of ordinary Levites. God has *lifted up his hand against them*, has said it, and sworn it, that *they shall bear their iniquity*, (v. 12.) assuredly they shall suffer for it, shall suffer disgrace for it; *they shall bear their shame*; (v. 13.) for though they have (we charitably hope) repented of it, *yet they shall not come near to do the office of a priest*, those parts of the office that were peculiar to them, they shall not come near to *any of the holy things* within the sanctuary, v. 13. Note, Those who have robbed God of *his honour*, will justly be deprived of *their honour*. And it is really a great punishment to be forbidden to *come near to God*; and justly might they who have once gone away from him, be rejected as unworthy ever to come near to him, and put at an everlasting distance.

(2.) Yet there is a mixture of mercy in this sentence. God deals not in severity, as he might have done, with those who had dealt treacherously with him, but mitigates the sentence, v. 11, 14. They are deprived, but in part, *ab officio*—of their office, and, it should seem, not at all *a beneficio*—of their emoluments. They shall help to *slay the sacrifice*, which the Levites were permitted to do, and which in this temple was done, not at the altar, but at the tables, ch. xl. 39. They shall be porters at the gates of the house, and they shall be *keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof*. Note, Those who may not be fit to be employed in one kind of service, may yet be fit to be employed in another; and even those who have offended may yet be made use of, and not quite thrown aside, much less thrown away.

2. Those who had been faithful are honoured and established, v. 15, 16. These are remarkably distinguished from the other; *But the sons of Zadok, who kept their integrity in a time of general apostasy, who went not astray when others did, they shall come near to me, shall come near to my table*. Note, God will put marks of honour upon those who give proofs of their fidelity and constancy to him in shaking, trying times, and will employ those in his service, who have kept close to his service, when others deserted it, and drew back. And it ought to be reckoned a true and great reward of stability in duty, to be established in it. If we keep close to God, God will keep us close to him.

17. And it shall come to pass, *that*, when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. 18. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat. 19. And when they go forth into the outer court, *even* into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them

in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments. 20. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. 21. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. 22. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, or her that is put away; but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before. 23. And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause men to discern between the unclean and the clean. 24. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. 25. And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. 26. And after he is cleansed they shall reckon unto him seven days. 27. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin-offering, saith the Lord God. 28. And it shall be unto them for an inheritance; I *am* their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I *am* their possession. 29. They shall eat the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30. And the first of all the first-fruits of all *things*, and every oblation of all, of every *sort* of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. 31. The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

God's priests must be *regulars*, not *seculars*; and therefore here are rules laid down for them to govern themselves by, and due encouragement given them to live up to those rules. Directions are here given.

I. Concerning their clothes; they must wear *linen garments*, when they *went in to minister*, or do any service in the inner court, or in the sanctuary, and nothing that was *woollen*, because it would *cause sweat*, v. 17, 18. They must dress themselves *cool*, that they might go the more readily about their work; and they had the more need to do so, because they were to attend the altars, which had constant fires upon them. And they must dress themselves *clean and sweet*, and avoid every thing that was sweaty and filthy, to signify the purity of mind with which the service of God is to be attended to. Sweat came in with sin, and was a part of the curse; *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*. Clothes

came in with sin, coats of skins did; and therefore the priests must use as *little* and as *light* clothing as possible, and not such as *caused sweat*. When they had finished their service, they must change their clothes again, and lay up their linen garments in the chambers appointed for that purpose, (v. 19.) as before, *ch. xlii. 14*. They must not go among the people with their holy garments on, lest they should imagine themselves sanctified by the touch of them; or, *They shall sanctify the people*, (as it is explained, *ch. xlii. 14*. they shall *approach to those things which are for the people*;) in their ordinary garments.

II. Concerning their hair; in that they must avoid extremes on both hands; (v. 20.) *They must not shave their heads*, in imitation of the Gentile priests, and as the priests of the Romish church do; nor, on the other hand, must they *suffer their locks to grow long*, as the *beaux*, or that they might be thought Nazarites, when really they were not; but they must be grave and modest, must *poll their heads*, and keep their hair short; if a *man*, especially a minister, wear *long hair*, it is not becoming, (1 Cor. xi. 14.) it is effeminate.

III. Concerning their diet; they must be sure to *drink no wine* when they went in to minister, lest they should drink to excess, should drink, and for get the law, v. 21. *It is not for kings to drink wine*, more than will do them good, much less for priests. See Lev. x. 9. Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

IV. Concerning their marriages; (v. 22.) here they must consult the credit of their office, and not marry one that had been *divorced*, that was at least under the suspicion of immodesty, nor a *widow*, unless she were a *priest's* widow, that had been accustomed to the usages of the priests' families. Others may do that which ministers may not do, but must deny themselves in, in honour of their character. Their wives as well as themselves must be of good report.

V. Concerning their preaching and church-governments.

1. It was part of their business to teach the people; and herein they must approve themselves both *skilful and faithful*; (v. 23.) *They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane*, between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, that they may neither *scruple* what is lawful, nor *venture* upon what is unlawful; that they may not pollute what is holy, nor pollute themselves with what is profane. Ministers must take pains to cause *people to discern between the clean and the unclean*, that they may not confound the distinctions between right and wrong, nor mistake concerning them, so as to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, but may have a good judgment of discretion concerning their own actions.

2. It was part of their business to judge upon appeals made to them; (Deut. xvii. 8, 9.) and *in controversy they shall stand in judgment*, v. 24. They shall have the honesty to stand up for what is right, and, when they have passed a right judgment, shall have the courage to stand to it, and *stand by it*. They must judge, not according to their own fancies, or inclinations, or secular interests, but *according to my judgments*; that must be their rule and standard. Note, Ministers must decide controversies according to the word of God, *to the law and to the testimony*; *Sit liber judex—Let the judge be unbiassed*. Their business is to keep courts in God's name, to preside in the congregations of his people. And herein they must go by the statute-book; They shall *keep my statutes in all mine assemblies*. God calls the assemblies of his people *his assemblies*, because they are held in his name, to his glory. Ministers are the masters of those assemblies, are to preside in them, and in all their acts must *keep*

close to *God's laws*. Another part of their work, as church-governors, is, to *hallow God's sabbaths*, to do the public work of that day with a becoming care and reverence, as the work of a holy day should be done; and to see that God's people also sanctify that day, and do nothing to pollute it.

VI. Concerning their mourning for dead relations; the rule here agrees with the law of Moses, Lev. xxi. 1, 11. A priest shall not come near any *dead body*, (for they must be purified *from dead works*,) except of his next relations, v. 25. Decent expressions of a pious sorrow for dear relations, when they are removed by death, are not disagreeable to the character of a minister. Yet by this approach to the dead body of a relation they contracted a ceremonial pollution, from which they must be cleansed by a *sin-offering*, before they went in again to minister, v. 26, 27. Note, Though sorrow for the dead is very allowable and commendable, yet there is danger of sinning in it, either by excess or dissimulation; and those tears have too often need to be *wiped over again*.

VII. Concerning their maintenance; they must live upon the altar at which they served, and live comfortably; (v. 28.) "*Ye shall give them no possession in Israel*, no lands or tenements, lest they should be entangled with the affairs of this life;" for God has said, *I am their Inheritance*, and they need no other in reserve; *I am their Possession*, and they need no other in hand. Some land was allowed them, (ch. xlviii. 10.) but their principal subsistence was by their office. What God appropriated to himself, they were the receivers of, for their own proper use and behoof; they lived upon the holy things; and so God himself was the Portion both of their inheritance and of their cup. Note, Those who have God for their Inheritance and their Possession, may be content with a little, and ought not to covet a great deal of the possessions and inheritances of this earth. If we have God, we have *all*; and therefore may well reckon that we have *enough*.

Observe, 1. What the *priests* were to have from the *people*, for their maintenance and encouragement. (1.) They must have the flesh of many of the offerings, the *sin-offering* and *trespass-offering*, which would supply them and their families with flesh-meat; and the *meat-offerings*, which would supply them with bread. What we offer to God, will redound to our own advantage. (2.) They must have *every dedicated, devoted thing in Israel*, which was in many cases to be turned into money, and given to the priest. This is explained, v. 30. *every oblation* or free-will-offering, which in times of reformation and devotion would be many and considerable; *Of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's*. We have the law concerning them, Lev. xxvii. (3.) They were to have the *first of the dough*, when it was going to the oven, as well as the *first of their fruits*, when they were going to the barn. God, who is the first, must have the first; and if it belong to him, his priests must have it. We may then comfortably enjoy what we have, when a share of it has been first set apart for works of piety and charity. To this the apostle's rule bears some analogy, to *begin the week* with laying by for pious uses, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. The priests being so well provided for, it would be inexcusable in them, if they (contrary to the law which every Israelite is bound by) should *eat that which is torn, or dead of itself*, v. 31. Those that were in want of necessary food, might perhaps expect to be dispensed with in such a case. Poverty has its temptations, but the priests were so well provided for, that they could have no pretence for it.

2. What the *people* might expect from the *priest* for their recompense. They that are kind to a pro-

phet, to a priest, shall have a prophet's, a priest's reward, that *he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house*, (v. 30.) that God may cause it by commanding it, that the priest may cause it by praying for it; and it was part of the priest's work to *bless the people in the name of the Lord*, not only their congregations, but their families. Note, It is all in all to the comfort of any house, to have the blessing of God upon it, and to have the blessing to rest in it; to dwell where we dwell, and to attend the entail of it upon those that shall come after us. And the way to have the blessing of God abide upon our estates, is to honour God with them, and to give him and his ministers, him and his poor, their share out of them. God blesses, he surely blesses, the habitation of those who thus are just, Prov. iii. 33. And ministers, by instructing and praying for the families that are kind to them, should do their part toward causing the blessing to rest there. Peace be to this house.

## CHAP. XLV.

In this chapter is further represented to the prophet, in vision, I. The division of the holy land: so much for the temple, and the priests that attended the service of it; (v. 1. . 4.) so much for the Levites; (v. 5.) so much for the city; (v. 6.) so much for the prince, and the residue to the people, v. 7, 8, 11. The ordinances of justice that were given both to prince and people, v. 9. . 12. III. The oblations they were to offer, and the prince's part in those oblations, v. 13. . 17. Particularly in the beginning of the year, (v. 18. . 20.) and in the passover and the feast of tabernacles, v. 21. . 25. And all this seems to point at the new church-state that should be set up under the gospel, which, both for extent and for purity, should far exceed that of the Old Testament.

1. **M**OREOVER, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the LORD, a holy portion of the land: the length *shall be* the length of five and twenty thousand *reeds*, and the breadth *shall be* ten thousand. This *shall be* holy in all the borders thereof round about. 2. Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred *in length*, with five hundred *in breadth*, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. 3. And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary *and* the most holy *place*. 4. The holy *portion* of the land shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the LORD; and it shall be a place for their houses, and a holy place for the sanctuary. 5. And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers. 6. And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy *portion*: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. 7. And a *portion shall be* for the prince on the one side and on the other side of the oblation of the holy *portion*, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation

of the holy *portion*, and before the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward; and the length *shall be* over against one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border. 8. In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and *the rest of* the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

Directions are here given for the dividing of the land after their return to it; and, God having warranted them to do it, it would be an act of faith, and not of folly, thus to *divide it* before they *had it*. And it would be welcome news to the captives, to hear that they should not only return to their own land, but that, whereas they were now but few in number, they should *increase and multiply*, so as to *replenish it*. But this never had its accomplishment in the Jewish state after the return out of captivity, but was to be fulfilled in the model of the Christian church, which was perfectly *new*, (as this division of the land was quite different from that in Joshua's time,) and much *enlarged* by the accession of the Gentiles to it; and will be perfected in the heavenly kingdom, of which the land of Canaan had always been a type. Now,

1. Here is the portion of land assigned to the *sanctuary*, in the midst of which the temple was to be built, with all its courts and purlieus; the rest round about it was for the priests. This is called (v. 1.) *an oblation to the Lord*; for what is given in works of piety, for the maintenance and support of the worship of God and the advancement of religion, God accepts as given to him, if it be done *with a single eye*. It is a *holy portion of the land*, which is to be set out first as the *first-fruits* that sanctify the lump. The appropriating of lands for the support of religion and the ministry, is an act of piety that bids as fair for perpetuity, and the benefit of posterity, as any other. This *holy portion of the land* was to be measured, and the borders of it fixed, that the sanctuary itself might not have more than its share, and in time engross the whole land. So far the *lands of the church* shall extend, and no further; as in our own kingdom donations to the church were of old limited by the *statute of mortmain*. The lands here allotted to the sanctuary were 25,000 *reeds* (so our translation makes it, though some make them only *cubits*) in length, and 10,000 in breadth; about eighty miles one way, and thirty miles another way, say some; twenty-five miles one way, and ten miles the other way, so some. The priests and Levites that were to come near to minister, were to have their dwellings in this *portion of the land*, that was round about the sanctuary, that they might be near their work; whereas by the distribution of the land in Joshua's time, the cities of the priests and Levites were dispersed all the nation over. This intimates that gospel-ministers should reside upon their charge; where their service *lies*, there must they *live*.

2. Next to the lands of the sanctuary, the city-lands are assigned, in which the holy city was to be built, and with the issues and profits of which the citizens were to be maintained; (v. 6.) *It shall be for the whole house of Israel*; not appropriated, as before, to one tribe or two, but some of all the tribes shall dwell in the city, as we find they did, Neh. xi. 1, 2. The portion for the city was full *as long*, but only half *as broad*, as that for the sanctuary; for the city was enriched by *trade*, and therefore had the less need of *lands*.

3. The next allotment after the church-lands

and the city-lands, is of the *crown-lands*, v. 7, 8. Here is no admeasurement of these, but they are said to lie on the one side, and on the other side, of the church-lands and city-lands, to intimate that the prince with his wealth and power was to be a protection to both. Some make the prince's share equal to the church's and city's share both together; others make it to be a thirteenth of the rest of the land, the other twelve being for the twelve tribes. The prince that attends continually to the administration of public affairs, must have wherewithal to support his dignity, and have abundance, that he may not be in temptation to *oppress the people*; which yet with many does not prevent that. But the grace of God shall prevent it, for it is promised here, *My princes shall no more oppress my people*; for God will make the *officers peace*, and the *exactors righteousness*. Notwithstanding this, we find that after the return of the Jews to their own land, the princes were complained of for their exactions. But Nehemiah was one that did not do as the *former governors*, and yet kept a handsome court, Neh. v. 15, 18. But so much is said of *the prince* in this mystical holy state, to intimate that in the gospel-church magistrates should be as *nursing-fathers* to it, and Christian princes its patrons and protectors; and the holy religion they profess, as far as they are subject to the power of it, will restrain them from oppressing God's people, because they are more *his people* than *theirs*.

4. The rest of the lands were to be distributed to the people, *according to their tribes*, who had reason to think themselves well settled, when they had both the *testimony of Israel* so near them, and the *throne of judgment*.

9. Thus saith the Lord God, Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God. 10. Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. 11. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of a homer, and the ephah the tenth part of a homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. 12. And the shekel *shall be* twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels shall be your maneh.

We have here some general rules of justice laid down both for prince and people, the rules of distributive and commutative justice; for godliness without honesty is but a form of godliness, will neither please God, nor avail to the benefit of any people. Be it therefore enacted, by the authority of the church's King and God,

1. That *princes do not oppress their subjects*, but duly and faithfully administer justice among them; (v. 9.) "*Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel*, that you have been oppressive to the people, and have enriched yourselves by spoil and violence, that you have so long fleeced the flock instead of feeding them, and from henceforward do so no more." Note, Even princes and great men that have long done amiss, must at length think it time, high time, to reform and amend; for no prescription will justify a wrong. Instead of saying that they have been long accustomed to oppress, and therefore may persist in it, for the custom will bear them out, they should say that they have been long accustomed to it, and therefore as here, *Let the time past suffice*, and let them now remove *violence and spoil*; let them drop wrongful demands, cancel wrongful

usages, and turn out those from employments under them, that do violence. Let them *take away their exactions*, ease their subjects of those taxes which they find lie heavy upon them, and let them *execute judgment and justice* according to law, as the duty of their place requires. Note, All princes, but especially the princes of Israel, are concerned to do justice; for of their people God says, They are my people, and they in a special manner *rule for God*.

2. That one neighbour do not cheat another in commerce; (v. 10.) *Ye shall have just balances*, in which to weigh both money and goods; a *just ephah* for dry measure for corn and flour, a *just bath* for the measure of liquids, wine, and oil; and the *ephah* and *bath* shall be *one measure*, the tenth part of a *chomer*, or *cor*, v. 11. So that the ephah and bath contained (as the learned Dr. Cumberland has computed) seven wine gallons and four pints, and something more. An omer was but the tenth part of an ephah, (Exod. xvi. 36.) and the 100th part of a *chomer*, or *homer*, and contained about six pints. The *shekel* is here settled; (v. 13.) it is twenty *gerahs*, just half a *Roman* ounce; in our money, 2s. 4d. and almost the eighth part of a farthing; as the aforesaid learned man exactly computes it. By the shekels, the *maneh*, or pound, was reckoned; which, when it was set for a mere weight, (says Bishop Cumberland,) without respect to coinage, contained just 100 shekels, as appears by comparing 1 Kings x. 17. where it is said *three manehs, or pounds, of gold, went to one shield*, with the parallel place, 2 Chron. ix. 16. where it is said *300 shekels of gold went to one shield*. But when the *maneh* is set for a sum of money or coin, it contains but sixty shekels, as appears here; where twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels, which in all make sixty, shall be the *maneh*. But it is thus reckoned, because they had one piece of money that weighed twenty shekels, another twenty-five, another fifteen, all which made up one pound; as a learned writer here observes. Note, It concerns God's Israel to be very honest and just in all their dealings, very punctual and exact in rendering to all their due, and very cautious to do wrong to none, because otherwise they spoil the acceptableness of their profession with God, and the reputation of it before men.

13. This is the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of a homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of a homer of barley. 14. Concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, ye shall offer the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, which is a homer of ten baths; for ten baths are a homer: 15. And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel, for a meat-offering, and for a burnt-offering, and for peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord God. 16. All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel. 17. And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and drink-offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin-offering, and the meat-offering, and the burnt-offering, and the peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. 18. Thus saith the Lord God, In the first month, in the first day of the

month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary: 19. And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin-offering, and put it upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. 20. And so thou shalt do the seventh day of the month for every one that erreth, and for him that is simple: so shall ye reconcile the house. 21. In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22. And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself, and for all the people of the land, a bullock for a sin-offering. 23. And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt-offering to the Lord seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish, daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily for a sin-offering. 24. And he shall prepare a meat-offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and a hin of oil for an ephah. 25. In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin-offering, according to the burnt-offering, and according to the meat-offering, and according to the oil.

Having laid down the rules of righteousness toward men, which is really a branch of true religion, he comes next to give some directions for their religion toward God, which is a branch of universal righteousness.

I. It is required that they offer an oblation to the Lord, out of what they have; (v. 13.) *All the people of the land* must give an oblation, v. 16. As God's tenants, they must pay a quitrent to their great Landlord; they had offered an oblation out of their real estates, (v. 1.) *a holy portion of their land*; now they are directed to offer an oblation out of their personal estates, their goods and chattels, as an acknowledgment of their receivings from him, their dependence on him, and their obligations to him. Note, Whatever our substance is, we must honour God with it, by giving him his dues out of it. Not that God has need of, or may be benefited by, any thing that we can give him, Ps. l. 9. No, it is but an oblation, we only offer it to him, the benefit of it returns back to ourselves, to his poor, who, as our neighbours, are ourselves, or to his ministers who serve continually for our good.

II. The proportion of this oblation is here determined, which was not done by the law of Moses. No mention is made of the tithe, but only of this oblation. And the quantum of this is thus settled. (1.) Out of their corn they were to offer a sixtieth part; out of every homer of wheat and barley, which contained ten ephahs, they were to offer the sixth part of one ephah, which was a sixtieth part of the whole, v. 13. (2.) Out of their oil, (and probably their wine too) they were to offer an hundredth part, for this oblation; out of every cor, or homer, which contained ten baths, they were to offer the tenth part of one bath, v. 14. This was given to the altar; for in every meat-offering there was flour mingled with oil. (3.) Out of their flocks they were to give one lamb out of 200; that was the smallest pro

portion of all, v. 15. But it must be *out of the fat pastures of Israel*. They must not offer to God that which was taken up from the common, but the fattest and best they had, for *burnt-offerings* and *peace-offerings*; the former were offered for the *giving of glory to God*, the latter for the *fetching in of mercy, grace, and peace from God*; and in our spiritual sacrifices these are our two great errands at the throne of grace; but, in order to the acceptance of both, these sacrifices were to *make reconciliation* for them. Christ is our Sacrifice of atonement, by whom reconciliation is made, and to him we must have an eye, in our sacrifices of acknowledgment.

III. This oblation must be given for the *prince in Israel*, v. 16. Some read it *to the prince*, and understand it of Christ, who is indeed the *Prince in Israel*, to whom we must offer our oblations, and into whose hands we must put them, to be presented to the Father. Or, They shall give it *with the prince*; every private person shall bring his oblation, to be offered with that of the prince. For it follows, (v. 17.) *It shall be the prince's part to provide all the offerings; to make reconciliation for the house of Israel*. The people were to bring their oblations to him, according to the foregoing rules, and he was to bring them to the sanctuary, and to make up what fell short out of his own. Note, It is the duty of rulers to take care of religion, and to see that the duties of it be regularly and carefully performed by those under their charge, and that nothing be wanting that is requisite thereto: the magistrate is the keeper of both tables; and it is a happy thing when those that are above others in power and dignity, go before them in the service of God.

IV. Some particular solemnities are here appointed.

1. Here is one in the beginning of the year, which seems to be altogether new, and not instituted by the law of Moses; it is the *annual solemnity of cleansing the sanctuary*. (1.) *On the first day of the first month*, upon new-year's-day, they were to offer a sacrifice for the *cleansing of the sanctuary*, (v. 18.) to make atonement for the iniquity of the holy things the year past, that they might bring none of the guilt of them into the services of the new year; and to implore grace for the preventing of that iniquity, and for the better performance of the service of the sanctuary the ensuing year. And, in token of this, the blood of this *sin-offering* was to be put upon the *posts* of the temple, the four corners, not of the altar, but the *settle of the altar*, and the *posts of the gate of the inner court*, (v. 19.) to signify that by it atonement was intended to be made for the sins of all the servants that attended that house, priests, *Levites*, and people, even the sins that were found in all their services. Note, Even sanctuaries on earth need cleansing, frequent cleansing; that above needs none. Those that worship God together, should often join in renewing their repentance for their manifold defects, and applying the blood of Christ for the pardon of them, and in renewing their covenants to be more careful for the future; and it is very seasonable to begin the year with this work; as Hezekiah did when it had been long neglected, 2 Chron. xxix. 17. They were here appointed to *cleanse the sanctuary* upon the first day of the month, because on the fourteenth day of the month they were to eat the *passover*, an ordinance which, of all the other Old Testament institutions, had most in it of Christ and gospel-grace, and therefore it was very fit that they should begin to prepare for it a fortnight before, by *cleansing the sanctuary*. (2.) This sacrifice was to be repeated *on the seventh day of the first month*, v. 20. And then it was intended to make atonement

for every one that errs, and for him that is simple. Note, He that sins, *errs*, and is *simple*; he mistakes, he goes out of the way, and shows himself to be foolish and unwise. But here it is spoken of those sins which are committed through ignorance, mistake, or inadvertency, whether by any of the priests, or of the Levites, or of the people. Sacrifices were appointed to atone for such sins as men were surprised into, did before they were aware; which they would not have done, if they had known and remembered aright, which they were overtaken in, and for which, afterward, they condemn themselves. But for presumptuous sins, committed with a high hand, there was no sacrifice appointed, Numb. xv. 30. By these repeated sacrifices ye shall *reconcile the house*; God will be reconciled to it, and continue the tokens of his presence in it, and will *let it alone this year also*.

2. The passover was to be religiously observed at the time appointed, v. 21. Christ is our *Passover*, that is *sacrificed for us*; we celebrate the memorial of that sacrifice, and feast upon it, triumphing in our deliverance out of the Egyptian slavery of sin, and our preservation from the sword of the destroying angel, the sword of divine justice, in the Lord's supper, which is our *passover-feast*; as the whole Christian life is, and must be, the feast of *unleavened bread*. It is here appointed that the prince shall prepare a *sin-offering* to be offered *for himself and the people*; a bullock on the first day, (v. 22.) and a *kid of the goats* every other day, (v. 23.) to teach us, in all our attendance upon God for communion with him, to have an eye to the great Sin-Offering, by which *transgression was finished*, and an *everlasting righteousness brought in*. On every day of the feast there was to be a *burnt-offering*, purely for the honour of God, and no less than seven bullocks and seven rams, with their meat-offering, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, and yet *no waste*, v. 23, 24.

3. The feast of tabernacles; that is spoken of next, (v. 25.) and no mention of the feast of pentecost, which came between that of the passover and that of tabernacles. Orders are here given (above what were given by the law of Moses) for the same sacrifices to be offered during the seven days of the passover. See the deficiency of the legal sacrifices for sin; they were therefore *often* repeated, not only every year, but every feast, every day of the feast, because *they could not make the comers thereunto perfect*, Heb. x. 1, 3. See the necessity of our frequently repeating the same religious exercises. Though the sacrifice of atonement is offered *once for all*, yet the sacrifices of acknowledgment, that of a broken heart, that of a thankful heart, must be *every day* offered, those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. We should, as here, fall into a method of holy duties, and keep to it.

## CHAP. XLVI.

In this chapter, we have, I. Some further rules given both to the priests and to the people, relating to their worship, v. 1. 15. II. A law concerning the prince's disposal of his inheritance, v. 16. 18. III. A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices, and the baking of the meat-offerings, v. 19. 24.

1. **T**HUS saith the Lord God, The gate toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. 2. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and



the priest shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate; then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. 3. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD, in the sabbaths, and in the new moons. 4. And the burnt-offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD in the sabbath-day *shall be* six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. 5. And the meat-offering *shall be* an ephah for a ram, and the meat-offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 6. And in the day of the new moon *it shall be* a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. 7. And he shall prepare a meat-offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram; and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 8. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof. 9. But when the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. 10. And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth: 11. And in the feasts, and in the solemnities, the meat-offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram; and to the lambs as he is able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 12. Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt-offering or peace-offerings voluntarily unto the LORD, *one* shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings as he did on the sabbath-day; then he shall go forth; and after his going forth *one* shall shut the gate. 13. Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt-offering unto the LORD of a lamb of the first year without blemish; thou shalt prepare it every morning. 14. And thou shalt prepare a meat-offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of a hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat-offering continually, by a perpetual ordinance, unto the LORD. 15. Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat-offer-

ing, and the oil, every morning, *for* a continual burnt-offering.

Whether the rules for public worship, here laid down, were designed to be observed, even in those things wherein they differed from the law of Moses, and were so observed under the second temple, is not certain; we find not in the history of that latter part of the Jewish church, that they governed themselves in their worship by these ordinances, as one would think they should have done, but only by the law of Moses, looking upon this *then* in the next age after as *mystical*, and not *literal*.

We may observe, in these verses,

1. That the place of worship was fixed, and rules given concerning that, both to prince and people.

1. The *east gate*, which was kept shut at other times, was to be opened on the sabbath-days, in the new moons, (v. 1.) and whenever the prince offered a voluntary offering, v. 12. Of the keeping of this gate ordinarily shut we read before; (*ch.* xlv. 2.) whereas the other gates of the court were opened every day, this was opened only on *high days*, and on special occasions, when it was opened for the prince, who was to *go in by the way of the porch of that gate*, v. 2, 8. Some think he went in with the priests and Levites into the *inner court*, (for into that court this gate was the entrance,) and they observe that magistrates and ministers should join forces, and go the same way, hand in hand, in promoting the service of God. But it should rather seem that he did not go *through* the gate, (as the glory of the Lord had done,) though it was open, but he went *by the way of the porch of the gate*, stood at the *post of the gate*, and worshipped at the *threshold of the gate*, (v. 2.) where he had a full view of the priests' performances at the altar, and signified his concurrence in them, for himself, and for the people of the land, that stood behind him at the *door of that gate*, v. 3. Thus must every prince show himself to be of David's mind, who would very willingly be a *door-keeper in the house of his God*, and, as the word there is, *lie at the threshold*, Ps. lxxxiv. 10. Note, The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of God. Even princes themselves, when they draw near to God, must worship *with reverence and godly fear*; owning that even *they* are unworthy to approach to him. But Christ is our *Prince*, whom God causes to *draw near and approach to him*, Jer. xxx. 21.

2. As to the *north gate* and *south gate*, by which they entered into the *court of the people*, (not into the inner court,) there was this rule given, that whoever came in at the *north gate* should go out at the *south gate*, and whoever came in at the *south gate* should go out at the *north gate*, v. 9. Some think this was to prevent thrusting and jostling one another; for God is the *God of order*, and not of *confusion*. We may suppose that they came in at the gate that was next their own houses, but that when they went away, God would have them go out at that gate which would lead them the *furthest way about*, that they might have time for meditation; being thereby obliged to go a great way round the sanctuary, they might have an opportunity to *consider the palaces of it*, and, if they improved their time well in fetching this circuit, they would call it the *next way home*. Some observe that this may remind us, in the service of God, to be still pressing forward, (Phil. iii. 13.) and not to *look back*; and, in our attendance upon ordinances, not to go back as we came, but more holy, and heavenly, and spiritual.

3. It is appointed that the people shall worship at the *door of the east gate*, where the prince does, he at the head and they attending him, both in the *tab*

*baths and in the new moons, (v. 3.) and that, when they come in, and go out, the prince shall be in the midst of them, v. 10.* Note, Great men should by their constant and reverent attendance on God in public worship, give a good example to their inferiors, both engaging them and encouraging them to do likewise. It is a very graceful, becoming thing for persons of quality to go to church with their servants, and tenants, and poor neighbours about them, and to behave themselves there with an air of seriousness and devotion; and those who thus *honour God* with their honour, he will *delight to honour*.

II. That the ordinances of worship were fixed. Though the prince is supposed himself to be a very hearty, zealous friend to the sanctuary, yet it is not left to him, no, not in concert with the priests, to appoint what sacrifices shall be offered, but God himself appoints them; for it is his prerogative to institute the rites and ceremonies of religious worship.

1. Every morning, as duly as the morning came, they must offer a lamb for a *burnt-offering, v. 13.* It is strange that no mention is made of the *evening sacrifice*; but Christ being come, and having offered himself now in the *end of the world, (Heb. ix. 26.)* we are to look upon him as the *Evening Sacrifice*, about the time of the offering up of which he died.

2. On the sabbath-days, whereas by the law of *Moses four lambs* were to be offered, (Numbers xxviii. 9.) it is here appointed that (at the prince's charge) there shall be *six lambs* offered, and a ram besides, (v. 4.) to intimate how much we should abound in sabbath-work, now in gospel-time, and what plenty of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise we should offer up to God on that day; and if *with such sacrifices God is well pleased*, surely we have a great deal of reason to be so.

3. On the new moons, in the beginning of their months, there was, over and above the usual sabbath-sacrifices, the additional offering of a young bullock, v. 6. Those who do much for God and their souls, steadily and constantly, must yet, upon some occasions, do yet more.

4. All the sacrifices were to be *without blemish*; so Christ, the great Sacrifice, was, (1 Pet. i. 19.) and so Christians who are to present themselves to God as living sacrifices, should aim and endeavour to be; *blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke.*

5. All the sacrifices were to have their meat-offerings annexed to them; for so the law of Moses had appointed, to show what a good table God keeps in his house, and that we ought to *honour him* with the fruit of our ground as well as with the fruit of our cattle, because in both he has *blessed us*, Deut. xxviii. 4. In the beginning, Cain offered the one, and Abel the other. Some observe, that the *meat-offerings* here are much larger in proportion than they were by the law of Moses. Then it was *three tenth-deals to a bullock*, and *two to a ram*, (so many tenth parts of an ephah.) and half a hin of oil at the most; (Numb. xv. 6.—9.) but here, for every bullock and every ram, a whole ephah, and a whole hin of oil, v. 7. These unbloody sacrifices shall be more abounded in; or, in general, it intimates, that as now, under the gospel, God abounds in the gifts of his grace to us, more than under the law, so we should abound in the returns of praise and duty to him. But it is observable that in the meat-offering *for the lambs*, the prince is allowed to offer *as he shall be able to give, (v. 5, 7, 11.) as his hand should attain unto.* Note, Princes themselves must spend as they can afford; and even in that which is laid out in works of piety, God expects and requires but that we should do according to our ability; every man *as God has prospered him*, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. God has not made us to serve with an offering, (Isa. xliii. 23.) but considers our frame and state. Yet this will not countenance those who pretend a disability

that is not real, or those who by their extravagances in other things disable themselves to do the good they should. And we find those praised, who, in an extraordinary case of charity, went not only to their power, but *beyond their power.*

16. Thus saith the Lord God, If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it shall be their possession by inheritance. 17. But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them.

18. Moreover, the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession; that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

We have here a law for the limiting of the power of the prince in the disposing of the crown-lands.

1. If he have a *son* that is a favourite, or has merited well, he may, if he please, as a token of his favour, and in recompense for his services, settle some parts of his lands upon him and his heirs for ever; (v. 16.) provided it do not go out of the family: there may be a cause for parents, when their children are grown up, to be more kind to one than to another; as Jacob gave to Joseph one portion *above his brethren*, Gen. xlviii. 22.

2. Yet if he have a *servant* that is a favourite, he may not in like manner settle lands upon him, v. 17. But if he see cause, he may give him lands to the year of Jubilee, and then they must return to the family again, v. 17. The servant might have the rents, issues, and profits, for such a term, but the inheritance, the *Jus proprietarium*—*The right of proprietorship*, shall remain in the prince and his heirs. It was fit that a difference should be put between a child and a servant, like that, John viii. 35. *The servant abides not in the house for ever, as the son does.*

3. What estates he gives his children, must be of his own; (v. 18.) *He shall not take of the people's inheritance*, under pretence of having many children to provide for; he shall not find ways to make them forfeit their estates, or to force them to sell them, and so *thrust his subjects out of their possession*; but let him and his sons be content with their own. It is far from being a prince's honour to increase the wealth of his family and crown, by encroaching upon the rights and properties of his subjects; nor will he himself be a gainer by it at last, for he will be but a poor prince, when the people are *scattered every man from his possession*, when they quit their native country, being forced out of it by oppression, choosing rather to live among strangers that are free people, and where what they have they can call their own, be it ever so little. It is the interest of princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, and then all they have is, in the best manner, at their service. It is better for themselves to gain their affections, by protecting their rights, than to gain their estates by invading them.

19. After he brought me through the entry, which *was* at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and, behold, there was a place on the two sides westward. 20. Then said he unto me, *This is the place where the*

priests shall boil the trespass-offering and the sin-offering; where they shall bake the meat-offering; that they bear *them* not out into the outer court, to sanctify the people. 21. Then he brought me forth into the outer court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court *there was* a court. 22. In the four corners of the court *there were* courts joined of forty *cubits* long, and thirty broad: these four corners *were* of one measure. 23. And *there was* a new *building* round about in them, round about them four, and *it was* made with boiling-places under the rows round about. 24. Then said he unto me, These *are* the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

We have here a further discovery of buildings about the temple, which we did not observe before, and those were places to boil the flesh of the offerings, *v.* 20. He that kept such a plentiful table at his altar, needed large kitchens; and a wise builder will provide conveniences of that kind. Observe,

1. Where those boiling-places were situated. There were some at the entry into the inner court, (*v.* 19.) and others under the rows, in the four corners of the outer court, *v.* 21.—23. These are the places, where, it is likely, there was most room to spare for this purpose; and this purpose was found for the spare room, that none might be lost. Pity that holy ground should be waste ground.

2. What use they were put to. In those places they were to *boil the trespass-offering, and the sin-offering*, those parts of them which were allotted to the priests, and which were more sacred than the flesh of the peace-offerings, of which the offerers also had a share. There also they were to *bake the meat-offering*, their share of it, which they had from the altar for their own tables, *v.* 20. Care was taken that they *bare them not out into the outer court, to sanctify the people*. Let them not pretend to *sanctify the people* with this holy flesh, and so impose upon them; or let not the people imagine that by touching these sacred things they were *sanctified*, and made ever the better, or more acceptable to God. It should seem from Hagg. ii. 12. that there were those who had such a conceit; and therefore the priests must not carry any of the holy flesh away with them, lest they should encourage that conceit. Ministers must take heed of doing any thing to bolster up ignorant people in their superstitious vanities.

## CHAP. XLVII.

In this chapter, we have, I. The vision of the holy waters, their rise, extent, depth, and healing virtues; the plenty of fish in them, and an account of the trees growing on the banks of them, *v.* 1.—12. II. An appointment of the borders of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided by lot to the tribes of Israel, and the strangers that sojourned among them, *v.* 13.—23.

1. **A**FTERWARD he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the fore-front of the house *stood* toward the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, at the south *side* of the altar. 2. Then brought he me out of the way

of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 3. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters *were* to the ankles. 4. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters *were* to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through: the waters *were* to the loins. 5. Afterward he measured a thousand; and *it was* a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. 6. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this*? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. 7. Now, when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river *were* very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea; *which being* brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. 9. And it shall come to pass, *that* every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. 10. And it shall come to pass, *that* the fishers shall stand upon it, from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets: their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. 11. But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed: they shall be given to salt. 12. And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

This part of Ezekiel's vision must so necessarily have a mystical and spiritual meaning, that from thence we conclude the other parts of his vision have a mystical and spiritual meaning also; for it cannot be applied to the waters brought by pipes into the temple for the washing of the sacrifices, the keeping of the temple clean, and the carrying off of those waters, for that would be to turn this pleasant river into a sink or common sewer. That prophecy, Zeek. xiv. 8. may explain it, of *living waters*, that shall go out from Jerusalem, *half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea*. And there is plainly a reference to this in St.

John's vision of *a pure river of water of life*, Rev. xxii. 1. That seems to represent the *glory* and joy, which is *grace perfected*. This here seems to represent the *grace* and joy, which is *glory begun*. Most interpreters agree, that these waters signify the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, and spread itself into the countries about, and the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost which accompanied it, and by virtue of which it spread itself far, and produced strange and blessed effects. Ezekiel had walked round the house again and again, and yet did not till now take notice of those waters; for God makes known his mind and will to his people, not all at once, but by degrees. Now observe,

1. The rise of these waters. He is not put to trace the streams to the fountain, but has the fountain-head first discovered to him, (v. 1.) *Waters issued out from the threshold of the house eastward, and from under the right side of the house, the south side of the altar.* And again, (v. 2.) *There ran out waters on the right side;* signifying, that from Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, Isa. ii. 3. There it was that the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and endured them with the gift of tongues, that they might carry these waters to all nations. In the temple first they were to stand, and *preach the words of this life*, Acts v. 20. They must preach the gospel to all nations, but must *begin at Jerusalem*, Luke xxiv. 47. But that is not all; Christ is the Temple, he is the Door, from him those living waters flow, out of his pierced side. It is the water that he gives us, that is *the well of water which springs up*, John iv. 14. And it is by believing in him that we receive from him *rivers of living water*; and *this shake he of the Spirit*, John vii. 38, 39. The original of these waters was not *above ground*, but they sprang up from under the threshold; for the fountain of a believer's life is a *mystery*, it is *hid with Christ in God*, Col. iii. 3. Some observe that they came forth on the *right side of the house*, to intimate that gospel-blessings are *right-hand* blessings. It is also an encouragement to those who attend at Wisdom's gates, at the posts of her doors, who are willing to lie *at the threshold* of God's house, as David was, that they lie at the fountain-head of comfort and grace; the very entrance into God's word gives light and life, Ps. cxix. 130. David speaks it to the praise of Zion, *All my springs are in thee*, Ps. lxxxvii. 7. They came *from the side of the altar*, for it is in and by Jesus Christ, the great Altar, (who sanctifies our gifts to God,) that God has *blessed us with spiritual blessings in holy, heavenly places*. From God as the Fountain, in him as the Channel, flows the river, which *makes glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*, Ps. xlvii. 4. But observe how much the blessedness and joy of glorified saints in heaven exceed those of the best and happiest saints on earth; here the streams of our comfort arise *from under the threshold*; there they proceed *from the throne, the throne of God and of the Lamb*, Rev. xxii. 1.

2. The progress and increase of these waters. They went forth eastward, (v. 3.) *toward the east country*, (v. 8.) for so they were directed. The prophet and his guide followed the stream as it ran down from the holy mountains, and when they had followed it about a *thousand cubits*, they went over across it, to try the depth of it, and it was *to the ankles*, v. 3. Then they walked along on the bank of the river on the other side, a thousand cubits more, and then, to try the depth of it, they waded through it the second time, and it was up to *their knees*, v. 4. They walked along by it a *thousand cubits* more, and then forded it the third time, and then it was up to their middle; *the waters were to the loins*. They then walked a thousand cubits further, and

attempted to repass it the fourth time, but found it impracticable; *the waters were risen*, by the addition either of brooks that fell into it above ground, or by springs under ground, so that they were *waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over*, v. 5. Note, (1.) The waters of the sanctuary are *running waters*, as those of a river, not *standing* waters, as those of a pond. The gospel, when it was first preached, was still spreading further; grace in the soul is still pressing forward; it is an active principle, *plus ultra—onward still*, till it comes to perfection. (2.) They are *increasing* waters. This river, as it runs constantly, so, the further it goes, the fuller it grows. The gospel-church was very small in its beginnings, like a little purling brook; but by degrees it came to be *to the ankles, to the knees*, many were added to it daily, and the *grain of mustard-seed* grew up to be a *great tree*. The gifts of the Spirit increase by being exercised, and grace, where it is true, is growing like the light of the morning, which *shines more and more to the perfect day*.

(3.) It is good for us to follow these waters, and go along with them. Observe the progress of the gospel in the world; observe the process of the work of grace in the heart; attend the motions of the blessed Spirit, and walk after them, under a divine guidance, as Ezekiel here did. (4.) It is good to be often searching into the things of God, and trying the depth of them; not only to look on the surface of those waters, but to go to the bottom of them as far as we can; to be often digging, often diving, into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as those who covet to be intimately acquainted with those things. (5.) If we search into the things of God, we shall find some things very plain and easy to be understood, as the waters that were but to the ankles; others more difficult, and which require a deeper search, as the waters to the knees, or the loins; and some quite beyond our reach, which we cannot penetrate into, or account for, but, despairing to find the bottom, must, as St. Paul, sit down at the brink, and adore the *depth*, Rom. xi. 33. It has been often said, that in the scripture, like these waters of the sanctuary, there are some places so shallow, that a lamb may wade through them, and others so deep, that an elephant may swim in them. And it is our wisdom, as the prophet here, to *begin* with that which is most easy, and get our hearts washed with those things before we proceed to that which is *dark and hard to be understood*; it is good to take our work before us.

3. The extent of this river; *It issues toward the east country*, but from thence it either divides itself into several streams, or fetches a compass, so that it goes down into the desert, and so goes into the sea, either into the *Dead sea*, which lay south-east, or the sea of Tiberias, which lay north-east, or the Great sea, which lay west, v. 8. This was accomplished when the gospel was preached with success throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, (Acts. viii. 1.) and afterward the nations about; nay, and those that lay most remote, even in the isles of the sea, were enlightened and leavened by it. The sound of it went forth *to the end of the world*; and the enemies of it could no more prevail to stop the progress of it than that of a mighty river.

4. The healing virtue of this river. The waters of the sanctuary, wherever they come and have a free course, will be found a wonderful restorative. Being brought forth into the sea, the sulphureous lake of Sodom, that standing monument of divine vengeance, even those *waters shall be healed*, (v. 8.) shall become sweet, and pleasant, and healthful. This intimates the wonderful and blessed change that the gospel would make, wheresoever it came in its power; as great a change, in respect both of character and condition, as the turning of the

Dead sea into a fountain of gardens. When children of wrath became children of love, and those that were dead in trespasses and sins, were made alive, then this was fulfilled. The gospel was as that salt which Elisha cast into the spring of the waters of Jericho, with which he *healed them*, 2 Kings ii. 20, 21. Christ coming into the world to be its Physician, sent his gospel as the great medicine, the *Pan-pharmakon*; there is in it a remedy for every malady. Nay, wherever these rivers come, they *make things to live*, (v. 9.) both plants and animals; they are the *water of life*, Rev. xxii. 1, 17. Christ came, that we may have life, and for that end he sends his gospel; *every thing shall live whither the river comes*. The grace of God makes dead sinners *alive*, and living saints *lively*; every thing is made fruitful and flourishing by it. But its effect is according as it is received, and as the mind is prepared and disposed to receive it; for, (v. 11.) with respect to the marshes and *miry places thereof*, that are settled in the *mirb* of their own sinfulness, and will not be healed or settled in the *moisture* of their own righteousness, and think they need no healing, their doom is, *they shall not be healed*; the same gospel which to others is a savour of life unto life, shall to them be a savour of death unto death; *they shall be given to salt*, to perpetual barrenness, Deut. xxix. 23. They that will not be watered with the grace of God, and made fruitful, shall be abandoned to their own hearts' lusts, and left for ever unfruitful. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Never fruit grow on thee more for ever*. They shall be given to salt, to be monuments of divine justice, as Lot's wife, that was turned into a pillar of salt, to season others.

5. The great plenty of fish that should be in this river; every living, moving thing shall be found here, shall *live here*, (v. 9.) shall come on and prosper, shall be the best of the kind, and shall increase greatly, so that there shall be a *very great multitude of fish, according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many*. There shall be as great plenty of the river-fish, and as vast shoals of them, as there is of salt-water fish, v. 10. There shall be great numbers of Christians in the church, and those multiplying like fishes in the rising generations, and *the dew of their youth*. In the creation, the *waters brought forth the fish abundantly*, (Gen. i. 20, 21.) and they still *live in* and by the waters that produced them; so believers are *begotten by the word of truth*, (James i. 18.) and *born by it*, (1 Pet. i. 23.) that river of God, by it they live, from it they have their maintenance and subsistence; in the waters of the sanctuary they are as in their element, out of them they are as fish *upon dry ground*; so David was, when he thirsted and panted for God, for the living God. Where the fish are known to be in abundance, thither will the fishers flock, and there they will *cast their nets*; and therefore, to intimate the replenishing of these waters, and their being made every way useful, it is here foretold that the fishers shall stand upon the banks of this river, from *En-gedi*, which lies on the border of the Dead sea, to *En-gelaim*, another city, which joins to that sea, and all along shall *spread their nets*. The Dead sea, which before was shunned as noisome and noxious, shall be frequented; gospel-grace makes those persons and places which were unprofitable and good for nothing, to become serviceable to God and man.

6. The trees that were on the banks of this river; *many trees on the one side and on the other* (v. 7.) made the prospect very pleasant and agreeable to the eye; the shelter of these trees also would be a convenience to the fishery. But that is not all; (v. 12.) *they are trees for meat, and the fruit of them shall not be consumed*, for it shall produce fresh

fruit *every month*. The leaf shall be for medicine, and it *shall not fade*. This part of the vision is copied out into St. John's vision very exactly, (Rev. xxii. 2.) where, on either side of the river, is said to grow the *tree of life*, which *yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves were for the healing of the nations*. Christians are supposed to be these trees: ministers especially; *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord*, (Isa. lxi. 3.) set by the *rivers of water*, the waters of the sanctuary, (Ps. i. 3.) grafted into Christ the Tree of life, and by virtue of their union with him made trees of life too, *rooted in him*, Col. ii. 7. There is a great variety of these trees, through the diversity of gifts with which they are endued by that one Spirit who *works all in all*. They grow on the bank of the river, for they keep close to holy ordinances, and through them derive from Christ sap and virtue. They are *fruit-trees*, designed, as the fig-tree and the olive, with their fruits to *honour God and man*, Judg. ix. 9. *The fruit thereof shall be for meat, for the lips of the righteous feed many*. The fruits of their righteousness are one way or other beneficial. The very leaves of these trees are for medicine, for *bruises and sores, marg*. Good Christians with their good discourses, which are as their leaves, as well as with their charitable actions, which are as their fruits, *do good* to those about them, they *strengthen the weak*, and bind up the broken-hearted. Their cheerfulness *does good like a medicine*, not only to themselves, but to others also. They shall be enabled by the grace of God to persevere in their goodness and usefulness; their *leaf shall not fade*, or lose its medicinal virtue, having not only life in their root but sap in all their branches; their profession *shall not wither*, (Ps. i. 3.) *neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed*; they shall not lose the principle of their fruitfulness, but *shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright*, Ps. xcii. 14, 15. Or, The reward of their fruitfulness shall abide for ever; they bring forth fruit that shall abound to their account in the great day, *fruit to life eternal*: that is indeed *fruit which shall not be consumed*. They bring *new fruit according to their months*, some in one month, and others in another; so that still there shall be one or other found to serve the glory of God for the purpose he designs. Or, Each one of them shall bring forth fruit monthly, which denotes an abundant disposition to fruit-bearing; they shall never be weary of well-doing; and a very happy climate, such, that there shall be a perpetual spring and summer. And the reason of this extraordinary fruitfulness is, *because their waters issued out of the sanctuary*; it is not to be ascribed to any thing in themselves, but to the continual supplies of divine grace, with which they are *watered every moment*; (Isa. xxvii. 3.) for whoever planted them, it was that which *gave the increase*.

13. Thus saith the Lord God, *This shall be the border whereby ye shall inherit the land, according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions*. 14. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another; *concerning the which I lifted up my hand to give it unto your fathers; and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance*. 15. And this *shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad*; 16. Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the bor-

der of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. 17. And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And *this is the north side.* 18. And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And *this is the east side.* 19. And the south side southward, from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And *this is the south side southward.* 20. The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side. 21. So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. 22. And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you; and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. 23. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God.

We are now to pass from the affairs of the sanctuary to those of the state; from the city to the country.

1. The land of Canaan is here secured to them for an inheritance; (v. 14.) *I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers*, promised it upon oath to them and their posterity. Though the possession had been a great while discontinued, yet God has not forgotten his oath which he sware to their fathers. Though God's providences may for a time seem to contradict his promises, yet the promise will certainly take place at last, for God will be ever mindful of his covenant. *I lifted up mine hand to give it*, and therefore it shall without fail fall to you for an inheritance. Thus the heavenly Canaan is sure to all the seed, because it is what God who cannot lie has promised.

2. It is here circumscribed, and the bounds and limits of it are fixed, which they must not pass over to encroach upon their neighbours, and which their neighbours shall not break through to encroach upon them. We had such a draught of the borders of Canaan, when Joshua was to put the people in possession of it, Numb. xxxiv. 1, &c. That begins with the salt sea in the south, goes round and ends there. This begins with Hamath about Damascus in the north, and so goes round and ends there, v. 20. Note, It is God that appoints the bounds of our habitation; and his Israel shall always have cause to say that *the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places.* The lake of Sodom is here called the east sea, for, it being healed by the waters of the sanctuary, it is no more to be called a salt sea, as it was in Numbers.

3. It is here ordered to be divided among the tribes of Israel, reckoning Joseph for two tribes, to make up the number of twelve, when Levi was taken out to attend the sanctuary, and had his lot adjoining to that; (v. 13, 21.) *Ye shall inherit it,*

*one as well as another*, v. 14. The tribes shall have an equal share, one as much as another. As the tribes returned out of Babylon, this seems unequal, because some tribes were much more numerous than the other, and indeed the most were of Judah and Benjamin, and very few of the other ten tribes; but as the twelve tribes stand, in type and vision, for the gospel-church, the Israel of God, it was very equal, because we find in another vision an equal number of each of the twelve tribes sealed for the living God, just 12,000 of each, Rev. vii. 5, &c. And to those sealed ones these allotments did belong. It intimates likewise that all the subjects of Christ's kingdom have obtained like precious faith. Male and female, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are all alike welcome to Christ, and made partakers of him.

4. The strangers which sojourn among them, which shall beget children, and be built up into families, and so help to people their country, shall have inheritance among the tribes, as if they had been native Israelites, (v. 22, 23.) which was by no means allowed in Joshua's division of the land. This is an act for a general naturalization, which would teach the Jews who was their neighbour; not those only of their own nation and religion, but those, whoever they were, that they had an opportunity of showing kindness to, because from them they would be willing to receive kindness. It would likewise invite strangers to come and settle among them, and put themselves under the wings of the Divine Majesty. But it certainly looks at gospel-times, when the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and both put upon a level before God, both made one in Christ, in whom there is no difference, Rom. x. 12. This land was a type of the heavenly Canaan, that better country, (Heb. xi. 16.) in which believing Gentiles shall have a blessed lot, as well as believing Jews, Isa. lvi. 3.

## CHAP. XLVIII.

In this chapter, we have particular directions given for the distribution of the land, of which we had the metes and bounds assigned in the foregoing chapter. 1. The portions of the twelve tribes, seven to the north of the sanctuary, (v. 1..7.) and five to the south, v. 23..29. 2. The allotment of land for the sanctuary, and the priests, (v. 8..11.) for the Levites, (v. 12..14.) for the city, (v. 15..20.) and for the prince, v. 21, 22. Much of this we had before, ch. xlv. 111. A plan of the city, its gates, and the new name given to it, (v. 30..35.) which seals up and concludes the vision and prophecy of this book.

1. **N**OW these are the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath, (for these are his sides east and west,) a portion for Dan. 2. And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Asher. 3. And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Naphtali. 4. And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Manasseh. 5. And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Ephraim. 6. And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Reuben. 7. And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Judah. 8. And



by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which they shall offer of five and twenty thousand *reebs* in breadth, and in length as one of the *other* parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. 9. The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD *shall be* of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth. 10. And for them, *even* for the priests, shall be *this* holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof. 11. *It shall be* for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. 12. And *this* oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy, by the border of the Levites. 13. And over against the border of the priests the Levites *shall have* five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length *shall be* five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. 14. And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first-fruits of the land: for it is holy unto the LORD. 15. And the five thousand that are left in the breadth, over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs; and the city shall be in the midst thereof. 16. And these *shall be* the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred. 17. And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. 18. And the residue in length, over against the oblation of the holy portion, *shall be* ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy portion; and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. 19. And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. 20. All the oblation *shall be* five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation four-square, with the possession of the city. 21. And

the residue *shall be* for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house *shall be* in the midst thereof. 22. Moreover, from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city *being* in the midst of that which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince. 23. As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side, Benjamin *shall have* a portion. 24. And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side, Simeon *shall have* a portion. 25. And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side, Issachar *a portion*. 26. And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side, Zebulun *a portion*. 27. And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side, Gad *a portion*. 28. And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river toward the great sea. 29. This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these *are* their portions, saith the Lord God.

We have here a very short and ready way taken for the dividing of the land among the twelve tribes, not so tedious and so far about as the way that was taken in Joshua's time; for, in the distribution of spiritual and heavenly blessings there is not that danger of murmuring and quarrelling that there is in the participation of temporal blessings. When God gave to the labourers every one his penny, those that were uneasy at it, were soon put to silence with, *May I not do not what I will with my own?* And such is the equal distribution here among the tribes.

In this distribution of the land, we may observe, 1. That it differs very much from the division of it in Joshua's time, and agrees not with the order of their birth, or their blessing by Jacob or Moses. Simeon here is not *divided* in Jacob, nor is Zebulun *a haven of ships*; a plain intimation that it is not so much to be understood *literally* as *spiritually*; though the mystery of it is very much hidden from us. In gospel-times old things are passed away, *behold, all things are become new*. The Israel of God is cast into a new method.

2. That the tribe of Dan, which was last provided for in the first division of Canaan, (Josh. xix. 40.) is first provided for here, v. 1. Thus in the gospel, the last shall be first, Matth. xix. 30. God, in the dispensations of his grace, does not follow the same method that he does in the disposals of his providence. But Dan had now his portion thereabouts where he had only one city before, northward, on the border of Damascus, and furthest of all from the sanctuary, because that tribe had revolted to idolatry.

3. That all the ten tribes, which were carried away by the king of Assyria, as well as the two tribes, which were long after carried to Babylon, have their allotment in this visionary land; which some think had its accomplishment in the particular persons and families of those tribes which returned with Judah and Benjamin, of which we find many instances in Ezra and Nehemiah; and it is probable that there were returns of many more afterward at several times, which are not recorded; and the Jews having Galilee, and other parts, that had been the possessions of the ten tribes, put into their hands, in common with them, they enjoyed them. Grotius says, If the ten tribes had repented, and returned to God, as the *chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin did, and the priests and Levites*, (Ezra i. 5.) they should have fared as those two tribes did, but they forfeited the benefit of this glorious prophecy by sin. However, we believe it has its designed accomplishment in the establishment and enlargement of the gospel-church, and the happy settlement of all those who are Israelites indeed, in the sure and sweet enjoyment of the privileges of the new covenant, in which there is enough for all, and enough for each.

4. That every tribe in this visionary distribution had its particular lot assigned it by a divine appointment; for it was never the intention of the gospel to pluck up the hedge of property, and lay all in common; it was in a way of charity, not of legal right, that the first Christians had all things common; (Acts ii. 44.) many precepts of the gospel suppose that every man should *know his own*. And we must not only acknowledge, but acquiesce in the hand of God, appointing us our lot, and be well pleased with it, believing it fittest for us. *He shall choose our inheritance for us*, Ps. xlvii. 4.

5. That the tribes lay *contiguous*; by the border of one tribe was the *portion* of another, all in a row, in exact order, so that, like stones in an arch, they fixed, and strengthened, and wedged in, one another. *Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren thus to dwell together!* It was a figure of the communion of churches and saints under the gospel-government; thus though they are *many*, yet they are one, and should hold together in holy love and mutual assistance.

6. That Reuben, which before lay at a distance beyond Jordan, now lies next to Judah, and next but one to the sanctuary; for the scandal he lay under, for which he was told *he should not excel*, began by this time to wear off. What has turned to the reproach of any person or people, ought not to be remembered for ever, but should at length be kindly forgotten.

7. That the sanctuary was *in the midst* of them; there were seven tribes to the north of it, and the Levites, the prince's and the city's portion, with that of five tribes more, to the south of it; so that it was, as it ought to be, *in the heart of the kingdom*, that it might diffuse its benign influences to the whole, and might be the centre of their unity. The tribes that lay most remote from each other, would meet there in a mutual acquaintance and fellowship. Those of the same parish or congregation, though dispersed, and having no occasion otherwise to know each other, yet by meeting stately to worship God together should have their hearts knit to each other in holy love.

8. That where the sanctuary was, the priests were; *For them, even for the priests, shall this holy oblation be*, v. 10. As, on the one hand, this speaks honour and comfort to ministers, that what is given for their support and maintenance is reckoned a *holy oblation to the Lord*, so it speaks their duty, which is, that since they are appointed and maintained for the service of the sanctuary, they ought

to attend continually to this very thing; to reside on their cures. Those that *live upon* the altar must *serve at the altar*, not take the wages to themselves, and devolve the work upon others; but how can they *serve the altar*, his altar they live upon, if they do not *live near it*?

9. Those priests had the priests' share of these lands, that had approved themselves faithful to God in times of trial; (v. 11.) *It shall be for the sons of Zadok*, who, it seems, had *signalized* themselves in some critical juncture, and *went not astray* when the *children of Israel*, and the other *Levites*, *went astray*. God will put honour upon them, and has special favours in reserve for them, who keep their integrity in times of general apostacy. *They are swimming upward*, and so they will find at last, that are *swimming against the stream*.

10. The land which was appropriated to the ministers of the sanctuary, might by no means be alienated. It was in the nature of the *first-fruits of the land*, and was therefore *holy to the Lord*; and though the priests and Levites had both the use of it, and the inheritance of it to them and their heirs, yet they might not *sell it, or exchange it*, v. 14. It is sacrifice to convert that to other uses, which is dedicated to God.

11. The land allotted for the city and its suburbs is called a *profane place*, (v. 15.) or *common*; not but that the city was a *holy city* above other cities, for the Lord was there, but, in comparison with the sanctuary, it was a *profane place*. Yet it is too often true in the worst sense, that great cities, even those which, like this, have the sanctuary near them, are *profane places*, and it ought to be sadly lamented. It was the complaint of old, *From Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land*, Jer. xxiii. 15.

12. The city is made to be exactly four-square, and the suburbs extending themselves equally on all sides, as the Levites' cities did in the first division of the land, (v. 16. 17.) which never being literally fulfilled in any city, intimates that it is to be understood spiritually of the beauty and stability of the gospel-church, that *city of the living God*, which is formed according to the wisdom and counsel of God, and is made firm and immovable by his promise.

13. Whereas, before, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were principally of Judah and Benjamin, in whose tribe it lay, now, the head city lies not in the particular lot of any of the tribes, but *they that serve the city*, and bear office in it, *shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel*, v. 19. The most eminent men must be picked out of *all the tribes of Israel*, for the service of the city, because many eyes were upon it, and there was great resort to it from all parts of the nation, and from other nations. They that *live in the city* are said to *serve the city*, for, wherever we are, we must study to be serviceable to the place, some way or other, according as our capacity is. They must not *come out of the tribes of Israel* to the city, to take their ease, and enjoy their pleasures, but to *serve the city*, to do all the good they can there, and in so doing they would have a good influence upon the country too.

14. Care was taken that those who applied themselves to public business in the city, as well as in the sanctuary, should have an honourable, comfortable maintenance; lands are appointed, *the increase whereof shall be food unto them that serve the city*, v. 18. Who goes a warfare at his own charges? Magistrates, that attend the service of the state, as well as ministers, that attend the service of the church, should have all due encouragement and support in so doing; and *for this cause pay we tribute also*.

15. The prince had a lot for himself, suited to

the dignity of his high station; (v. 21.) we took an account of it before, *ch. xlv.* He was seated near the sanctuary, where the *testimony* of Israel was, and near the city, where the *thrones of judgment* were, that he might be a protection to both, and might see that the duty of both was carefully and faithfully done; and herein he was a minister of God for good to the whole community. Christ is the church's Prince, that defends it on every side, and creates a defence: nay, he is himself a Defence upon all its glory, and compasses it with his favour.

*Lastly*, As Judah had his lot next the sanctuary on one side, so Benjamin had, of all the tribes, his lot nearest to on the other side; which honour was reserved for them who adhered to the house of David and the temple at Jerusalem, when the other ten tribes went astray from both. It is enough if treachery and apostacy, upon repentance, be pardoned, but constancy and fidelity shall be rewarded and preferred.

30. And these *are* the goings out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures. 31. And the gates of the city *shall be* after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. 32. And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. 33. And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. 34. At the west side four thousand and five hundred, *with their* three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali. 35. *It was* round about eighteen thousand *measures*: and the name of the city from that day *shall be*, The Lord is there.

We have here a further account of *the city* that should be built for the metropolis of this glorious land, and to be the receptacle of those who should come from all parts to worship in the sanctuary adjoining. It is no where called *Jerusalem*, nor is the land which we have had such a particular account of the dividing of, any where called the *land of Canaan*; for the old names are forgotten, to intimate that the *old things are done away, behold, all things are become new*.

Now, concerning this city, observe here,

1. The *measures* of its outlets, and the grounds belonging to it, for its several conveniences; each way its appurtenances extended 4,500 *measures*, 18,000 in all, v. 35. But what these measures were, is uncertain; it is never said, in all this chapter, whether so many *reeds*, as our translation determines, by inserting that word, (v. 8.) each reed containing six cubits and a span; (*ch. xl. 5.*) and why should the measurer appear with the measuring-reed in his hand of that length, if he did not measure with *that*, except where it is expressly said he measured by cubits? Or whether, as others think, it is so many cubits, because those are mentioned, *ch. xlv. 2.* and *ch. xlviii. 3.* Yet that makes me incline rather to think that where cubits are not mentioned, it must be intended so many lengths of the measuring-reed. But those who understand it of so many cubits, are not agreed whether it be meant of the common cubit, which was half a yard,

or the *geometrical* cubit, which, for better expedition, is supposed to be mostly used in surveying lands, which, some say, contained *six cubits*, others about three cubits and a half, so making 1000 cubits the same with 1000 paces, that is, an *English* mile. But our being left at this uncertainty, is an intimation that these things are to be understood spiritually, and that what is principally meant, is, that there is an exact and just proportion observed by Infinite Wisdom in modelling the gospel-church, which though now we cannot discern, we shall when we come to heaven.

2. The *number* of its gates. It had twelve gates in all, three on each side; which was very agreeable when it lay four-square; and these twelve gates inscribed to the twelve tribes. Because the city was to be served out of *all the tribes of Israel*, (v. 19.) it was fit that each tribe should have its gate; and Levi being here taken in, to keep to the number twelve, Ephraim and Manasseh are made one in Joseph, v. 32. On the north side were the gates of Reuben, Judah, and Levi, v. 31. On the east, the gates of Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan, v. 32. On the south, the gates of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun, v. 33. And on the west, the gates of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali, v. 34. Conformable to this, in St. John's vision, the new Jerusalem (for so the holy city is called there, though not here) has *twelve gates*, three of a side, and on them are written the names of the *twelve tribes of the children of Israel*, Rev. xxi. 12, 13. Note, Into the church of Christ, both militant and triumphant, there is a free access by faith for all that come of every tribe, from every quarter. Christ has *opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers*. Whoever will may come, and take of the *water of life*, of the tree of life, *freely*.

3. The name given to this city; *From that day*, when it shall be new-erected according to this model, the name of it shall be, not as before, *Jerusalem—the vision of peace*, but, which is the original of that, and more than equivalent to it, *Jehovah Shammah—The Lord is there*, v. 35. This intimated,

(1.) That the captives, after their return, should have manifest tokens of God's presence with them, and his residence among them, both in his ordinances and in his providences; they should have no occasion to ask, as their fathers did, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?* For they shall see, and say, that he is with them of a truth. And then, though their troubles were many and threatening, they were like the bush, which burned, but was not consumed, because *the Lord was there*. But when God departed from their temple, when he said, *Migramus hinc—Let us go hence, their house was soon left unto them desolate*. Being no longer his, it was not much longer theirs.

(2.) That the gospel-church should likewise have the presence of God in it, though not in the *Shechinah*, as of old, yet in a token of it no less sure, than of his Spirit. Where the gospel is faithfully preached, gospel-ordinances duly administered, and God worshipped in the name of Jesus Christ only, it may truly be said, *The Lord is there*; for faithful is he that has said it, and he will be as good as his word. *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. The Lord is there* in his church to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be *nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for*. This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for *the Lord is there*; and then whither else shall we go to mend ourselves? Nay, it is true of every good Christian, he dwells in God, and God in him; whatever soul has in it a living principle of grace, it may be truly said, *The Lord is there*.

(3.) That the glory and happiness of heaven should consist chiefly in this, that *the Lord is there*. St. John's representation of that blessed state does indeed far exceed this, in many respects. That is all gold, and pearls, and precious stones; it is much larger than this, and much brighter, for it *needs not the light of the sun*. But in making the presence of God the principal matter of its bliss, they both

agree. There the happiness of the glorified saints is made to be, that *God himself shall be with them*, (Rev. xxi. 3.) that *he who sits on the throne shall dwell among them*, Rev. vii. 15. And here it is made to crown the bliss of this holy city, that *the Lord is there*. Let us therefore give all diligence to make sure to ourselves a place in that city, that we may be *for ever with the Lord*.