AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET DANIEL.

THE book of Ezekiel left the affairs of Jerusalem under a doleful aspect, all in ruins, but with a joyful prospect of all in glory again. This of Daniel sicily follows. Ezekiel told us what was seen, and what was foreseen, by him in the former years of the captivity; Daniel tells us what was seen, and foreseen, in the latter years of the captivity: when God employs different hands, yet it is about the same work. And it was a comfort to the poor captives, that they had first one prophet among them and then another, to show them how long, and a sign that God had not quite cast them off. Let us inquire.

I. Concerning this prophet; his Hebrew name was Daniel, which signifies the judgment of God; his Chaldee name was Beltchahazzar. He was of the tribe of Judah, and, as it should seem, of the royal family; he was betimes eminent for wisdom and piety. Ezekiel, his contemporary, but much his senior, speaks of him as an oracle, when he upbraids the king of Tyre with his conceitness of himself: *Thou art wiser than Daniel*, Ezek. xxviii. 3. He is likewise therewith celebrated for success in prayer, when Noah, Daniel, and Job are reckoned as three men that had the greatest interest in heaven of any other, Ezek. xiv. 14. He began betimes to be famous, and continued long so. Some of the Jewish Rabbins are loath to acknowledge him to be a prophet of the higher form, and therefore rank his book among the Hagiographa, not among the prophecies, and would not have their disciples pay much regard to it. One reason they pretend is, because he did not live such a man, mortified life as Jeremiah and some other of the prophets did, but lived like a prince, and was a prime minister of state; whereas we find him persecuted as other prophets were, (ch. vi.) and mortifying himself as other prophets did, when *he ate no pleasant bread*, (ch. x. 3.) and fasting and sick when he was under the power of the Spirit of prophecy, ch. vii. 27. Another reason they pretend is, because he wrote his book in a heathen country, and *there had his visions, and not in the land of Israel*; but, by the same reason, Ezekiel also must be expunged out of the roll of prophets. But the true reason is, he speaks so plainly of the time of the Messiah's coming, that the Jews cannot avoid the conviction of it, and therefore do not care to hear of it. But Josephus calls him one of the greatest of the prophets, nay, the angel Gabriel calls him a man greatly beloved. He lived long an active life in the courts and councils of some of the greatest monarchs the world ever had, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius; for we mistake if we confine the privilege of an intercourse with heaven to speculative men, or those that spend their time in contemplation; no, who was more intimately acquainted with the mind of God than Daniel, a courtier, a statesman, and a man of business? The Spirit, as the wind, blows where it likes. And if those that have much to do in the world, plead that as an excuse for the coldness and the slowness of their converse with God, Daniel will condemn them. Some have thought that he returned to Jerusalem, and was one of the masters of the Greek synagogue; but nothing of that appears in scripture, it is therefore generally concluded that he died in Persia, at Susa, where he lived to be very old.

II. Concerning this book. The first six chapters of it are historical, and are plain and easy; the six last are prophetic, and in them are many things dark, and hard to be understood; which yet would be more intelligible if we had a more complete history of the nations, and especially of the Jewish nation, from Daniel's time to the coming of the Messiah. Our Saviour intimated the difficulty of apprehending the sense of Daniel's prophecies, when, speaking of them, he says, *Let him that readeth understand*, Matth. xxiv. 15. The first chapter, and the three first verses of the second chapter, are in Hebrew; thence to the eighth chapter is in the Chaldee dialect; thence to the end is in Hebrew. Mr. Broughton observes, *That, as the Chaldeans were kind to Daniel, and gave cupps of cold water to him when he requested it, rather than the king's wine, God would not have them lose their reward, but made that language which they taught him, to have honour in his writings through all the world unto this day*. Daniel, according to his computation, continues the holy story from the first surprising of Jerusalem by the Chaldee Babylon, when he himself was carried away captive, until the last destruction of it by Rome, the mystical Babylon, for so far forward his predictions look, ch. ix. 27. The fables of Susanna, and of Bel and the Dragon, in both which Daniel is made a party, are apocryphal stories, which we think we have no reason to give any credit to, they never being found in the Hebrew or Chaldee, but only in the Greek, nor ever admitted by the Jewish church. There are some, both of the histories and of the prophecies of this book, that bear date in the latter end of the Chaldean monarchy, and others of both, that are dated in the beginning of the Persian monarchy. But both Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which he interpreted, and his own visions, point at the Greek and Roman monarchies, and very particularly at the Jews' troubles under Antiochus, which it would be of great use to them to prepare for; as his fixing the very time for the coming of the Messiah, was to all them that waited the consolation of Israel, and is to us, for the confirming of our belief, *That this is he who should come, and we are to look for no other*. 
This chapter gives us a more particular account of the beginning of Daniel's life, his original and education, than we have at any other time. Isaiah, Jeremia, and Ezekiel began immediately with divine visions; but Daniel began with the study of human learning; and was afterward honoured with divine visions; such was his usefulness that God took care, and made provision for the service of his church. We have here, 1. Jehoiakim's first captivity, (v. 1, 2,) in which Daniel, with others of the seed royal, was carried to Babylon. 2. The choice made of Daniel, and some other young men, to be brought up in the Chaldean literature, that they might be fitted to serve the government, and the provision made for them, v. 3-7. 3. Their pious refusal to eat the provisions by the king's mess, and being determined to live upon pulse and water, which, having tried it, the master of the eunuchs allowed them to do, finding that it agreed very well with them, v. 8-16. 4. Their wonderful improvement, above all their fellows, in wisdom and knowledge, v. 17-21.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god. 3. And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4. Children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank; so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; 7. Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel, the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

We have, in these verses, an account, 1. Of the first descent which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the first very year of his reign, made upon Judah and Jerusalem, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, and his success in that expedition; (v. 1, 2,) he besieged Jerusalem, soon made himself master of it, seized the king, took whom he pleased, and what he pleased, away with him, and then left Jehoiakim to reign as tributary to him, which he did about eight years longer; but then rebelling, he sent them back to him, new taken from their first captivity, most interpreters think the seventy years are to be dated, though Jerusalem was not destroyed, nor the captivity completed, till about nineteen years after. In that first year Daniel was carried to Babylon, and there continued the whole seventy years, (see v. 21,) during which time all nations shall serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his son's son, Jer. xxv. 11. So that this one prophet saw within the compass of his own time, the rise, reign, and ruin of that monarchy; and that it was res unius etatis—the affair of a single age; such short-lived things are the kingdoms of the earth, but the kingdom of heaven is everlasting. The righteous, that see them taking root, shall see their fall, Job v. 5. 16. Mr. Broughton observes the proportion of times in God's government since the coming out of Egypt; thence to their entering Canaan forty years, thence seven years to the dividing of the land, thence seven Jubilees to the first year of Samuel, in whom prophecy began; thence to this first year of the captivity seventy years, 490, (ten Jubilees,) thence to the return, one seventy, thence to the death of Christ, to the seven last years, and then thence to the destruction of Jerusalem forty years. 11. The improvement he made of this success; he did not destroy the city or kingdom, but did that which just accomplished the first threatening of mischief by Babylon; it was that denounced against Hezekiah for showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, (1sa. xxxix. 6, 7,) that the treasures and the children should be carried away, and if they had been humbled and reformed by this, hitherto the king of Babylon's power and success should have gone, but no further. If lesser judgments do the work, God will not send greater; but if not, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Let us see what was now done.
III. A particular account of Daniel and his fellows; they were of the children of Judah, the royal tribe, and, probably, of the house of David, which was grown a numerous family; and God told Hese- kiah, that of the children that should issue from him, some should be taken, and made eunuchs, or chamberlains, in the palace of the king of Babylon. The prince of the eunuchs changed the names of Daniel and his fellows, partly to show his authority over them, and partly to show an instance of their being naturalized, and made Chaldeans. Their Hebrew names, which they received at their circumcision had something of God, or Jah in them; Daniel—God is my Judge; Hananiah—The grace of the Lord; Mishael—He that is the strong God; Azariah—The Lord is a Help; to make them forget the God of their fathers, the Guide of their youth, they gave them names that savour of the Chaldean idolatry; Belteshazzar signifies, the keeper of the hid treasures of Bel; Shadrach—The inspiration of the sun, which the Chaldeans worshipped; Meshach—of the goddess Shaca, under which name Venus was worshipped; Abed-nego—The servant of the shining fire, which they worshipped also. Thus, though they would not force them from the religion of their fathers to that of their sovereigns, yet they did what they could by fair means, insensibly to wean them from the former, and instil the latter into them. Yet see how comfortably they were provided for: though they suffered for their father's sins, they were preferred for their own merits; and the land of their captivity was made more comfortable to them than the land of their nativity at this time would have been.

3. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king? 11. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12. Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.

We observe here, very much to our satisfaction,
1. That Daniel was a favourite with the prince of the eunuchs, (v. 9.) as Joseph was with the keeper of the prison: he had a tender love for him. No doubt, Daniel deserved it, and recommended himself by his ingenuous, inoffensive, sweetness and temper; he was greatly beloved, (ch. ix. 23.) and yet it appears here, God brought him into favour with the prince of the eunuchs, for every one does not meet with acceptance according to his merits. Note, The interest which we think we make for ourselves, we must acknowledge to be God's gift, and must ascribe to him the glory of it. Whoever are in favour, it is God that has brought them into it, and it is by him that they find good understanding. Herein was again verified that word, (Ps. cvi. 45.) 'He made them to be hittled of all those that carried them captives.' Let young ones know that the way to be acceptable is to be tractable and dutiful.

2. That Daniel was still firm to his religion. They had changed his name, but they could not change his nature; whatever they pleased to call him, he still retained the spirit of an Israelite indeed. He would apply his mind as closely as any of them all to his books, and took pains to make himself master of the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans; but he was resolved that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat: he would not meddle with it, nor with the wine which he drank; v. 8. And having engaged himself to keep himself pure from the pollution of it, to his fellows, they concurred in the same resolution, as appears, v. 11. This was not out of5. overs, or meekness, or a spirit of contradiction, but from a principle of conscience. Perhaps it was not in itself unlawful for them to eat of the king's meat, or to drink of his wine. But, (1.) They were scrupulous concerning the meat, lest it should be sin to eat it, or that keeping themselves pure from it might expose them as was expressly forbidden by their law, as swine's flesh; or they were afraid lest it should have been offered in sacrifice to an idol, or blessed in the name of an idol. The Jews were distinguished from other nations very much by their meats; (Lev. xii. 43, 46.) and these pious young men, being in a strange country, thought themselves obliged to keep up the honour of their being a peculiar people. Though they could not keep up their dignity as princes, they would not lose it as Israelites; for on that they most valued themselves. Note, When God's people are in Babylon, they need not take special care that they partake not in her sins. Providence seemed to lay this meat before them; being captives, they must eat what they could get, and must not disobey their masters, yea, and in some command be against it, they must abide by that: though Providence says, 'Kill, and eat;' conscience says, 'No, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has come into my mouth.' (2.) They were jealous over themselves, lest, though it should not be sinful in itself, it should be an occasion of sin to them; lest, by indulging their appetites with these dainties, they might give the grace that was in them occasion to stagnate and grow sluggish. They called in the pleasure of Babylon; they had learned Daniel's prayer, 'Let me not eat of their dainties,' (Ps. cxli. 4.) and Solomon's precept, 'Be not desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat;' (Prov. xxiii. 5.) and accordingly they form their resolution. Note, It is very much to the praise of all, and especially of young people, to be dead to the delights of sense, and to apply themselves to such things as may not only hinder, but draw them into subjection. (3.) However, they thought it unseasonable now, when Jerusalem was in distress, and they themselves in captivity. They had no heart to drink wine in bowls, so much were they grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Though they had royal blood in their veins, yet they did not think it proper to have royal dainties in their months when they were thus brought low. Note, It becomes us to be humble under humiliating providences. Call me not Naomi, call me Mara. See the benefit of affliction; that the account Jerimiah gives of the princes and great men now at Jerusalem, it appears that they were very corrupt and wicked, and defiled themselves with things offered to idols, while these young gentlemen that were in captivity, would not defile themselves, no, not with their portion of the king's meat. How much better is it with those that retain their integrity in these times of affliction, than with those that retain their iniquity in the heights of prosperity! Observe, The great thing that Daniel avoided, was, defiling himself with the pollutions of sin; that is the thing we should be more afraid of than of any outward trouble. Daniel, having taken up this resolution, requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself, not only that he might not be compelled to do it, but that he might not be tempted to do it; that the habit might not be laid before him; that he might not see the portion appointed him of the king's meats, nor look upon the wine when it was red: it will be easier to keep the temptation at a distance than to suffer it to come near, and then be forced to put a knife to our throat. Note, We cannot better improve our interest in any with any of them we have found favour with, than to make them Mend to do what we think right.

3. That God wonderfully owned him herein: when Daniel requested that he might have none of the king's meat or wine set before him, the prince of the eunuchs objected, that if he and his fellows were not found in as good case as any of their companions, he should be in danger of having anger, and of losing his head. Daniel, to dispose him that there would be no danger of any bad consequence, desires the matter might be put to a trial. He applies himself further, to the under-officer, Melzar, or the steward; 'Prove us for ten days; during that time let us have nothing but pulse to eat, nothing but herbs and fruits, or parched pease or lentils, and nothing but water to drink, and see how we can live upon that, and prove us.' v. 12. People will not have the benefit of abstinence and a spare diet, nor how much it contributes to the health of the body, unless they try it. Trial was accordingly made; Daniel and his fellows lived for ten days upon pulse and water, hard fare for young men of genteel extraction and education, and which one would rather expect they should have indented against than has been mentioned for; but at the end of ten days they were compared with the other children, and were found fairer and fatter in flesh, of a more healthfull look, and a better complex or than all those which did eat the portion of the king's meat, v. 15. This was in part a natural effect of their temperance, but it must be ascribed to the special blessing of God, in which he will give to them a sense of the betterness of herbs better than a stalled ox. By this it appears that man lives not by bread alone; pulse and water shall be the most nourishing food if God speak the word. See what it is to keep ourselves pure from the pollutions of sin, it is the way to have that comfort and satisfaction which will be health to the navel and marrow to the bones, while the pleasures of sin are rattenning. We need not be afraid of being weak for God's sake, provided we are afterwards strong for his service.

4. That his master commended him. The steward did not force them to eat against their consciences, but, as they desired, gave them pulse and water, (v. 16.) the pleasures of which they enjoyed, and we have reason to think they were not envied the enjoyment. Here is a great example of temperance and contentment with mean things; and (Epicurus said) 'He that lives according to nature will
never be poor, but he that lives according to opinion will never be rich." This wonderful abstemiousness of these young men in the days of their youth contributed to the fitting of them, (1.) For their eminent services; hereby they kept their minds clear and unclouded, and fit for contemplation, and saved for the best employments a great deal both of time and thought; and thus they prevented those diseases which attended these men, for the business of age, that owe their rise to the intemperance of youth. (2.) For their eminent sufferings. They that had thus honored themselves to hardship, and lived a life of self-denial and mortification, could the more easily venture upon the fiery furnace and the den of lions, rather than sin against God.

17. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18. Now, at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19. And the king communed with them: and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king; 20. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. 21. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Concerning Daniel and his fellows, we have here,
1. Their great attainments in learning, v. 17. They were very sober and diligent, and studied hard; and we may suppose their tutors, finding them of an uncommon capacity, took a deal of pains with them, but, after all, their achievements are ascribed to God only: it was he that gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights; it is the Lord our God that gives men power to get this wealth; the mind is furnished only by him that formed it. The great learning which God gave these four children was, (1.) A balance for their lives: they had, their children, been deprived of the honours and pleasures that would have attended their noble extraction; but, to make them amends for that, God, in giving them learning, gave them better honours and pleasures than those they had been deprived of. (2.) A recompense for their integrity; they kept to their religion, even in the minutest instances of it, and would not so much as worship the kings with the king's meat or wine, but became strong in effect, Nazarites; and now God rewarded them for it with an eminency in learning; for God gives to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge, and joy with them, Eccl. ii. 26. To Daniel he gave a double portion, he had understanding in visions and dreams; he knew how to interpret dreams, as Joseph by the art, such as are pretended to be given by the Oracles: the art of divinity and wisdom which God gave him. Nay, he was endued with a prophetical spirit, by which he was enabled to converse with God, and to receive the notices of divine things in dreams and visions, Num. xii. 6. According to this gift given to Daniel, we find him, in this book, all along employed in dreams and visions, interpreting or entertaining them; for as every one has received the gift, so shall he have an opportunity, and so shall he have a heart, to minister the same, 1 Pet. iv. 10.

2. Their great preferment after three years spent in their education, (they being of some maturity, it is likely, when they came, perhaps about twenty years old,) they were presented to the king with the rest that were of their standing, v. 18. And the king examined them, and communed with them himself, v. 19. He could do it, being a man of parts and learning himself, else he had not come to be so; and he would do it; for it is the wisdom of princes, in the choice of the persons they employ, to see with their own eyes, to exercise their own judgment, and not trust too much to the representation of others. The king examined them not so much in the languages, in the rules of oratory or poetry, as in all matters of wisdom and understanding, the rules of prudence and true politics: he inquired into their judgment about the conduct of human life and public affairs:—"Were they wise?" but, "Were they wise?" And he found them to excel not only the young candidates for preferment, that were of their own standing, but that they had more understanding than the ancients, than all their teachers, Ps. cxix. 99, 100. So far was the king from being partial to his own countrymen, to judge them by their own religion, and of an established reputation, that he freely essayed to try them: and upon trial, he found those poor young captive Jews ten times wiser and better than all the magicians that were in all his realm, v. 20. He was so wise aware of something extraordinary in these young men, and, which gave him a surprising satisfaction, was so wise aware that a little of their true divinity was preferable to a great deal of the divinity he had been used to. What is the chaff to the wheat, the magicians' rods to Aaron's! There was no comparison between them; these four young students were better, were ten times better, than all the old practitioners—put them all together, that were in all his realm, and we may be sure that they were not a few. This contempt did God pour upon the pride of the Chaldeans, and this honour did he put upon the low estate of his own people; and thus did he make not only these persons, but the rest of the nation for their sakes, the more respected in the land of their captivity. Lastly, This judgment being given concerning them, they stood before the king; (v. 19.) they attended in the presence-chamber, may, and in the council-chamber; for to see the king's face is the periphrasis of a privy councilor, Esth. i. 14. This confirms Daniel's observation, that God does bestow a man diligent in his business, sober and humble? He shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men. Industry is the way to preferment. How long the other three were about the court, we are not told; but Daniel, for his part, continued to the first year of Cyrus, (v. 21.) though not always alike in favour and reputation. He lived and prospered year after year. It was mentioned, to intimate that he lived to see the delivery of his people out of their captivity, and their return to their own land. Note, Sometimes God favours his servants that mourn with Zion in her sorrows, to let them live to see better times with the church than they saw in the beginning of their days, and to share with her in her joys.

CHAP. II.

It was said (ch. i. 17.) that Daniel had understanding in dreams; and here we have an early and eminent instance of it, which soon made him famous in the court of Babylon, as Joseph by the same means came to be so in the court of Egypt. This chapter is a history, but it is the history of a prophecy, by a dream, and the interpretation of it. Pharaoh's dream, and Joseph's interpretation of it, related only to the years of plenty and famine, and the interest of God's Israel in them; but Nebuchadnez-
The king commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

We meet with a great difficulty in the date of this story; it is said to be in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, v. 1. Now Daniel was carried to Babylon in his first year, and, it should seem, he was three years under tutors and governors, before he was presented to the king, ch. i. 5. How then could this happen in the second year? Perhaps though three years were appointed for the education of other children, yet Daniel was so far in advance, that he was taken, in common with his companions, and the preferment of his companions with him, v. 46., 49.

1. A ND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 4. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriac, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. 5. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill: 6. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts, and rewards, and great honour: therefore shew me the dream and the interpretation thereof. 7. They answered again, and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. 8. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9. But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you; for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me till the time be changed; therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. 10. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth; and there is none other that can shew it before the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. 12. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.
2. The trial that he made of his magicians and astrologers, whether they could tell him what his dreamed a dream; and for this they were immediately sent for, to show the king his dream, v. 2. There are many things which we retain the impressions of, and yet have lost the images of the things; though we cannot tell what the matter was, we know how we were affected with it; so it was with this king. His dream had slipped out of his mind, and he could not possibly recollect it, but was confused he knew not what the dream was. God ordered it so that Daniel might have the more honour, and, in him, the God of Daniel. Note, God sometimes serves his own purposes by putting things out of men's minds as well as by putting things into their minds. The magicians, it is likely, were proud of their being sent for into the king's bed-chamber, to give him a taste of their office, not doubting but it would be for their honour. He tells them that he had dreamed a dream, v. 3. They speak to him in the Syriac tongue, which was then the same with the Chaldee, but now they differ much. And from henceforward Daniel uses that language, or dialect of the Hebrew, for the same reason that those words, Jer. x. 11. are in that language, because designed to convince the Chaldeans of the folly of their idolatry, and to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. Daniel was a man of many parts, and God, which the stories of these chapters have a direct tendency to, but ch. viii. and forward, being intended for the comfort of the Jews, is written in their peculiar language. They, in their answer, complimented the king with their good wishes, desired him to tell his dream, and undertook with all possible assurance to interpret it, v. 4. But the king insisted upon it, that they must tell him the dream itself; because he had forgotten it, and could not tell it them. And if they could not do this, they should all be put to death as deceivers, v. 5. themselves cut to pieces, and their houses made a dung-hill. If they could, they should be rewarded and preferred, v. 6. And they knew, as Balaam did concerning Balak, that he was able to promote them to great honour, and give them that wages of unrighteousness, which, like him, they loved so dearly: no question therefore that they will do their utmost to gratify the king; if they do not, it is not for want of good will, but for want of power; Providence so ordering it, that the magicians of Babylon might now be as much confounded and put to shame as of old the magicians of Egypt had been; that, how much soever his people were both in Egypt and Babylon vilified and made contemptible, his oracles might in both be magnified and made honourable, by the silencing of those that set up in competition with them. The magicians, having reason on their side, insist upon it, that the king must tell them the dream, and then, if they do not tell him the interpretation of it, it is their fault, v. 7. But arbitrary power is dead to reason; the king fixes upon it, that they must tell him the dream itself; because he had forgotten it, and could not tell it them. And if they could not do this, they should all be put to death as deceivers, v. 8. And they did, v. 9. They gave him the words, and had imposed upon him with a sham, he might have charged them with lying and corrupt words; but to say this of them, when they honestly confessed their own weakness, only shows what senseless things indulged passions are, and how apt great men are to think it is their prerogative to pursue their humour, in defiance of reason and equity, and all the dictates of both. When the magicians begged of him to tell them the dream, though the request was highly rational and just, he tells them he will not; and they said the like of them. See 2. Chr. vii. 7. till the time he changed, (v. 9.) either till the king's desire to know his dream be over, and he grown indifferent whether he be told it or no, though now he is so hot upon it, or till they may hope he has so perfectly forgotten his dream, (the remaining shades of which are slipping from him as he catches at them,) that they may tell him what they please, and make him believe it was his dream, and, when the thing which is going, is quite gone from him, as it will be in a little time, he will not be able to disprove them. And therefore, without delay, they must tell him the dream. In vain do they plead, (1.) That there is no man on earth that can retrieve the king's dream, v. 10. There are settled rules by which to discover what the meaning of the dream was: whether they will hold or no, is the question. But never were any rules offered to be given, by which to discover what the dream was; they cannot work unless they have something to work upon. They acknowledge that the gods may indeed declare unto man what is his thought, (Amos iv. 13.) for he understands our thoughts after off; (Ps. cxxxix. 2.) what they will be before we think them, what they are, and what they will have. But if we have forgotten them, and we have forgotten them. But those who can do this, are gods that have not their dwelling with flesh, (v. 11.) and it is they alone that can do this. As for men, their dwelling is with flesh, the wisest and greatest of men are clouded with a veil of flesh which quite obstructs and confounds all their acquaintance with spirits, and their powers and operations; but the gods, that are themselves pure spirits, know what is in man. See here an instance of the ignorance of these magicians, that they speak of many gods, whereas there is but one, and can be but one infinite, yet see their knowledge of that which even the light of nature teaches, and the works of nature prove; that there is a God, who is a Spirit, and perfectly knows the spirits of men, and all their thoughts, so as it is not possible that any man should. This confession of the divine omniscience is here extrated from these idolaters, to the honour of God, and their own condemnation, who, though they know there is a God in heaven, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, yet offered up their prayers and praises to dumb idols, that have eyes and see not, ears and hear not. (2.) That there is nothing on earth that would expect or require such a thing, v. 10. This intimates that they were kings, birds, and potentates, not ordinary people, that the magicians had most dealings with, and at whose devotion they were, while the oracles of God, and the gospel of Christ, are dispensed to the poor. Kings and potentates have often required unreasonable things of their subjects, but they think that never any reason will be given therefor, or thatasmuch as they hope his imperial majesty will not insist upon it. But it is all in vain, when passion is in the thrones reason is under foot: he was angry and very furious, v. 12. Note, It is very common for those that will not be convinced by reason, to be provoked and exasperated by it, and to push on with fury what they cannot support with equity. The order is this, Daniel had given the magicians of Babylon; there is but one decree for them all, (v. 9.) they all stand condemned without exception or distinction; the decree is gone forth, they must every man of them be slain, (v. 13.) Daniel and his fellows (though they knew nothing of the matter) not excepted. See here, (1.) What are commonly the unjust proceedings of arbitrary power. Nebuchadnezzar is here a tyrant in true colours, speaking
death when he cannot speak sense, and treating those as traitors whose only fault is, that they would serve him but cannot. (2.) What is commonly the just punishment of pretenders. How unrighteous soever Nebuchadnezzar was in this sentence, as to the ringleaders in the imposture, God was righteous; they that imposed upon men, in pretending to do what they could not do, are now sentenced to death, for not being able to do what they did not pretend to.

14. Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon. 15. He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. 16. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. 17. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18. That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are his: 21. And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: 22. He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. 23. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.

When the king sent for his wise men, to tell him his dream, and the interpretation of it, (v. 2.) Daniel, it seems, was not summoned to appear among them; the king, though he was highly pleased with him when he examined him, and thought him ten times wiser than the rest of his wise men, yet forget him when he had most occasion for him; and no wonder, when all was done in a hasty and deliberate thought. The providence so ordered it, that the magicians being nonplussed he might be the more taken notice of, and so the more glory might redound to the God of Daniel. But though Daniel had not the honour to be consulted with the rest of the wise men, contrary to all law and justice, by an undistinguishing sentence he stands condemned with them, and tells Solomon what he has noticed brought him to prepare for execution, knows nothing of the matter. How miserable is the case of those who live under an arbitrary government, as this of Nebuchadnezzar's! How happy we, whose lives are under the protection of the law and methods of justice, and lie not thus at the mercy of a peevish and capricious prince!

We have found already in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for prudence and prayer: as a prince, he had power with God and man; by prayer he had power with God, by prudence he had power with men, and in both he prevailed; thus did he find favour and good understanding in the sight of both. In these verses, we have a remarkable instance of both.

1. Daniel by prudence knew how to deal with men, and he prevailed with them. When Arioch, the captain of the guard, that was appointed to slay all the wise men of Babylon, the whole college of them, seized Daniel, (for the sword of tyranny, like the sword of war, devours one as well as another,) he answered with counsel and wisdom, (v. 14.) he did not allow the king, in this instance, to give the king all the satisfaction he desired, v. 16. The king, being now sensible of his error in not sending for Daniel sooner, whose character he began to recollect, was soon prevailed with to respite the judgment, and make trial of Daniel. Note, The likeliest method to turn away wrath, even the wrath of a king, which is as the messenger of death, is by a soft answer, by that yielding with meekness, and the like grace, (as before, where the word of a king is, there is power, yet even that word may be repelled, and that so as to be repelled; and so some read it here, (v. 14.) Then Daniel returned, and stayed the counsel and edict, through Arioch, the king's provost-marshal.

II. Daniel knew how by prayer to converse with God, and he found favour with him, both in petition and in thanksgiving. There are the two principal parts of prayer. Observe, 1. His humble petition for this mercy, that God would discover to him what was the king's dream, and the interpretation of it. When he had gained time, he did not go to consult with the rest of the wise men, whether there was any thing in their art, in their book of knowledge, or signes and omens, that would show, if not the place, where, but went to his house, there to be alone with his God, for from him alone, who is the Father of lights, he expected this great gift.

Observe, (1.) He did not only pray for this discovery himself, but he engaged his companions to pray for it too. He made the thing known to them, who had been all along his bosom friends and companions, that they would desire mercy of God concerning this secret, v. 17, 18. Though Daniel was, probably, their senior, and every way excelled them, yet he engaged them as partners with him in this matter. To unite is virtue.—The union of forces produces greater force. See Esth. iv. 16. Note, Praying friends are valuable friends; it is good to have others that have fellowship with us in that matter of things, that have fellowship with God, and an interest at the throne of grace; and it well becomes the greatest and best of men to desire the assistance of the prayers of others for them. St. Paul often bespeaks his friends to pray for him. Thus we must show that we put a value upon our friends, upon prayer, upon their prayers.

(2.) He was particular in this prayer, but had an eye to, and a dependence upon, the general mercy of God; that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, v. 18. We ought in prayer to look up to God as the God of heaven, a God above us, and who has dominion over us, to whom we owe adoration and allegiance, a God of power, who can do every thing. Our Saviour has
taught us to pray to God as our Father in heaven.
And whatever good we pray for, our dependence must be upon the mercies of God for it, and an interest in those mercies we must desire; we can expect nothing by way of recompense for our merits, but all as the gift of God's mercies.

(3.) Their plea with God was, the imminent peril they were in; they desired mercy of God in this matter, that so Daniel and his fellows might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon, that the righteous might not be destroyed with the wicked.

Note. When the lives of good and useful men are in danger, it is time to be earnest with God for mercy to them. It is a matter to which we must apply ourselves; and though we cannot in faith pray for miracles, yet we may in faith pray to him who has all hearts in his hand, and who in his providence does wonders without miracles, for the discovery of that which is out of our view, and the obtaining of that which is out of our reach, as far as is for his glory and our good, believing that to him nothing is hid, nothing is hard.

First, For that he could make such a discovery; (v. 22.) He reveals the deep and secret things, which are hid from the eyes of all living; it was he that revealed to man what is true wisdom, when none else could; (Job xxxvii. 27, 28.) It is he that reveals things to come, and makes known the end of those things, which are as yet to be done.

The effectual fervent prayer of righteous men avails much. There are mysteries and secrets which by prayer we are let into; with that key the cabinets of heaven are unlocked, for Christ has said, Thus knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

1. He is so willing for this mercy, when he had received it; Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven, v. 19. He did not stay till he had told it to the king, and seen whether he would own it to be his dream or no, but is confident that it is so, and that he has gained his point, and therefore he immediately turns his prayers into praises. As he had prayed in a full assurance that God would do this for him, so he gave thanks, in a full assurance that he had done it; and in both he had an eye to God as the God of heaven. His prayer was not recorded, but his thanksgiving is. Observe,

(1.) The honour he gives to God in his thanksgiving, which he studies to do in a very great variety and copiousness of expression; Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever. There is that for ever in God, which is to be reverenced and praised, that cannot be changed and eternally in him. And it is to be blessed for ever and ever; as the matter of praise is God's eternal perfection, so the work of praise shall be everlasting in the doing. [1.] He gives to God the glory of what he is in himself; Wisdom and might are his. Wisdom and courage; so some.

Whatever is fit to be done, he will do; whatever he will do, he will do soon; and when he has done it, he will be sure to do it in the best manner; for he has infinite wisdom to design and contrive, and infinite power to execute and accomplish; with him are strength and wisdom, which in men are often parted. [2.] He gives him the glory of what he is to the world of mankind. He has a universal influence and agency upon all the children of men, and all their actions and affairs. Are the times changed? Is the posture of affairs altered? Does every thing lie open to mutation? It is God that changes the times and the seasons, and the face of them. No change comes by chance, but according to the will and counsel of God. Are things the proper way? He does move and depose? Do they alibrate? Are they laid aside? Is it God that removes kings? Are the poor raised out of the dust, to be set among princes? It is God that sets up kings; and the making and unmaking of kings is a flower of his crown, who is the Fountain of all power, King of kings and Lord of lords. Are there men that excel others in wisdom, and who are called philosophers? It is the common rate, contemplative, penetrating men? It is God that gives wisdom to the wise, whether they be so wise as to acknowledge it or no; they have it not of themselves, but it is he that gives knowledge to them that know understanding; which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our knowledge, and why we should serve and honour God with it, and make it our business to know him.

[3.] He gives him the glory of this particular discovery. He praises him,

First, For that he could make such a discovery; (v. 22.) He reveals the deep and secret things, which are hid from the eyes of all living; it was he that revealed to man what is true wisdom, when none else could; (Job xxxvii. 27, 28.) It is he that reveals things to come, and makes known the end of those things, which are as yet to be done.

He had made this discovery to him. Here he has an eye to God as the God of his fathers; Jews were now captives in Babylon, yet they were beloved for their fathers' sake. He praises God who is the Fountain of wisdom and might, for the wisdom and might he had given him; wisdom to know this great secret, and might to hear the discovery. Note, What wisdom and might we have, we must acknowledge it to be God's gift; Thou hast made this known to me, v. 25. What was hid from the celebrated Chaldeans, who made the interpreting of dreams their profession, is revealed to Daniel, a captive Jew, a babe, much their junior. God would hereby put honour upon the spirit of prophecy then when he was putting contempt upon the spirit of divination. Was Daniel thus thankful to God for making known that to him, which was the saving of the lives of him and his fellows? Much more was he to be thankful to him for making known to us the great salvation of the soul; to us, and not to the world, to us, and not to the wise and prudent.

Secondly, For that he had made this discovery to him. Here he has an eye to God as the God of his fathers; Jews were now captives in Babylon, yet they were beloved for their fathers' sake. He praises God who is the Fountain of wisdom and might, for the wisdom and might he had given him; wisdom to know this great secret, and might to hear the discovery. Note, What wisdom and might we have, we must acknowledge it to be God's gift; Thou hast made this known to me, v. 25. What was hid from the celebrated Chaldeans, who made the interpreting of dreams their profession, is revealed to Daniel, a captive Jew, a babe, much their junior. God would hereby put honour upon the spirit of prophecy then when he was putting contempt upon the spirit of divination. Was Daniel thus thankful to God for making known that to him, which was the saving of the lives of him and his fellows? Much more was he to be thankful to him for making known to us the great salvation of the soul; to us, and not to the world, to us, and not to the wise and prudent. 

(2.) The respect he puts upon his companions in this thanksgiving. Though it was by his prayers, principally, that this discovery was obtained, and to him that it was made, yet he owns their partnership with him; both his thanksgiving and prayer are as thankful for their desirous of them, and in enjoying of it. Thou hast made known unto us the king's matter. Either they were present with Daniel when the discovery was made to him; or, as soon as he knew it, he told them, ἄνευς, ἄνευς—I have found it, I have found it; that they who had assisted him with their prayers.
might assist him in their praises; his joining them with him is an instance of his humility and modesty, which well become those that are taken into communion with God. Thus, St. Paul sometimes joins Sylvanus, Timotheus, or some other minister with himself in the inscriptions to many of his epistles. Note, What honour God puts upon us, we should be willing that our brethren may share with us in.

24. Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him, Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. 25. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah that will make known unto the king the interpretation. 26. The king answered, and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? 27. Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; 28. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29. (As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass: 30. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.)

We have here the introduction to Daniel's declaring of the dream, and the interpretation of it.

1. He immediately bespake the reversing of the sentence against the wise men of Babylon, v. 24. He went with all speed, v. 25. He went with all speed, no doubt, and told him that his commission was immediately superseded: Deny, saith he, the wise men of Babylon. Though there were those of them perhaps that deserved to die, as magicians, by the law of God, yet here, that which they stood condemned for was not a crime worthy of death or of bonds; and therefore let them not die, and be unjustly destroyed, but let them live, and be justly shewed, as having been unable to do that which a prophet of the Lord could do. Note, Since God shows common kindness to the evil and good, we should do so too, and be ready to save the lives even of bad men, Matth. v. 45. A good man is a common good. To Paul in the ship God gave the souls of all that sailed with him; they were saved for his sake. To Daniel was owing the preservation of all the wise men, who put not according not to the benefit done to them, ch. iii. 8.

2. He offered his service, with great assurance, to go to the king, and tell him his dream, and the interpretation of it; and was admitted accordingly, v. 24, 25. Arioch brought him in haste to the king, hoping to ingratiate himself with the king; he pretends he had sought him to interpret the king's dream, whereas really it was to execute upon him the king's sentence that he sought him. But courtiers' business is every way to humour the prince, and make their own services acceptable.

3. He contrived as much as might be to reflect shame upon the magicians, and to give honour to God, upon this occasion, v. 26. Note, It was a bold undertaking, and questioned whether he could make it good; (v. 26.) Art thou able to make known unto me the dream? What! Such a babe in this knowledge, such a stippling as thou art, wilt thou undertake that which thy seniors despair of doing? The less likely it appeared to the king that Daniel should do this, the more God was glorified in enabling him to do it. Note, In transmitting divine revelation to the children of men, it has been God's usual way to make use of the weak and foolish things and persons of the world, and such as were despised and deposed of, to confound the wise and mighty; that the excellency of the power might be of him, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. Daniel from this takes occasion.

1. To put the king out of conceit with his magicians and soothsayers, whom he had such great expectations from; (v. 27.) This secret they cannot show to the king; it is out of their power, the rules of their art will not reach to it. Therefore let not the king be angry with them for not doing that which they cannot do; but rather despise them, and cast them off, because they cannot do it. Brought- in words it generally; This secret no sages, astrologers, enchanters, or entrail-cookers, can shew unto the king; let not the king therefore consult them any more. Note, The experience we have of the inability of all creatures to give us satisfaction, should lessen our esteem of them, and lower our expectations from them. They are baffled in their pretensions, we are baffled in our hopes from them; hitherto they come, and no further; let us therefore say to them, as Job to his friends, Now ye are nothing, miserable comforters are ye all.

2. To bring him to the knowledge of the one living and true God, the God whom Daniel worshipped; Though they cannot find out the secret, let not the king despair of having it found out, for God is a God in heaven, that reveals secrets, v. 28. Note, The all-sufficiency of the God should drive us to the all-sufficiency of the Creator. There is a God in heaven, and it is well for us there is, who can do that for us, and make known that to us, which none on earth can, particularly the secret history of the work of redemption, and the secret designs of God's love to us therein, the mystery which was hid from ages and generations; divine revelation helps us out, there where human reason leaves us quite at a loss, and makes known that, not only to kings, but to the floor of this world, which none of the philosophers or politicians of the heathens, with all their oracles and arts of divination to help them, could ever pretend to give us any light into, Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

4. He confirmed the king in his opinion, that the dream he had put the magicians to solution to recover the idea of was really well worth inquiring after, that it was of great value, and of vast consequence; not a common dream, the idle disjoint of a ludicrous and luxurious fancy, not worth remembering or telling again, but that it was a divine discovery, a ray of light darted into his mind from the upper world, relating to the most affairs and revolutions of this lower world. God in it made known to the king what shall be in the latter days, (v. 28.) in the times yet to come, reaching as far as the setting up of Christ's kingdom
in the world, which was to be in the latter days, 
Heb. i. 1. And again, (v. 29.) "The thoughts which came into thy mind, were not the repetitions of what had been before, as our dreams usually are;"

(Omnis qua semis voluntari vota durum, 
Temporeposita reddi amara quies.
The sentiment of the verse throughout the day, often mingled with the grateful numbers of the right. Claudian.)

"but they were predictions of what should come to pass hereafter, which he that reveals secrets makes known to thee; and therefore thou art in the right in taking the hint, and pursuing it thus." Note, Things that are to come to pass hereafter, are secret things; and therefore before these be revealed, they are known to the great king, who has revealed them, especially with reference to the last days of all, to the end of time, ought to be very seriously and diligently inquired into and considered by every one of us. Some think that the thoughts which are said to have come into the king's mind upon his bed, what should come to pass hereafter, were his own thoughts when he was awake. Just before he fell asleep, and dreamed this dream, he was much in his own mind what would be the issue of his growing greatness, what his kingdom would hereafter come to; and so the dream was an answer to those thoughts. What discoveries God intends to make, he thus prepares men for.

3. He solemnly professes that he could not pretend to have merited from God the favour of this discovery, or to have obtained it by any sanctity of his own (v. 30.). "But as for me, this secret is not found out by me, but is revealed to me, and that not for any wisdom that I have more than any living, to qualify me for the receiving of such a discovery." Note, It well becomes those whom God has highly favoured and honoured, to be very humble and low in their own eyes; to lay aside all opinion of their own wisdom and worthiness, that God alone may have the praise of the good they are, and have, and do, and that all may be attributed to the freedom of his good will toward them, and the fulness of his good work in them. The secret was made known to him not for his own sake, but, (1.) For the sake of his people, for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king; for the sake of his brethren and companions in tribulation, who had by their prayers helped him to obtain this discovery, and made it to him as a secret, that he might impart it to the king; and that the lives might be spared, that they might come into favour, and be preferred, and all the people of the Jews might fare the better, in their captivity, for their sakes. Note, Humble men will be always ready to think that what God does for them and by them, is more for the sake of others than for their own. (2.) For the sake of his prince, and some read the former clause in this sense, "Not for any wisdom of mine, but that the king may know the interpretation, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thine heart; that thou mightest have satisfaction given thee as to what thou wast before considering, and thereby instruction given thee how to behave toward the church of God." God revealed this thing to Daniel, that he might make it known to the king. Prophecies concern that they may give; that the discoveries made them may not be lodged with themselves, but communicated to the persons themselves that are concerned.

31. Thou, O king, sawest, and behold, a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. 32. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass. 33. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the: God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and wisdom, and glory. 38. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. 39. And after thee shall arise another kingdom, inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes of pottery's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay; so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and (that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Daniel here gives full satisfaction to Nebuchadnezzar concerning his dream and the interpretation of it. That great prince had been kind to this poor prophet in his maintenance and education; he had been brought up at the king's cost, preferred at court, and the land of his captivity had hereby been
made much easier to him, and others of his brethren. And now the king is abundantly repaid for all the expense he had been at upon him; and for receiving this prophet, though not in the name of a prophet, he had a prophet's reward: such a reward as a prophet only could give, and for which that wealthy, mighty prince was now glad to be beholden to him.

Here is-

I. The dream itself, v. 31, 45. Nebuchadnezzar perhaps was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them; however, he was a worshipper of images, and now, behold, a great image is set before him in a dream; which might intimate to him what the images were, which he had so dextrously and powerfully employed, and might refer it to, they were mere dreams. The creatures of fancy might do as well to please the fancy. By the power of imagination he might shut his eyes, and represent to himself what forms he thought fit, and beautify them at his pleasure, without the expense and trouble of sculpture. This was the image of a man erect; it stood before him, as a living man; and because those monarchies which were designed to be represented by it, were admirable in the eyes of their friends, the brightness of this image was excellent; and because they were formidable to their enemies, and dreaded by all about them, the form of this image is said to be terrible; both the features of the face and the postures of the body made it so. But that which was most remarkable in this image, was the vastness of it. The head of gold was the richest and most durable metal; the breast and arms of silver, the next to it in worth; the belly and sides, or thighs, of brass; the legs of iron, still baser metals; and lastly, the feet part of iron and part of clay. See what the things of this world are; the further we go in them, the less valuable they appear. In the life of man, youth is golden, and glittering, but it gilt clays in the eye of our esteem; and old age is half clay; a man is then as good as dead. It is so with the world; later ages degenerate. The first age of the Christian church, of the reformation, was a head of gold; but we live in an age that is iron and clay. Some allude to this in the description of a hypocrite, whose practice is not agreeable to his knowledge. He has a head of gold, great in name, but no power, and the image looks as if it lay flat, and holds his duty, but does it not. Some observe that in Daniel's visions the monarchies were represented by four beasts, (ch. 7.) for he looked upon that wisdom from beneath, by which they were turned to be earthly and sensual, and a tyrannical power, to have more in it of the beast than of the man, and so the vision agreed with his notions of the thing. But to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen prince, they were represented by a gay and pompous image of a man, for he was an admirer of the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. To him the sight was so charming, that he was impatient to see it again.

But what became of this image? The next part of the dream shows it as calcined, and brought to nothing. He saw a stone cut out of the quarry by an unknown power, without hands, and this stone fall upon the feet of the image, that were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces; and then the image must fall of course, and so the gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, were all broken to pieces together, and beaten so small, that they became like the chaff, of the summer threshing-floors, and there were not to be found but an handful of the dust of the earth. This stone cut out of the mountain became itself a great mountain, and filled the earth. See how God can bring about great effects by weak and unlikely causes: when he pleases, a little one shall become a thousand. Perhaps the destruction of this image of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, might be intended to signify the abolishing of idolatry out of the world in due time. The stobs of the heathen are silver and gold, as this image was; and they shall perish from off the earth, and from under these heavens, Jer. x. 11. Isa. ii. 18. And whatever power destroys idolatry, is in the ready way to magnify and exalt itself; as this stone, when it had broken the image to pieces, became a great mountain.

II. The interpretation of this dream. Let us now see what is the meaning of this. It was from God, and therefore from him it is that we take the explication of it. It should seem Daniel had his fellow with him, and speaks for them as well as for himself, when he says, We will tell the interpretation, v. 36. Now, this image represented the kingdoms of the earth, that should successively rule among the nations, and have influence on the affairs of the Jewish church. The four monarchies were not represented by four distinct statues, but by one image, because they were all of one and the same spirit and genius, and all more or less against the church. It was the same power, only lodged in four several nations, the two former lying eastward of Judea, the two latter westward.

1. The head of gold signifies the Chaldean monarchy, which is now in being; (v. 37, 38.) Thou, O king, art, or, rather, shalt be, a king of kings; a universal monarch, to whom many kings and kingdoms shall be tributaries; or, Thou art the head of this image, the image of all kings, the head of the princes, the monarchies of this world; the head of servants is the meanest servant; thou dost cut all other kings. But let him not attribute this elevation to his own politics or fortune; no, it is the God of heaven that has given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, a kingdom that exercises great authority, stands firm, and shines bright, acts by a puissant army with an arbitrary power.

Note. The greatest of princes have no power but what is given them from above. The extent of his dominion is set forth, (v. 38.) that wheresoever the children of men dwell, in all the nations of that part of the world, he was ruler over them all, over them and all that belonged to them, all their cattle, not only those which they had a property in, but these they received at his pleasure, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven. He was lord of all the woods, forests, and chases, and none were allowed to hunt or fowl without his leave. Thus thou art this head of gold; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, for seventy years. Compare this with Jer. xxv. 9, 11, especially Jer. xxxvii. 3—7. There were other powerful kingdoms in the world at this time, as that of the Egyptians; but it was the kingdom of Babylon that reigned over the Jews, and that began the government which continued in the succession here described till Christ's time. It is called a head, for its wisdom, eminency, and absolute power, a head of gold for its wealth; (Isa. xiv. 4.) it was a golden city. Some make this monarchy to begin in Nimrod, and so bring it into all the Assyrian kings, which was about fifty years before this, about fifty years after that, and compare that it lasted above 1600 years. But it had not been so long a monarchy of such vast extent and power as is here described, nor anything like it; therefore others make only Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, and Belshazzar, to belong to this head of gold; and a glorious high throne they had, and perhaps exercised a more despotic power, than any of the kings that went before them. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-five years current. Evil-merodach twenty-three years current, and Belshazzar three. Babylon was their metropolis, and Daniel was with them upon the spot during the seventy years.

2. The head and arms of silver signifies the monarchy of the Medes and Persians; of which the
King is told no more than this, There shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, (v. 39.) not so rich, powerful, or victorious. This kingdom was founded by Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian, in alliance with each other, and therefore represented by two arms, meeting in the breast. Cyrus was hips, and Persia, and Media, a Mede by his mother. Some reckon that this second monarchy lasted 130 years, others 204 years. The former computation agrees best with the scripture-chronology.

(3.) The belly and thighs of brass signified the monarchy of the Grecians, founded by Alexander, who conquered Darius Codomans, the last of the Persian emperors. This is the third kingdom of brass: and it is also the father of the two kingdoms, the Persian monarchy; but in Alexander himself it shall be by the power of the sword rule over all the earth; for Alexander boasted that he had conquered the world, and then sat down and wept because he had not another world to conquer.

(4.) The legs and feet of iron signified the Roman monarchy. Some make this to signify the latter part of the Grecian monarchy, the two empires of Syria and Egypt; the former governed by the family of the Seleucidae, from Seleucus, the latter by that of the Lagide, from Ptolemaeus Lagus: these they make the two legs and feet of this image; Grotius, and Junius, and Broughton, go this way. But it has been the more received opinion, that it is the Roman monarchy that is here intended; because it was in the last days of this world, and when it was at its height, that the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world by the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The Roman kingdom was strong as iron, (v. 40.) witness the prevalence of that kingdom against all that contended with it for many ages. That kingdom broke in pieces the Grecian empire, and afterward quite destroyed the nation of the Jews. Toward the latter end of the Roman monarchy, it grew very weak, broken into ten kingdoms, which were as the toes of these feet. Some of these were weak as clay, others strong as iron, v. 42. Endeavours were used to unite and cement them for the strengthening of the empire, but in vain: They shall not cleave one to another, v. 43. This empire divided the government for a long time between the senate and the people, the nobles and the plebeians, so that it was not entirely seamless; there were civil wars between Marius and Sylla, Caesar and Pompey, whose parties were as iron and clay. Some refer this to the declining times of that empire, when, for the strengthening of the empire against the invasions of the barbarous nations, the branches of the royal family intermarried; but the politicks had not the desired effect, when the day of that full empire came.

2. The stone cut out without hands represented the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which should be set up in the world in the time of the Roman empire, and upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom in the kingdoms of the world. This is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, for it should be neither raised nor supported by human power or policy; no visible hand should act in the setting of it up, but it should be done invisibly by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. This was the stone which the builders refused, because it was not cut out by their hands, but it is now become the head-stone of the corner.

(1.) The gospel-church is a kingdom, which Christ is the sole sovereign Monarch of; in which he rules by his word and Spirit, to which he gives protection and law, and from which he receives homage and tribute. It is a kingdom not of this world, and yet set up in it; it is the kingdom of God among men.

(2.) The God of heaven was to set up this kingdom, to give authority to Christ to execute judg-
ton. [1.] Of the divine original of this dream; The great God, (so he calls him, to express his own high thoughts of him, and to beget the like in the mind of this great king,) he has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter, which the gods of the magicians could not do. And thus a full confirmation was given to that great argument which Isaiah had long before urged against idolaters, and particularly the idolaters of Babylon, when he challenged the gods they worshipped, to show things that are to come hereafter, which we may know we are gods; (Isa. xlii. 1.) and by this proved the God of Israel to be the true God, that he declares the end from the beginning, Isa. xlv. 10. [2.] Of the undoubted certainty of all the things foretold in this dream. He who makes known these things, is the same that has himself designed and determined them, and will by his providence effect them; and we are sure that his counsel shall stand, and cannot be altered, and therefore the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. Note, Whatever God has made known, we may depend upon.

46. Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. 47. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. 48. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. 49. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

One might have expected that when Nebuchadnezzar was contriving to make his own kingdom everlasting, he would have been curaged at Daniel, who foretold the fall of it, and that another kingdom of another nature should be the everlasting kingdom; but, instead of resenting it as an affront, he received it as an oracle, and here we are told what the expressions were of the king's mind as he reflected on this. He was ready to look upon Daniel as a little god. Though he saw him to be a man, yet from this wonderful discovery which he had made both of his secret thoughts, in telling him the dream, and of things to come, in telling him the interpretation of it, he concluded that he had certainly a divinity lodged in him, worthy his adoration; and therefore he fell upon his face, and worshipped him, and said, I know, O king, that the God whom Daniel serves is a God, and makes known things secret and hid. Thus did God magnify divine revelation, and make it honourable, extorting from a proud potentate such a veneration but for one glimpse of it. He worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation to him, and burn incense.

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that service. The preferring of them would be a great stay and help to Daniel in his place and business. And these pious Jews being thus preferred in Babylon, had great opportunity of serving their brethren in captivity, and of doing them many good offices, which, no doubt, they were ready to do. Thus, sometimes, before God brings his people into trouble, he prepares that it may be easy to them.

CHAP. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left Daniel's companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in honour and power, princes of the provinces, and preferred for their distinguished services to the king of the whole of Israel, and they had been the three men as much under the king's displeasure as though they were in his favour, and yet more truly, more highly honoured by his God than they were honoured by his prince; both by the grace wherewith he enabled them rather to suffer than to sin, and by the miraculous and glorious deliverance which he wrought for them out of their sufferings. It is a very memorable story, a glorious instance of the power and goodness of God, and a great encouragement to the constancy of his people in trying times. The apostle refers to it when he mentions, among the believing heroes, those who by faith quenched the quenchless fire (Heb. xi. 24). We have here, I. Nebuchadnezzar's erecting a golden image, and dedicating it as the temple of his god, and his requiring all his subjects, of what rank or degree soever, to fall down and worship it, and the general constancy of his people with that command, v. 1-7. II. Information given against the Jewish princes for refusing to worship this golden image, v. 8-12. III. Their constant persistence in that refusal, notwithstanding his rage and menaces, v. 13-18. IV. The casting of them into the fiery furnace for their refusal, v. 19-23. V. Their miraculous preservation in the fire by the power of God, and their invitation out of the fire by the favour of the king, who was by this miracle convinced of his crime, and confessed his guilt and mistake, v. 24-30. VI. The honour which the king gave to God hereupon, and the favour he showed to those faithful warriors, v. 31-39.

1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR, the king, made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof of six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together into the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4. Then a herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages. 5. That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whosesoever shall not fall down and worship, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 7. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

We have no certainty concerning the date of this story, only, that if this image which Nebuchadnezzar dedicated had any relation to that which he dreamed of, it is probable that it happened not long after that; some reckon it to be about the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, a year before Jehoiachin's captivity, in which Ezekiel was carried away. 

1. A golden image set up to be worshipped. Nebuchadnezzar's full of idols already, yet nothing will serve this imperious prince, but they must have one more; for those who have forsaken the only living God, and begin to set up many gods, will find the gods they set up so unsatisfying, and their desire after them so insatiable, that they will multiply them without measure, wander after them endlessly, and never know when they have sufficient. The diversities are so contrary to novelty and variety, they choose new gods. They that have many, will have more; Nebuchadnezzar the king, that he might exalt the prerogative of his crown, to make what god he thought fit, set up this image, v. 1. Observe, (1.) The valueableness of it: it was an image of gold, not all gold surely; rich as he was, it is probable that he could not afford that, but overlaid with gold. Note, The worshippers of false gods are not wont to mind changes in setting up images, and worshipping them; they lavish gold out of the bag for that purpose, (Isa. lxvi. 6,) which shames our mangledness in the worship of the true God. (2.) The vastness of it: it was threescore cubits high, and six cubits broad. It exceeded the ordinary stature of a man fifteen times; for that is reckoned but four cubits, or six feet; as if its being monstrous would make amends for its being idlesse. But why did Nebuchadnezzar set up this image? Some suggest that it was to clear himself from the imputation of being turned Jew, because he had lately spoken with great honour of the God of Israel, and had preferred some of his worshippers. Or, perhaps, he set it up as an image of himself, and designed to be himself worshipped in it; proud princes affected to be gods, as some have been; Alexander the Great did so, pretending himself to be the son of Jupiter Olympus. He was told that in the image he had seen in his dream, he was represented by the head of gold, who was to be succeeded by kingdoms of baser metal; but here he sets up to be himself the whole image, for he makes it all of gold. See here, [1.] How the good impressions that were then set upon him were quite lost and quenched. He then acknowledged, that the God of Israel is of a truth a God of gods, and a Lord of kings; and yet now, in defiance of the express law of that God, he sets up an image to be worshipped, not only continues in his former idolatries, but contrives new ones. Note, Strong convictions often come short of a sound conversion. Many in a place have owned the deceiving and casting away of that; but, his mind rising with his condition, now he thinks that too little, and, in contradic-
2. A general convention of the states summoned to attend the solemnity of the dedication of this image, v. 2. Messengers are dispatched to all parts of the kingdom, to gather together the princes, dukes, and lords, all the peers of the realm, with all officers civil and military, the captains and commanders of the forces, the judges, the treasurers, or general receivers, the counsellors, and the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces; they must all come to the dedicating of this image, upon pain and peril of their lives. Thereat shall fall the great men, for the greater honour of his idol; it is therefore mentioned to the glory of Christ, that kings shall bring presents unto him. If he can bring them to pay homage to his golden image, he doubts not but the inferior people will follow of course. In obedience to the king’s summons, all the magistrates and officers of that vast kingdom leave the services of their particular countries, and come to Babylon to the dedicating of this golden image; long journeys, many of them took, and expensive ones, upon a very foolish errand; but as the idols are senseless things, such are the worshipping.

3. A proclamation made, commanding all manner of persons present before the image, upon the signal given, to fall down prostrate, and worship the image, and under the style and title of The golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. A herald proclaims this aound throughout this vast assembly of grandees, with their numerous train of servants and attendants, and a great crowd of people, in doubt, that were not sent for; let them all take notice, (1.) That the king does strictly charge and command all manner of persons to fall down, and worship the golden image; whatsoever other gods they worship at other times, now they must worship this. (2.) That they must all do this just at the same time, in token of their communion with each other in this idolatrous service; and that, in order hereunto, notice shall be given by a concert of music, which would likewise serve to adorn the solemnity, and to sweeten and soften the minds of those that were loath to yield, and to bring them to comply with the king’s command. This mirth and gaiety in the worship would be very agreeable to carnal, sensual minds, that are strangers to that spiritual worship which is owing to God who is a Spirit.

4. The general compliance of the assembly with this command, v. 7. They heard the sound of the musical instruments, both wind instruments and hand instruments, the cornet and flute, with the harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, the melody of which they thought was ravishing, and fit enough it was to excite such a devotion as they were then to pay; and immediately they all, as one man, as soldiers that are wont to be exercised by beat of drum, all the people, nations, and languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image. That way that sense directs, the most will go; there is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music, or driven to by a fiery furnace. And by such methods as these false worship has been set up and maintained.

3. Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews. 9. They spake, and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. 10. Thou O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11. And whose falleth not down and worshippeth, that he shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12. There are certain Jews, whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. 13. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury, commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14. Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15. Now, if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well; but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace: and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? 16. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. 18. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image which thou hast set up.

It was strange that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would be present at this assembly, when, it is likely, they knew for what intent it was called together. Daniel, we may suppose, was absent, as having done his business calling him away, and having having leave from the king to withdraw; unless we suppose that he stood so high in the king’s favour, that none durst complain of him for his non-compliance; but why did not his companions keep out of the way? Surely because they would obey the king’s orders as far as they could, and would be ready to hear a public testimony against this gross idolatry. They did not think it necessary to turn down to the image, but, being in office, thought themselves obliged to stand up against it, though it was the image which the king their master set up, and would be a golden image to them that worshipped it. Now,

I. Information is brought to the king by certain Chaldeans against these three gentlemen, that they did not obey the king’s edict, v. 8. Perhaps these Chaldeans that accused them, were some of these magicians or astrologers that were particularly
called Chaldeans, (ch. ii. 2, 4,) who bore a grudge to Daniel's companions for his sake, because he had eclipse\d\_ed them, and so had these his companions. They by their prayers had obtained the mercy which saved the lives of these Chaldeans, and beheld, how they requite them, evil for good; for their love they are their adversaries! Thus Jeremiah stood before God, and cried for his people for a pit for his life, Jer. xviii. 20. We must not think it strange if we meet with such ungrateful men. Or perhaps they were some of the Chaldeans as expected the places to which they were advanced, and envied them their preferment; and who can stand before envy? They appeal to the king himself concerning the edict, with all due respect to his majesty, and demand, why is this sentence cast on the king, live for ever? as if they aimed at nothing but his ruin, and to serve his interest, when really they were putting him upon which would endanger the ruin of him and his kingdom) they beg leave, 1. To put him in mind of the law he had lately made, That all manner of persons without exception of nation or language, should fall down and worship this golden image; they put him in mind also of the penalty which by the law was to be inflicted upon recusants, that they were to be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, v. 10. 11. It cannot be denied but that this was the law; whether a righteous law or no, ought to be considered. 2. To inform him that these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, had not conformed to this edict, v. 12. It is probable that Nebuchadnezzar had no particular design to ensnare this monarch in the making the law, for then he would himself have had his eye upon them, and would not have needed this information; but their enemies, that sought an occasion against them, laid hold on this, and were forward to accuse them. To aggravate the matter, and incense the king the more against them, (1.) They put him in mind of the dignity to which the criminals had been preferred. Though they were Jews, foreigners, captives, men of a despised nation and religion, yet the king had set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon. It was therefore very ungrateful, and an insufferable piece of insolence, for them to disobey the king's command, who had shewn so much of the king's favour. And besides, the high station they were in would make their refusal the more scandalous, it would be a bad example to them who after them were to succeed and therefore it was necessary that it should be severely animadverted upon. Thus princes that are incensed enough against innocent people, commonly want not those about them who do all they can to make them worse. (2.) They suggest that it was done maliciously, contumaciously, and in contempt of him and his authority; They have set no regard upon thee; for they serve not the gods which thou servest, and which thou requir\_est them to serve, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

II. These three pious Jews are immediately brought before the king, and arraigned and examined upon this information. Nebuchadnezzar fell into a great passion, and in his rage and fury commanded them to be seized, v. 13. How little was it then, no doubt, that a man might rule over so many nations, when at the same time he had no rule over his own spirit, that there were so many who were subjects and captives to him, when he was himself a perfect slave to his own British passions, and led captive by them! How unfit was he to rule reasonable men, who could not himself be ruled by reason! It needed not to be a surprise to him to hear that these three men did not now serve his gods, for he knew very well they never had done it, and their religion, which they had always adhered to, forbade them to do it. Nor had he any reason to think that they did it in contempt of his authority, who had in all instances showed themselves respectful and dutiful to him as their prince. But it was especially unseasonable at this time, when he was in the midst of his devotions, dedicating his golden image, to be in such a rage and fury, and of a mind so discomfited with the discretion of a man, one of his king's, whom he least of all might have suspected of having defied him. True devotion calms the spirit, quietts and meekens it, but superstition, and a devotion to false gods, inflame men's passions, inspire them with rage and fury, and turn them into brutes. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion, so was the wrath of this king; and yet when he was in such a heat, these three men were brought before him with an undaunted courage, and unshaken constancy.

III. The case is laid before them in short, and it is put to them whether they will comply or no. 1. The king asked them whether it was true that they had not worshipped the golden image, when others did, v. 14. "Is it of purpose?" (so some read it,) Was it designedly and deliberately done, or was it only through inadvertency, that you have not served my gods? What! you that I have nourished and brought up, that have been educated and maintained at my charge, that I have been so kind to, and done so much for; you that have been in such reputation for wisdom, and therefore should better have known your duty to your prince; what! do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" Note, The faithfulness of God's servants to him has often been the wonder of their enemies and persecutors, who think it strange, that they run not with them to the same excess of riot. 2. He was willing to admit them to a new trial; if they did it on purpose did not do it before, yet it may be, upon second thoughts, they will change their minds; it is therefore repeated to them upon what terms they now stand, v. 15. (1.) The king is willing that music shall play again, only for their sakes, to soften them into a compliance; and if they will not, like the deaf adder, step their ears, but will hearken to the voice of the charmers, and will worship the golden image, well and good, their former omission shall be pardoned. But, (2.) The king is resolved, if they persist in their refusal, that they shall immediately be cast into the fiery furnace, and be burnt to ashes. The king is allowed to give the command, and therefore the execution; but an opportunity of a new trial was not refused to them. Thus does the matter lie in a little compass, Turn, or burn; and because he knew they bowed themselves up in their refusal with a confidence in their God, he insolently sets him at defiance, and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Let him, if he can. Now he forgot what he himself once owned, that their God was a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, ch. iv. 17. Proud men are still ready to say, Turn, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? Or, as Nebuchadnezzar, Who is the Lord, that I should fear his power?

IV. They give in their answer, which they all agree in, that they still adhere to their resolution, not to worship the golden image, v. 16—18. We have here such an instance as is an heathen parallel; we call these the three children, (and they were indeed young men,) but we should rather call them the three champions, the first three of the worthies of God's kingdom among men. They did not break out into any intertemperate heat or passion against those that did worship the golden image, did not insult or affront them; nor did they fear the most hard and tyrannical measures, but when they were duly called to the fiery trial, they quitted themselves bravely, with a
conduct and courage that became sufferers for so good a cause: The king was not so daringly bold in making this idol, but they were as daringly good in witnessing against it. They keep their temper admirably well, do not call the king a tyrant, or an idolater, (the cause of God needs not the wrath of man,) but, with an exemplary calmness and sedate-ness of mind, they deliberately give in their answer, which they resolve to abide by. Observe, this was good some time before the approach of death, and the noble negligence with which they look upon the dilemma that are put to or Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. They do not in su suf-fer deny him an answer, nor stand mute; but they tell him that they are in no care about it. There needs not an answer; (so would each other resolved to stand mute,) and the king is resolved they shall die if they do not: the matter therefore is determined, and why should it be disputed? But it is better read, "We want not an answer for thee, nor have it to seek, but come prepared."

(1.) They needed no time to deliberate concerning the matter of their answer; for they did not in the least hesitate whether they should comply or not. Observe, they had resolved they would not: they would not, one would think they might have considered awhile before they had resolved; life is desirable, and death is dreadful. But when the sin and duty that were in the case were immediately determined by the letter of the second commandment, and no room was left to question that, the life and death that were in the case were not to be considered.

Note, Those that make their duty their main care, need not be careful concerning the event. 2. Their believing confidence in God, and their dependence upon him, v. 17. This was it that enabled them to look with so much contempt upon death, death in pomp, death in all its terrors; they trusted in the living God, and by that faith chose rather to suffer than to sin; they therefore feared not the wrath of the king, but endured, because by faith they had an eye to him that is invisible; (Heb. xi. 23, 27.) "If it be so, if we are brought to this strife, if we must be thrown into the fiery furnace, unless we serve thy gods, know then," (1.) "That though we worship not thy gods, yet we are not atheists; there is a God whom we can call ours, to whom we faithfully adhere." (2.) "That we serve this God, we have devoted ourselves to his honour, we employ ourselves in his work, and depend upon him to protect us, provided for, and regard us.

(3.) "Thus we are well assured that this God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; whether he will or no, we are sure he can either prevent our being cast into the furnace, or rescue us out of it." Note, The faithful servants of God will find him a Master able to bear them out in his service, and to control and overrule all the powers that are armed against them. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst. (4.) "That we have reason to hope he will deliver us; partly, because in such a vast appearance of idolatry, it would be very much for the honour of his great name to deliver them; and partly, because Nebuchadnezzar had defined him to do it; Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand? They are reminded and encouraged of the blasphemies of the enemy, as well as for the answering of the prayers of his people, Ps. lxxxiv. 18, 22. "But if he do not deliver us from the fiery furnace, he will deliver us out of thy hand." He can but torment and kill the body, and, after that, there is no more that he can do; then they are got out of his reach, delivered out of his hand. Note, Good thoughts of God and his part in our deliverances, and a full assurance that he is with us while we are with him, will help very much to carry us through sufferings; and if he be for us, we need not fear what man can do unto us. Let him do his worst. God will deliver us either from death or in death.

3. Their firm resolution, however, to adhere to their present course, and to answer as before, though God should not think fit to deliver us from the fiery furnace, (which yet we know he can do,) if he should suffer us to fall into thy hand, and fall by thy hand, yet be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve these gods, though they be thy gods, nor worship this golden image, though thou thyself hast set it up." They are neither ashamed nor afraid to own their religion, nor to maintain it, in this nor in any other form, if God do not fear him, they will not yield to him; had they consulted with flesh and blood, much might have been said to bring them to a compliance, especially when there was no other way of avoiding death, so great a death. (1.) They were not required to abjure their own God, or to renounce his worship, no, nor by any verbal profession or declaration to own this golden image to be a god, but only to bow down before it, which they might do with a secret reserve of their hearts for the God of Israel, inwardly detesting this idolatry, as Naaman bowed in the house of Rimmon. (2.) They were not to fall into a course of idolatry; it was but one single act that was required of them, which would be done in a minute, and the danger was over, and they might recover themselves in an instant, if they had not been already in a great capstansad benevolentiam—to put him into a good humour, but every thing that is plain and downright; O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee. Note, Those that make their duty their main care, need not be careful concerning the event.
young men, and rising men. But there is enough in that one word of God, wherewith to answer and silence these and many more such like carnal reasons; Thou shalt not bow down thyself to an image, nor worship them. They know they must obey God rather than man; they must rather suffer than sin; and must not do evil, that good may come. And therefore none of these things move them; they are resolved rather to die in their integrity than live in their iniquity. While their brethren, who yet remain in their own land, were worshiping images of theirs, these here in Babylon would not be bought to it by constraint, but as if they were good by anti-peripatetics,* were most zealous against idolatry in an idolatrous country. And truly, all things considered, the saving of them from this sinful compliance was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace, as the saving of them out of the fiery furnace was in the kingdom of nature. These were they who formerly resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat, and now they as bravely resolved not to defile themselves with his gods. Note. A steadfast, self-denying adherence to God and duty, in lesser instances, will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater. And in this we must be resolute, never under any pretence whatsoever, to worship images, or to say, A confederacy, with them that do so.

19. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22. Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. 26. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

In these verses, we have,
1. The casting of these three faithfull servants of God into the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar had himself known and owned so much of the true God, that, one would have thought, though his pride and his fierce passion had been the cause to wish to set it up to be worshipped, yet that what these young men now said, (when he had formerly found to be wiser than all his wise men,) should have revived his convictions, and at least have engaged him to dispense with them; but it proved quite otherwise.
2. Instead of being convinced by what they said, he was exasperated, and made more outrageous. v. 19. It made him full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against these men. Note. British passions, the more they are indulged, the more violent they grow, and even change the countenance, to the great reproach of the wisdom and reason of a man. Nebuchadnezzar, in this heat, exchanged the awful majesty of a prince upon his throne, and the condescension of the humble, for the frightful fury of a wild bull in a net. Would men in a passion but view their faces in a glass, they would blush at their own folly, and turn all their displeasure against themselves.
3. Instead of mitigating their punishment, in consideration of their quality, and the posts of honour they were in, he ordered it to be heightened, that they should heat the furnace seven times as it was wont to be heated for other malefactors, that they should put seven times more fuel to it: which, though it would not make their death more grievous, but rather despacht them the sooner, was designed to signify that the king looked upon their crime as seven times more heinous than the crimes of others, and so made their death more ignominious. But God brought glory to himself out of this foolish instance of the king's rage; for though it would have made their death the more grievous, yet it did make their deliverance much more illustrious.
4. He ordered them to be bound in their clothes, and cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace; which was done accordingly, v. 20, 21. They were bound, that they might not struggle, or make any resistance; were bound in their clothes, for haste, or that they might be consumed the more slowly and gradually. But God's providence ordered it for the increase of the miracle, in that their clothes were not so much as singed. They were bound in their coats or mantles, their hosen or breeches, and their habs or turbans, as if, in detestation of their crime, they would have made their clothes to be burnt with them. What a terrible death was this—To be cast bound into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. v. 23. It makes one's flesh tremble to think of it, and horror to take hold on one. It is amazing that the tyrant was so hard-hearted as to inflict such a punishment, and that the confessors were so stout-hearted as to submit to it rather than sin against God. But what is this to the second death, to that furnace into which the tares shall be cast in bundles, to that lake which burns eternally with fire and brimstone? Let Nebuchadnezzar heat his furnace as hot as he can, a few minutes will finish the torment of those who are cast into it: but hell-fire tortures, and does not kill; the pain of damned sinners is more exquisite, and the smoke of their tor
ment ascends for ever and ever, and they have no rest, no intermission, no cessation of their pains, who have worshipped the beast and his image, (Rev. xiv. 10, 11.) whereas their pain would be soon over that were cast into this furnace for worshiping this Babylonian beast and his image.

1. It was a remarkable providence, that the men, the mighty men, that bound them, and threw them into the furnace, were themselves consumed or suffocated by the flame, v. 22. The king's commandment was urgent, that they should dispatch them quickly, and be sure to do it effectually; and therefore they resolved to go to the very mouth of the furnace, that they might throw them into the midst of it, but their hearts were so great, that they would not take time to arm themselves accordingly. The apocryphal additions to Daniel say that the flame ascended forty-nine cubits above the mouth of the furnace. Probably, God ordered it so, that the wind blew it directly upon them with such violence that it smothered them. God did thus immediately plead the cause of his injured servants, and take vengeance for them on their persecutors, whom he punished, not only in the very act of their sin, but by it. But these men were only the instruments of cruelty; he that made them do it had the greater sin; yet they suffered justly for executing an unjust decree, and it is very probable that they did it with pleasure, and were glad to be so employed. Nebuchadnezzar himself was reserved for a further recompense, which he will be punished, not only for the cruelties they have been guilty of, but for employing those about them in their cruelties, and so exposing them to the judgments of God.

II. The delivery of these three faithful servants of God out of the furnace. When they were cast into the midst of the fiery furnace, we might well conclude that we should hear news of them, that their very bones would be calcined; but, to our amazement, we here find that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are yet alive.

1. Nebuchadnezzar finds them walking in the fire; He was astonished, and rose up in haste, v. 24. Perhaps the slaying of the men that executed his sentence, v. 22, made it more effectual than he thought, and caused him to reflect that it would not be well to proceed; or it was some unaccountable impression upon his own mind that astonished him, and made him rise up in haste, and go to the furnace, to see what was become of these he had cast into it. Note, God can strike those with astonishment, whose hearts are most hardened, both against him, and against his people. He that made the soul, can make his sword to approach to it, even to that of the greatest tyrant. In his astonishment he calls his counsellors about him, and appeals to them whether we did not cast three men bound into the fire. It seems, it was done by order, not only of the king, but of the council. They durst not but concur with him, which forced them to do so. They were tied, and set them at liberty; thus God's people have their hearts enlarged, through the grace of God, by these very troubles with which their enemies designed to straiten and hamper them. (2.) They were tossed from their bands; the fire that did not so much as singe their clothes, burnt the cords wherein they were tied, and set them at liberty: thus God's people have their hearts enlarged, through the grace of God, by these very troubles with which their enemies designed to straiten and hamper them. (2.) They had no hurt, made no complaint, felt no pain, or uneasiness in the least; the flame did not scorch them, the smoke did not stifle them, they were alive, and as well as ever, in the midst of the flames. See how the God of nature can, when he pleases, control the powers of nature, to make them serve his purposes. Now was fulfilled, in the letter, that gracious promise, Isa. lxxxiii. 2. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. By faith they thought of the existence of the fire, quench the fiery darts of the wicked. (3.) They walked in the midst of the fire; the furnace was large, so that they had room to walk; they were unhurt, so that they were able to walk; their minds were easy, so that they were disposed to walk, as in a paradise or garden of pleasure. Can a man walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? Prov. vi. 28. They therefore did it with an much more sure as the king of Tyrus walked up and down in the midst of his stones of fire, his precious stones that sparkled as fire, Ezek. xxviii. 14. They were not striving to get out, finding themselves unhurt, but leaving it to that God who preserved them in the fire, to bring them out of it; they walked up and down in the midst of it, unconcerned. One of the apocryphal writings relates at large the prayer which Zachariah, one of the three, prayed in the fire, wherein he laments the calamities and iniquities of Israel, and entreats God's favour to his people; and the song of praise which they all three sang in the midst of the flames; in both which there are remarkable strains of devotion: but we have reason to think, with Grothus, that they were composed by those who never heard the story of the three Hebrews. Job xxxvii. 24, 25. God, who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, has made them only as what might have been used, on this occasion, and therefore we justly reject them as no part of holy writ. (4.) There was a fourth seen with them in the fire, whose form, in Nebuchadnezzar's judgment, was like the Son of God; he appeared as a Divine Person, a Messenger from heaven, not as a Servant, but as a Saviour, as a Son of Man. Like an angel; (so some,) and angel of the presence of the living God. Job xxxvii. 24. In the apocryphal narrative of this story it is said, The angel of the Lord came down into the furnace; and Nebuchadnezzar here says, (v. 28.) God sent his angel, and delivered them; and it was an angel that shut the lions' mouths when Daniel was in the den, ch. vi. 22. But some think it was the Eternal Son of God, the Angel of the covenant, and not a created angel, who appeared to Nebuchadnezzar, and went before him as assumed it for good and all; and never more seasonably, nor to give a more proper indication and presage of his great errand into the world in the fulness of time, than now, when, to deliver his chosen out of the fire, he came and walked with them in the fire. Note, Those that suffer for Christ have his gracious presence with them in their sufferings, even in the fiery furnace, even in the very midst of the shadow of death, and therefore even there they need fear no evil. Hereby Christ showed what is done against his people he takes as done against himself; whoever throws them into the furnace, does, in effect, throw him in. I am Jesus, whom thou hast persecuted, Acts ix. 5. He comes therefore before them of the furnace, bids them come forth, and come hither. Come forth; come; so some read it; he speaks with a great deal of tenderness and concern, and stands ready to lend them his hand, and help them out. He is convinced by their miraculous preservation, that he did wrong in casting them into the furnace; therefore he comes to them out privily, no, verily, but he will come himself and fetch them out, Acts xvi. 25. The respect of the title that he gives them; when he was in the heat of his fury and rage against them, it is probable that he called them rebels and traitors, and all the ill names he could invent; but now he owns them for the servants of the Most High God; a
God who now appears able to deliver them out of his hand. Note, Sooner or later, God will convince the proudest of men, that he is the Most High God, and above them, and too hard for them, even in those things wherein they deal proudly and presumptuously. Exod. xix. 11. He will likewise let them know who are his servants, and that he owns them, and will stand by them. Elijah prayed, (1 Kings xviii. 36.) Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant. Nebuchadnezzar now embraces those whom he had abandoned, and is very officious about them, now that he perceives them to be the favourites of Heaven. Note, Who persecutes have done against God's servants, when God opens their eyes, they must as far as they can undo again.

How the fourth, whose form was like the Son of God, withdrew, and whether he vanished away, or visibly ascended, we are not told, but of the other three we are informed, (1.) That they came forth out of the midst of the fire, as Abraham their father out of Ur, the fire of the Chaldees, into which, says this tradition of the Jews, he was cast, for refusing to worship idols, and out of which he was delivered, as those his three children were; when they had their discharge, they did not tempt God by staying in any longer, but came forth as brands out of the burning. (2.) That it was made to appear to the full satisfaction of all the amazed spectators, that they had not received the least damage by it. Fire may, for a time, be united together to view them, and found that there was not so much as a hair of their head singed. Here that was true in the letter, which our Saviour spake figuratively, for an assurance to his suffering servants, that they should sustain no real damage; (Luke xxi. 18.) There shall not a hair of your head perish. Their clothes did not so much as change colour, nor were the bones of it, or our fire only, much less were the bodies of it; much scorched or blistered in, the fire had no power on them. The Chaldeans worshipped the fire, as a sort of an image of the sun, so that, in restraining the fire now, God put contempt, not only upon their king, but upon their god too, and showed that his voice divides the flames of fire as well as the floods of water; (Ps. xxxv. 7.) when he pleases to make a way for himself, he changes the multitude of it. But here it was, our God only that is the consuming Fire; (Heb. xii. 29.) other fire, if he but speak the word, shall not consume.

29. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. 29. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which spake any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort. 30. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

The strict observations that were made, super visum corporis—an inspecting their bodies, by the princes and governors, and all the great men who were present upon this public occasion, and who could not be supposed partial in favour of the confessors, contributed much to the clearing of this miracle, and the magnifying of the power and grace of God in it. That indeed a notable miracle has been done, is manifest, and we cannot deny it, Acts xii. 24. Let us now see what effect it had upon Nebuchadnezzar.

1. He gives glory to the God of Israel, as a God able and ready to protect his worshippers; (v. 28.) Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Let him have the honour both of the faithful allegiance which his subjects bear to him, and the powerful protection he grants to them, rather of which can be paralleled between any other nation and their gods. The king does himself acknowledge and adore him, and thinks it is fit that he should be acknowledged and adored by all. Blessed be the God of Shadrach. Note, God can extort confessions of his blessedness even from those that have been ready to curse him to his face. (1.) He gives him the glory of his power, that he was able to protect his worshippers against the most mighty and malignant enemies: There is no other god that can deliver after this sort; (v. 29.) no, not this golden image which he had set up. For this reason, there was no other god that obliged his worshippers to cleave to him only, and to suffer death rather than worship any other, as the God of Israel did; for they could not engage to bear them in so dangerous a case. But God was able to deliver them as no other can, he may demand such obedience as no other may. (2.) He gives him the glory of his goodness, that he was ready to do it; (v. 28.) He has sent his angel, and delivered his servants. Bel could not save his worshippers from being burnt at the mouth of the furnace, but the God of Israel saved his from being burnt when they were cast into the midst of the furnace, because they refused to worship any other god. Note, This, Nebuchadnezzar was plainly given to understand that all the great success which he had had, and should yet have, against the people of Israel, which he gloried in, as if he had therein overpowered the God of Israel, was owing purely to their sin; if the body of that nation had faithfully adhered to their own God, and the worship of him only, as these three men did, the triumph and success of his enemies would have been cut out of his hand as these three men were. And this was a necessary instruction for him at this time. 2. He applauds the constancy of these three men in their religion, and describes it to their honour; (v. 28.) though he is not himself persuaded to own their God for his, and to worship him; because, if he do so, he knows he must worship him only, and renounce all others, and he calls him the God of Shadrach, not my God; yet he commands them for cleaving to him, and not serving or worshiping any other God but their own. Note, There are many who are not religious themselves, and yet will own that they are clearly in the right that are religious, and are steadfast in their religion. Though they are not themselves persuaded to close with it, they will persuade others to it, and do it to their own hands. If men have given up their names to that God who will alone be served, let them keep to their principles, and serve him only, whatever it costs them. Such a constancy in the true religion will turn to men's praise, even among them that are without, when meekness, meekness, and double dealing, are what all men will cry shame on. He commands them that they did this; (1.) With a generous contempt of their lives, which they valued not, in comparison with the favour of God, and the testimony of a good conscience. They yielded their own bodies to be cast into the fiery furnace rather than they would not only not forsake their God, but not affront him, by once paying that homage to any
other, which is due to him alone. Note, Those shall have their praise, if not of men, yet of God, who prefer their souls before their bodies, and will rather lose their lives than forsake their God. Those know not the taste and value of religion, who do not think it worth suffering for. (2.) They did it with a glorious contradiction to their prince: they changed the king's word, they went contrary to it, and thereby put contempt upon both his precepts and threatenings, and made him repent and revoke both. Note, Even kings themselves must own that, when their commands are contrary to the commands of God, he is to be obeyed, and not the king. (3.) They did it with a gracious confidence in their God. They trusted in him that he would stand by them in what they did, that he would either bring them out of the fiery furnace, back to their place on earth, or lead them through the fiery furnace, forward to their place in heaven; and in this confidence they became fearless of the king's wrath, and regardless of their own lives. Note, A steadfast faith in God will produce a steadfast faithfulness to God. Now this honourable testimony, thus publicly borne by the king himself to these servants of God, we may well thank, would have a great influence upon the rest of the Jews that were, or should be, captives in Babylon. Their neighbours could not but with any confidence urge them to do that, nor could they for shame do that which was done by them, or done by them planned and executed by the king himself for not doing. Nay, and what God did for these his servants, would help not only to keep the Jews close to their religion while they were in captivity, but to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, for which end they were sent into captivity; and when it had had that blessed effect upon them, they might be assured that God would deliver all of them from that furnace, as now he delivered their brethren out of this.

3. He issues out a royal edict, strictly forbidding any to speak evil of the God of Israel, ver. 29. We have reason to think that both the sins and the troubles of Israel had given great occasion, though no just occasion, to the Chaldæans to blaspheme the God of Israel, and, it is likely, Nebuchadnezzar himself had encouraged it; but now, though he is no true convert, nor is wrought upon to worship him, yet he resolves never to speak ill of him again, nor to suffer others to do so; Whoever shall speak any thing amiss, any error, (so some,) or rather any reproach or blasphemy, whoever shall speak with contempt of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, he shall be consumed and destroyed, and made a dunghill. The miracle now wrought by the power of this God, in defence of his worshippers, publicly in the sight of the thousands of Babylon, was a sufficient justification of this edict. And it would contribute much to the glory of the Jews, and their captivity, to be by this law screened from the fiery darts of reproach and blasphemy, with which otherwise they would have been continually annoyed. Note, It is a great mercy to the church, and a good point gained, when its enemies, though they have not their hearts turned, yet have their mouths stopped, and their tongues tied. If a heathen prince bards out against the God of the Jews, philosophers, much more should Christian princes do it; nay, in this thing, one would think that men should be a law to themselves, and that those who have so little love to God, that they care not to speak well of him, yet could never find in their hearts, for we are sure they could never find cause, to speak any thing amiss of him.

4. He not only reverses the attitude of these three men, but restores them to their places in the government, (makes them to prosper, so the word is,) and prefers them to greater and more advantageous trusts than they had been in before; He promoted them in the presence of Babylon, which was much to their honour, and the comfort of their children in captivity there. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to prefer and employ men of steadfastness in religion; for these are most likely to be faithful to them, who are faithful to God; and it is likely to be well with them, when God's favourites are made theirs.

CHAP. IV.

The penman of this chapter is Nebuchadnezzar himself; the story concerning him here recorded is given in his own words, as he himself drew it up, and published it; but Daniel, a prophet, by inspiration, inserts it in his history, and so it is become a part of sacred writ, and a very blessed admonition to his readers. Now this history is a rival with God Almightly for the sovereignty as perhaps any mortal man ever was; but here he fairly owns himself conqueror, and gives it under his hand, That the God of Israel is above him. Here is, 1. The preface to his narrative, wherein he acknowledges God's dominion over him, v. 1., 3. II. The narrative itself, wherein he relates, 1. His dream, which puzzled the magicians, v. 1., 18. II. The interpretation of it, which was given by Daniel, who showed him that it was a prognostication of his own fall, advising his return to repent and reform, v. 19. 27. 3. The accomplishment of it in his running the usual courses of his life, v. 28. 36. 4. The conclusion of the narrative, with an humble acknowledgment and adoration of God as Lord of all, v. 37. This was extorted from him by the judgment he had received, who has all men's hearts in his hand, and stands upon record a lasting proof of God's supremacy, a monument of his glory, a trophy of his victory, and a warning to all not to stand upon their own reason, or despising, while they lift up or harden their hearts against God.

1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. 2. I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion from generation to generation.

Here is,

1. Something of form, which was usual in writs, proclamations, or circular letters, issued out by the king, v. 1. The royal style which Nebuchadnezzar makes use of, has nothing in it of pomp or fancy, but is plain, short, and unaffected; Nebuchadnezzar the king. If at other times he made use of great swelling words of vanity in his title, now he had them all aside; for he was old, he was lately recovered from a distraction which had humbled and mortified him, and pravagued by the dream by contemplation of God's greatness and sovereignty. The declaration is directed, not only to his own subjects, but to all to whom this present writing shall come; to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth. He is not only willing that they should all hear of it, though it carry the account of his own infancy, (which perhaps none durst have published,) he had not done it himself, and therefore Daniel published the original paper,) but he strictly charges and commands all manner of persons to take notice of it; for all are concerned, and it may be profitable to all. He salutest those to whom he writes, in the usual form, Peace be multiplied unto you. Note, It becomes kings with their commands to dispense their good wishes, and, as fathers of the country, to bless their subjects. So the common form, with us: We send greeting. Omnibus quibus ha present

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To all to whom these presents shall come, health; and sometimes, Salutem semperfiteman—Health and salvation everlasting. 

1. Something of substance and matter. He writes this, 1. To acquaint others with the providences of God that had related to him; (v. 2.) I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God (so he calls the true God) has wrought toward me. He thought it seemly, (so the word is,) that it was his duty, and did well become him, that it was a debt he owed to God and the world, now that he was restored after the confusion and distractions of a vast number of years, to relate those extraordinary places, and record for future ages, how justly God had humbled him, and how graciously he had at length restored him. All the nations, no doubt, had heard what befell Nebuchadnezzar, and rang of it; but he thought it fit that they should have a distinct account of it from himself, that they might know the hand of God in it, and what impressions were made upon his own spirit by it, and might speak of it not as a matter of news, but as a matter of religion. The events concerning him were not only wonders to be admired, but signs to be instructed by, signifying to the world that Jehovah is greater than all gods. Note, We ought to show to others God's dealings with us, both the rebukes we have been under, and the favours we have received; but we must not reflect directly upon ourselves, as this here did upon Nebuchadnezzar, yet we must not conceal it, as long as it may REDOUND to the glory of God. Many will be forward to tell what God has done for their souls, because that turns to their own praise, who care not for telling what God has done against them, and how they deserved it; whereas we ought to give glory to God, not only by praising him for his mercies, but by confessing our own failings and defects, and accepting the punishment of our iniquity, and in both taking shame to ourselves, as this mighty monarch here does.

2. To show how much he was himself affected with them, and convicted by them, v. 3. We should always speak of the word and works of God with concern and seriousness, and show ourselves affected with those great things of God, which we desired, not should take notice of. (1.) He admires God's doings. He speaks of them as one amazed; How great are his signs and how mighty are his wonders? Nebuchadnezzar was now old, had reigned above forty years, and had seen as much of the world and the revolutions of it as most men ever did; and yet never till now, when himself was nearly touched, was he brought to admire surprising events as God's signs and his wonders. Now, How great, how mighty, are they! Note, The more we see events to the Lord's doing, and see in them the product of divine power, and the conduct of a divine wisdom, the more marvellous they will appear in our eyes, Ps. cxviii. 23.—lxxvi. 2. (2.) He infers from thence God's dominion. This is that which he is at length brought to subscribe to; His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and not like his kingdoms which he saw and let fall by foresee, in a dream, hastening towards a period. He now owns that there is a God that governs the world, and has an universal, incontestable, absolute dominion in and over all the affairs of the children of men. And it is the glory of this kingdom, that it is everlasting; other reigns are confined to one generation, and other dynasties to a few generations, but God's dominion is from the first generation to generation. It should seem, Nebuchadnezzar had foretold of a kingdom which the God of heaven would set up, that should never be destroyed, (ch. ii. 44.) which, though meant of the kingdom of the Messiah, he understood of the providential kingdom. Thus we may make a profitable practical use and application of those prophetic scriptures, which yet we do not fully, and perhaps not rightly, taking the meaning of.

4. I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 5. Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7. Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. 8. But at the last Daniel came in before me, (whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods,) and before him I told the dream, saying, 9. O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. 10. Thus were the visions of my head in my bed: I saw, and, behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. 12. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. 13. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven. 14. He cried aloud, and said thus, Hiew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. 15. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the grass of the earth. 16. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. 17. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. 18. This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou,
O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof; forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

Nebuchadnezzar, before he relates the judgments of God that had been brought upon him for his pride, gives an account of the fair warning he had of them before they came, which if he had duly regarded, they might have been prevented. But therefore he was told of them, and of the issue of them, before they came to pass, that, when they did come to pass, by comparing them with the prediction of them, he might see, and say, that they were the Lord's doing; and might be brought to believe that there is a divine revelation in the world, as well as a Divine Providence, and that the works of God agree with his word.

Now, in the account he here gives of his dream, by which he had notice of what was coming, we may observe,

I. The time when this alarm was given him; (v. 4.) This was when he was at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace. He had left Egypt, and with it completed his victories, and ended his wars, and made himself monarch of all those parts of the world, which was about the thirty-fourth or thirty-fifth year of his reign, Ezek. xxix. 17. Then had he this dream, which was accomplished about a year after; seven years his distraction continued, upon his recovery from which he penned this declaration, lived about two years after, and died in his forty-fifth year. He had undergone a long fatigue in his wars, had made many a tedious and dangerous campaign in the field; but now at length he is at rest in his house, and there is no adversary, nor evil occur. Note, God can reach the greatest of men with his terrors then when they are most secure, and think themselves at rest and flourishing.

II. The impression it made upon him; (v. 5.) I saw a dream, which made me afraid. One would think no little thing would frighten him that had been a man of war from his youth, and used to look the perils of war in the face without change of countenance; yet, when God pesses, a dream strikes a terror upon him. His bed, no doubt, was soft, and easy, and well guarded, and yet his own thoughts upon his bed make him uneasy, and the visions of his head, the creatures of his own imagination, trouble him. Note, God can make the greatest of men uneasy, even then when they say to their souls, Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry; can make those who have been the troublers of the world, and have tormented thousands, to be their own tormentors, their own tormentors; and those that have been the terror of the mighty, a terror to themselves. By the constrainment which this dream put him into, and the impression it made upon him, he perceived it to be, not an ordinary dream, but sent of God on a special errand.

III. His consulting, in vain, with the magicians and astrologers concerning the meaning of it. He had not now forgotten the dream, as before, ch. ii. He had it ready enough, but he wanted to know the interpretation of it, and what was figured by it, v. 6. Orders are immediately given to summon all the wise men of Babylon, that were such fools as to pretend by magic, divinations, inspecting the entrails of victims, or observations of the stars, to predict things to come; they must all come together, to see if any, or all of them in consultation, could interpret the king's dream. It is probable these people had sometimes, in a like case, given the king some sort of satisfaction, and by the rules of their art had answered the king's queries so as to please him, whether it were right or wrong, hit or missed; but now that his expectation from them was disappointed, he told them the dream, (v. 7.) but they could not tell him the interpretation of it; though they had boasted, with great assurance, (ch. ii. 4, 7.) that if they had but the dream told them, they would without fail interpret it. But the key of this dream was in a sacred prophecy, (Ezek. xxxix. 3.) which he did not comprehend. If it had been the king's, he would have taken it, and the king would rather that his own magicians should have the honour of doing it if they could, than that Daniel should have it; or, Daniel being governor of the wise men, (ch. ii. 48.) was, as usual, last consulted. Many make God's word their last refuge, and never have recourse to it till they are driven off by all other ways. He compliments Daniel very highly, takes notice of the name which he had himself given him, in the choice of which he thinks he was very happy, and that it was a good omen, his name was Belteshazzar, from Bel, the name of my god; he applauds his rare endowments, he has the spirit of the holy gods, so he tells him to his face; (v. 8.) with which we may suppose that Daniel was so far from being puffed up, that he was rather very much grieved to hear that which he had by gift from the God of Israel, the true and living God, ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar's god, a dunghill deity. Here is a strange medley in Nebuchadnezzar, but such as is commonly found in those that side with their corruptions against their convictions. 1. He retains the language and dialect of the Babians, which the Hebrews afterward professed to convert to the faith and worship of the living God. He is an idolater, and his speech bewrayeth him. For he speaks of many gods, and is not brought to acquiesce in one as sufficient, no, not in him who is all-sufficient. And some think, when he speaks of the spirit of the holy gods, that he supposes there are some evil, malignant deities, whom men are concerned to worship, only to prevent them doing them a mischief, and some who are good, beneficent deities, and that by the spirit of them Daniel was animated. He also owns that Bel was his god still, though he had once and again acknowledged the God of Israel to be Lord of all, ch. ii. 47.—iii. 20. He also applauds Daniel, not as a servant of God, but as master of the magicians. (v. 9.) supposing his knowledge to differ from theirs, not in kind, but only in degree; and he consulted him not as a prophet, but as a celebrated magician; so endeavouring to save the credit of the art, when those blundered and were nonsensical, who were masters of the art. See how close his idolatry sat to him: he has got a notion of many gods, and has chosen Bel for his god, which he will not own himself to be a servant of, but as master of the magicians. (v. 9.)
11. Many persist in a false way, only because they think they cannot in honour leave it. See bow low his convictions sat, and how easily he had dropped them: he once called the God of Israel a God of gods, ch. ii. 47. Now he sets him upon a level with the rest of those whom he calls the holy gods. Note, If convictions be not speedily prosecuted, it is a thousand to one but in a little time they are quite lost and forgotten. Nebuchadnezzar, not gods, God, was his proper name, and by his confessions had been brought to make of the sovereignty of the true God, soon went backward, and relapsed to the same veneration he had always had for his false gods. And yet, 2. He professes a great opinion of Daniel, whom he knows to be a servant of the true God, and of him only. He looked upon him as one that had such an insight, such a foresight, as none of his magicians had; I know that no secret troubles thee, Note, The spirit of prophecy quite outdoes the spirit of divination, even the enemies themselves being judges; for so it was adjudged here, upon a fair trial of skill.

V. The particular account he gives him of his dream.

1. He saw a stately flourishing tree, remarkably and all the signs of the wood. This tree was planted in the midst of the earth, (v. 10.) fitly representing him who reigned in Babylon, which was about the midst of the then known world. His dignity and eminency above all his neighbours were signified by the height of this tree, which was exceeding great, it reached unto heaven: he overtopped those about him, and aimed to have divine honours given him; nay, he overpowered those about him; and the potent armies he had in command of, with which he carried all before him, are signified by the strength of this tree; it grew, and was strong. And so much were Nebuchadnezzar and his growing greatness the talk of the nations, so much had they their eye upon him, (some a jealous eye, all a wondering eye,) that the sight of this tree is said to be to the end of all the earth. This tree had everything in it that was pleasant to the eye, and good for food; (v. 12.) The leaves thereof were fair; denoting the pomp and splendour of Nebuchadnezzar's court, which was the wonder of strangers, and the glory of his own subjects. Nor was this tree for sight and state only, but for use. (1.) For protection; the boughs of it were for shelter, both to the beasts and to the fowls. Princes should be a screen to their subjects from the heat, and a shelter both from storms and tempests. (2.) For protection; the boughs of it were for shelter, both to the beasts and to the fowls. Princes should be a screen to their subjects from the heat, and a shelter both from storms and tempests. (2.) For provision. The Assyrian was compared to a cedar, (Ezek. xxxi. 6.) which affords shadow only; out this tree here had much fruit, in it was meat for all, and all flesh was fed of it. This mighty monarch, it should seem by this, not only was great, but did good; he did not impose upon others, but he added to them, and interest abroad brought wealth and trade to it. They that exercise authority would be called benefactors, (Luke xxii. 25.) and the most effectual course they can take to support their authority is, to be really benefactors. And see what is the best that great men with their wealth and power can attain to, and that is, to have the honour of having many to live upon them, and to be maintained by them; for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them.

2. He heard the doom of this tree read, which he perfectly remembered, and relates it here, perhaps, word for word as he heard it. The sentence was passed upon it by an angel, whom he saw come down from heaven, and heard proclaim this sentence aloud. This angel is here called a watcher, or watchman; not only because angels by their natures are spies of God, and keep them as a text asleep, but because by their office they are ministering spirits, and attend continually to their ministrations, watching all opportunities of serving their great Master. They, as watchers, encamp round them that fear God, to deliver them, and bear them up in their hands. This angel was a messenger, or ambassador, (so some read it,) and a holy one. Holiness becomes God's house; therefore angels that attend, and are employed by him, are holy ones; they preserve the purity and rectitude of their nature, and are in every thing conformable to the divine will. Let us review the doom passed upon the tree.

(1.) Orders are given that it be cut down; (v. 14.) now also the axe is laid to the root of this tree. Though it is ever so high, ever so strong, that can not securely be cut down, yet it is to fall; that boughs and boughs, that are sheltered and concealed by the boughs of it, are driven away and dispersed; the branches are cropped, the leaves shaken off, and the fruit scattered. Note, Worldly prosperity in its highest degree is a very uncertain thing; and it is no uncommon thing for those that have lived in the greatest pomp and power, to be stripped of all that which they trusted to, and gloried in. By the turns of providence, those who made a figure become captives, those who lived in plenty, and above what they had, are reduced to straits, and live far below what they had, and those perhaps are brought to be beheld to others, who once had many depending upon them, and making suit to them. But the trees of righteousness, that are planted in the house of the Lord, and bring forth fruit to him, shall not be cut down, nor shall their leaf wither.

(2.) Care is taken that the root be preserved; (v. 15.) Leave the stump of it in the earth, exposed to all weather; there let it lie neglected and buried in the grass; let the beasts that formerly sheltered themselves under the boughs, now repose themselves upon the stump; but, that it may not be raked to pieces, or trodden to dirt, and to show that it is yet reserved for better days, let it be hooped round with a bark, and a Corner put upon it, that it may be stood fire. Note, God in judgment remembers mercy; and may yet have good things in store for those whose condition seems most forlorn. There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, that through the scent of water it will bud, Job xiv. 7-9.

(3.) The meaning of this is explained by the angel himself to Nebuchadnezzar; (v. 16.) whoever is a person signified by this tree, he is sentenced to be deprived from the honour, state, and dignity of a man, to be deprived of the use of his reason, and to be and live like a brute, till seven times pass over him; Let a beast's heart be given unto him. This is surely the saddest and sorriest of all temporal judgments, worse a thousand times than death, and though like it, least felt by the culprit, yet to be deprived of the heart, and to be so much deprecated more than any other. Nay, whatever outward affliction God is pleased to lay upon us, we have reason to bear it patiently, and to be thankful that he continues to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences. But those proud tyrants who set their heart as the heart of God, (Ezek. xxviii. 2.) justly may be deprived of the heart of man, and have a beast's heart given them.
The truth of it is confirmed; (v. 17.) This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones. God has determined it, as a righteous Judge; he has signed the book, and sealed it, the decree is gone forth. And, [1.] The angels of heaven have subscribed to it; as attesting it, approving it, and applauding it. It is by the decree of the watchers; not that the great God needs the counsel or concurrence of the angels in any thing he determines or does, but as he uses their ministration in executing his counsels, so he is sometimes represented, after his pleasure, as moving a man by angelic advice with them; Whom shall I send? Isa. vi. 8. Who shall persuade Ahab? 1 Kings xxii. 20. So it denotes the solemnity of this sentence. The king's brevies, or short wri<ref>test me ise—in my presence; but charters used to be signed, His testament—in presence of us whose names are underwritten; such was Nebuchadnezzar's doom, it was by the decree of the watchers. [2.] The saints on earth petitioned for it, as well as the angels in heaven; The demand is by the word of the holy ones. God's suffering people, that had long groaned under the heavy yoke of Nebuchadnezzar's tyranny, cried to him for vengeance; they made the demand, and God gave this answer to it; for when the oppressed cry to God, he will hear, Exod. xxi. 27. So in Ahab's time, that provocatio, that there should be no more rain, at Elijah's word, when he made intercession against Israel, 1 Kings xviii. 1.

(5.) The design of it is declared; therefore orders are given for the cutting down of this tree, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules. This judgment must be executed, to convince the muthinking, unbelieving world, that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, a God that governs the world, that not only has a kingdom of his own in it, and administers the affairs of that kingdom, but rules also in the kingdom of men, in the dominion that one man has over another, and gives that to whomever he will from him promotion comes, Ps. lxxv. 6, 7. He advances men to power and dominion that little expected it, and crosses the projects of the ambitious and aspiring. Sometimes he sets up the basest of men, and serves his own purposes by them; mean men, as David from the sheep-fold; he raises the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, Ps. cxiii. 7, 8. Nay, sometimes he sets up bad men, to be a scourge to a provoking people. Thus he can do, thus he may do, thus he often does, and gives not account of any of his works to man. Nebuchadnezzar was designed that the living should be made to know this. The dead know it, that are gone to the world of spirits, the world of retribution, they know that the Most High rules; but the living must be made to know it, and lay it to heart, that they may make their peace with God before it be too late.

Thus has Nebuchadnezzar fully and faithfully related his dream, what he saw, and what he heard, and then demands of Daniel the interpretation of it, (v. 18.) for he found that no one else was able to do it, but is confident that he was; For the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, or of the Holy God; the proper title of the God of Israel. Much may be expected from those that have in them the Spirit of the Holy God. Whether Nebuchadnezzar had any jealousy that it was his own doom that was read by this dream, does not appear; perhaps he was so vain and secure as to imagine that it was some other prince that was a rival with him, of whose fall he had the pleasing prospect given him in this dream; but, be it for him or against him, he is very solicitous to know the meaning of it; and Daniel is sent upon Daniel to give it him. Note, When God gives us general warnings of his judgments, we should be desirous to understand his mind in them, to hear the Lord's voice crying in the city.

19. Then Daniel, (whose name was Belteshazzar,) was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. 20. The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21. Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation; 22. It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. 23. And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him: 24. This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 25. That there shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomever he will. 26. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree-roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. 27. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

We have here the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; and when once it is applied to himself, and it is declared that he is the tree in the dream, (Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur—Change but the name, the fable speaks of thee,) when once it is said, Thou art the man, there needs little more to be said for the explication of the dream; out of his own mouth he is judged; so shall his doom be himself has decided it. The thing was so plain, that Daniel, upon hearing the dream, was estimat<ref>ed for one hour, v. 19. He was struck with amazement and terror at so great a judgment coming upon
served a prince: his flesh trembled for fear of God. He was likewise struck with confusion, when he found himself under a necessity of being the man that must bring to the king these heavy tidings, which, having received so many favours from the king, he had rather he should have heard from any one else; so far is he from desiring the woful day, that he dreads it, and the thoughts of it trouble him. They that came after the ruined sinner, are said to have met with this day, as they that went before, and saw it coming, (as Daniel here,) were affrighted, Job xviii. 20.

1. The preface to the interpretation is a civil compliment which, as a courtier, he passes upon the king. The king observed him to stand as one astonished, and thinking he was loath to speak out for fear of offending him, he encouraged him to deal plainly and faithfully with him. Let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. This he speaks either, (1.) As one that sincerely desired to know the truth. Note, Those that consult the oracles of God must be ready to receive them as they are, whether they be for them or against them, and must accordingly give their ministers leave to be free with them. Or, (2.) As one that despised the truth, and set at defiance whatever he saw or heard, and so warning after warning we are tempted to think that this was his meaning; Let it not trouble thee, for I am resolved it shall not trouble me; nor will I lay it to heart. But whether he have any concern for himself or no, Daniel is concerned for him, and therefore wishes, The dream be to them that hate thee. Let the ill it bodes light on the head of thine enemies, not on thine head. Though Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater, a persecutor, and an oppressor of the people of God, yet he was, at present, Daniel's prince; and therefore, though Daniel foresees, and is now going to foretell, ill concerning him, he dares not wish ill to him.

2. The interpretation itself is only a repetition of the dream, with application to the king. As for the tree which thou sawest flourishing, (v. 20, 21.) it is thou, O king, v. 22. And willing enough would the king be to hear this, as before to hear, Thou art the head of gold, but for that which follows. He shows the king his present prosperous state in the glass of his own dream; Thy greatness is grown, and reaches as near heaven as human greatness can do, and thy dominion is to the end of the earth, ch. ii. 37, 38. As for the dominion passed away, and the dominion of heaven was to take it; seven times over him, seven years; and then he shall know that the Most High rules: and when he is brought to know and own that, he shall be restored to his dominion again, v. 26. Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, shall remain as firm as the stump of the tree in the ground, and thou shalt have it, after thou shalt have known what the beast do rule. God ever calls the heavens, because it is in heaven that he has prepared his throne, (Ps. cii. 19.) from thence he beholds all the sons of men, Ps. xxxiii. 13. The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's; and the influence which the visible heavens have upon this earth, is intended as a faint representation of the dominion the God of heaven has over this lower world, which is represented here against him, v. 18. Note, Then only we may expect comfortably to enjoy our right in, and government of, both our selves and others, when we dutifully acknowledge God's title to, and dominion over, us and all we have.

3. The close of the interpretation is the pious counsel which Daniel, as a prophet, gave the king; (v. 27.) whether he appeared concerned or not at the interpretation of the dream, a word of advice would be very seasonable, if careless, to awaken him, if troubled, to comfort him: and it is not incon- sistent with the dream and the interpretation of it, for Daniel knew not but it might be conditional, like the prediction of Nineveh's destruction. Observe, (1.) How humbly he gives his advice, and with what tenderness and respect; O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee; take it in good part, as coming from love, and we'll meant, and let it not be misinterpreted. Note, Sinners need to be courted to their own good, and accosted gently, to do well to themselves. The apostle beseeches men to suffer the word of exhortation, Heb. xiii. 22. We think it a good point gained, if people will be persuaded to take good counsel kindly; nay, if they will take it patiently. (2.) What his advice is; he does not counsel him to enter into a course of hypocrisy, for the preventing of the distemper in his head, but to break off a course of sin that he was in; to reform his life; he writes to him as one not his ally, but as his enemy, and warning after warning we are tempted to think that this was his meaning; Let it not trouble thee, for I am resolved it shall not trouble me; nor will I lay it to heart. But whether he have any concern for himself or no, Daniel is concerned for him, and therefore wishes, The dream be to them that hate thee. Let the ill it bodes light on the head of thine enemies, not on thine head. Though Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater, a persecutor, and an oppressor of the people of God, yet he was, at present, Daniel's prince; and therefore, though Daniel foresees, and is now going to foretell, ill concerning him, he dares not wish ill to him.

29. All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. 29. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30. The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 31. While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee: 32. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 33.
The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's dream accomplished, and Daniel's application of it to him justified and confirmed. How he took it we are not told, whether he was pleased with Daniel or displeased; but here we have,

1. God's presence with him; All this came upon him, but not till twelve months after, (v. 29.) so long there was a lengthening of his tranquillity, though it does not appear that he broke off his sins, or showed any mercy to the poor captives, for this was still God's quarrel with him, that he opened not the house of his prisoners, Isa. xiv. 17. Daniel having counselled him to repent, God so far confirmed his word, that he gave him space to repent; let him alone this year also, this one year more, before he brought this judgment upon him. Note, God is therefore long-suffering with provoking sinners, because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2 Pet. iii. 9.

2. His pride and haughtiness, and abuse of that power which had been given him for the good of the place of the kingdom of Babylon, in pomp and pride, pleasing himself with the view of that vast city, which, with all the territories thereto belonging, was under his command, and he said, either to himself or to those about him, perhaps some foreigners to whom he was showing his kingdom and the glory of it. Is not this great Babylon? Yes, it is great, of vast extent, no less than a day's journey round about it, with rivers within it. It is full of inhabitants, and they full of wealth; it is a golden city, and that is enough to speak it great, Isa. xiv. 4. See the grandeur of the houses, walls, towers, and public edifices; every thing in Babylon he thinks looks great; and this great Babylon I have built. Babylon was built many ages before he was born, but because he had fortified and beautified it, and we may suppose much of it was rebuilt during his long and prosperous reign, he boasts that he has built it; as Augustus Caesar boasted concerning Rome, Lateritiam inveni, marmoreae reliqui—I found it brick, but I left it marble. He boasts that he built it for the house of the kingdom, the metropolis of his empire. This vast city, compared with the countries that belonged to his dominions, was but a small homestead. He built it upon the assistance of his subjects, yet boasts that he did it by the might of his power; he built it for his security and convenience, yet, as if he had no occasion for it, boasts that he built it purely for the honour of his majesty. Note, Praise and self-conceitiveness are sins that most easily beset great men, who have great things in the world. They are apt to take the glory to themselves which is due to God only.

3. His punishment for his pride. When he was thus strutting, and vaunting himself, and adoring his own shadow, while the proud word was in the king's mouth, the powerful word came from heaven, by which he was immediately deprived, (1.) Of his honour as a king; The kingdom is departed from thee. When he had the most precious and inviolable bulwarks for the preserving of his kingdom, now, in an instant, it is departed from him; when he thought it well guarded, that none could take it from him, behold, it departs of itself. As soon as he becomes utterly incapable to manage it, it is of course taken out of his hands. (2.) He is deprived of his honour as a man; he loses his reason, and that means loses his dominion; They shall drive thee from men, v. 22. And it was fulfilled; (v. 33.) he was driven from men the same hour. On a sudden he fell stark mad, distracted in the highest degree that ever any man was. His understanding and memory were gone, and all the faculties of a rational soul broken, so that he became a perfect brute in the shape of a man. He went naked, and on all fours, like a brute; did himself shew the society of reasonable creatures, and run wild into the fields and woods; and was driven out by his own servants, who, after some time of trial, despairing of his return to his right mind, abandoned him, and looked after him no more. He had not the spirit of a beast of prey; (that of the royal lion,) but of the object and less honourable species, for he was made to grass as oxen; and, probably, he did not speak with human voice, but lowed like an ox. Some think that his body was all covered with hair; however, the hair of his head and beard, being never cut or combed, grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

Let us pause a little, and view this miserable spectacle; and let us receive instruction from it. [1.] Let us see here what a mercy it is to have the use of our reason, how thankful we ought to be for it, and how careful we ought to be not to do any thing which may either provoke God, or may have a natural tendency, to put us out of the possession of our own souls. Let us learn how to value our own reason, and multiply the evils of those that are under the prevailing power of meanness and distraction, or are delirious, and to be very tender in our censures of them and conduct toward them, for it is a temptation common to men, and a case which, some time or other, may be our own. [2.] Let us see here the vanity of human glory and greatness; Is this Nebuchadnezzar the Great? What, this despicable animal, this less than the poorest beggar? Is it this he that looked so glorious on the throne, so formidable in the camp, that had politics enough to subdue and govern kingdoms, and now has not so much sense as to keep his own clothes on his back; Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms? Is. xiv. 16. Never let the wise man then glory in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his strength. [3.] Let us see here how God resists the proud, and delights to abase them, and put contempt upon them. Nebuchadnezzar would be more than a man, and therefore God justly makes him less than a man, and puts him upon a level with the beasts, that set up for a rival with his Maker. See Job xi. 11.—13.

34. And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me; and I blessed the Most High; and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: 35. And all the inhabitants of the earth are preyed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doeth thou? 36. At the same time my reason returned unto me; and, for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom; and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and
honour the King of heaven, all whose works are true, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's recovery from his distraction, and his return to his right mind, at the end of the days prefixed, of the seven years; so long he continued a monument of God's justice, and a trophy of his victory over the children of pride; and he was made more so by being struck mad, than if he had been in an instant struck dead with a thunderbolt. Yet it was a mercy to him that he was kept alive; for, while there is life, there is hope that we may yet praise God, as he did here: At the end of the days, (says he,) I lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, (v. 34.) looked no longer down toward the earth as a beast, but began to look up as a man; O homini sublime dedit—Heaven gave to man an erect countenance. But there was more in it than this; he looked up as a devout man, as a penitent, as a humble petitioner for mercy, being perhaps never till then made sensible of his own misery. And now,

I. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him, that with it he glorifies God, and humbles himself under his mighty hand. He was told that he should continue in that forlorn case, till he should know that he was made king, as he had brought to the knowledge of that: Mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High. Note. Those may justly be reckoned void of understanding, that do not bless and praise God; nor do men ever rightly use their reason till they begin to be religious, nor live as men till they live to the glory of God. As reason is the substratum or subject of religion, (so that creatures which have no reason are not capable of religion,) so religion is the crown and glory of reason, and we have our reason in vain, and shall one day wish we had never had it, if we do not glorify God with it. This was the first act of Nebuchadnezzar's returning reason: and when this became the employment of it, he was then, and not till then, qualified for all the other enjoyments of it. And till he was for a great while disabled to exercise it in other things, he never was brought to apply it to this, which is the great end for which our reason is given us. His folly was the means whereby he became wise; he was not recovered by his dream of this judgment, (that was soon forgotten like a dream,) but he is made to feel it, and then his ear is opened to discipline. To bring him to himself, he must first be beside himself. And by what it means, he that good thoughts were in his mind, and a good work was wrought there, were not of himself, (for he was not his own man,) but it was the gift of God.

Let us see what Nebuchadnezzar is now at length effectually brought to the acknowledgment of; and we may learn from it what to believe concerning God.

1. That the most high God lives for ever, and his being knows neither change nor period, for he has it of himself. His flatterers often complimented him with, O king, live for ever! But he is now convinced that no king lives for ever, but the God of Israel only, who is still the same.

2. That his kingdom is like himself, everlasting, and his dominion from generation to generation: there is no succession, no revolution, in his kingdom. All his days are spent for ever, and of his government there is no end.

3. That all nations before him are as nothing; he has no need of them, he makes no account of them. The greatest of men, in comparison with him, are less than nothing. Those that think highly of God, think meanly of themselves.

4. That his kingdom is universal, and both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth are his subjects, and under his check and control. Both angels and men are employed by him, and accountable to him; the highest angel is not above his command, nor the meanest of the children of men beneath his cognizance. The angels of heaven are his armies, the inhabitants of the earth his tenants.

5. That his power is irresistible, and his sovereignty uncontrollable, for he does according to his will, according to his design and purpose, according to his pleasure. If he decrees that he pleases that he does; whatever he appoints shall be accomplish'd; and none can resist his will, change his counsel, or stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? None can arraign his proceedings, inquire into the meaning of them, or demand a reason for them. Wo to him that strives with his Maker; that says to him, What dost thou, or, Why dost thou so?

6. That every thing which God does, is well done; his works are truth, for they all agree with his word. His ways are judgment, both wise and righteous, exactly consonant to the rules both of prudence and equity, and no fault to be found with them.

7. That he has power to humble the haughtiness of his enemies that act in contradiction to him, or competition with him; Those that walk in pride he is able to abase; (v. 37.) he is able to deal with those that are not sensible of their own sufficiency to contend with him.

II. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him, as with it to re-enjoy himself, and the pleasures of his re-established prosperity; (v. 56.) At the same time my reason returned to me; he had said before, (v. 34.) that his understanding returned to him, and here he mentions it again, for the use of our reason is a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. Now his lords sought to him; he did not need to seek to them, and they soon perceived, not only that he had recovered his reason, and was fit to rule, but that he had recovered it with advantage, and was more fit to rule than ever. It is probable that the dream and the interpretation of it were well known, and much talked of, at court; and, the former part of the prediction being fulfilled, that he should go distracted, they doubted not but that, according to the prediction, he should come to himself again at seven years' end, and, in confidence of that, when the time was expired, were ready to receive him; and then his honour and brightness returned to him, the same that he had before his madness seized him. He is now established in his kingdom as firmly as if there had been no interrupting given him to it, but was, as it were, wiser than ever; and he that but the other day was in the depth of disgrace and ignominy, has now excellent majesty added to him, beyond what he had when he went from kingdom to kingdom conquering and to conquer. Note, 1. When men are brought to honour God, particularly by a penitent confession of sin and a believing acknowledgment of his sovereignty, then, and not till then, they may expect that God will put honour upon them; will not restore them to the dignity they lost by the sin of the first Adam, but add excellent majesty to them from the righteousness and grace of the second Adam.

2. Afflictions shall last no longer than till they have done the work for which they were sent. When this prince is brought to own God's dominion over him, it is by the hand of God, and no one else; All the accounts we take and give of God's dealing with us ought to conclude with praises to him. When Nebuchadnezzar is restored to his kingdom, he praises and extols and honours the King of heaven, (v. 37.) before he applies himself to his secular business. Therefore we have our reason, that we may be in a capacity of praising him, and therefore our prosperity, that we may have cause to praise him.
It was not long after this that Nebuchadnezzar ended his life and reign. Abydenus, quoted by Eusebius, (Pref. Evang. 1. 9.) reports from the tradition of the Chaldeans, that upon his death-bed he foretold the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. Whether he continued in the same good mind that he had before he died, is not known; but possibly he did any thing appear to the contrary but that he did: and if so great a blasphemer and persecutor did find mercy, he was not the last. And if our charity may reach so far as to hope he did, we must admire free grace, by which he lost his wits for awhile, that he might have his soul for ever.

CHAP. V.

The destruction of the kingdom of Babylon had been long and often foretold when it was at a distance; in this chapter we have it accomplished, and a prediction of it the very same night that it was accomplished. Belshazzar now reigned in Babylon; some compute he had reigned seventeen years, others but three; we have here the story of his exit, and the period of his kingdom. We must know, that about two years before this, Cyrus, king of Persia, a growing monarch, came against Babylong with a great army: Belshazzar met him, fought him, and was routed by him in a pitched battle. He and his scattered forces retired into the city, where Cyrus besieged them: they were very secure, because the river Euphrates was their moat, and they had twenty years to take the city,; but in the second year of the siege, he took it, as is here related. We have in this chapter, I. The riotous, idolatrous, sacrilegious feast which Belshazzar made, in which he filled up the measure of his iniquity, v. 1-6. II. The alarm given him in the midst of his jollity by a hand-writing on the wall, which none of his wise men could read or tell him the meaning of, v. 5-8. III. The interpretation of the mystical characters by Daniel, who was at length brought in to him, and dealt plainly with him, and showed him his doom written, v. 10-25. IV. The immediate accomplishment of the interpretation in the slaying of the king and seizing of the kingdom, v. 30, 31.

BELSHAZZAR the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was at Jerusalem; that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink there in. 3. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them. 4. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. 5. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. 7. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. 8. Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. 9. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

We have here Belshazzar the king very gay, but all of a sudden very gloomy, and in straits in the face of Cyrus, king of Persia; which that Cyrus, who was now with his army besieging Babylon, knew of this feast, and, presuming that they then would be off their guard, somno vinoque sehabit—buried in sleep and wine, took that opportunity to attack the city, and so with the more ease made himself master of it. Belshazzar upon this occasion invited a thousand of his lords to come and drink with him, but he may, as this should have shewn themselves in defence of the city against the besiegers; or these were his great council of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was further to be done. And they were to look upon it as a great favour that he drank wine with them, for he may, in such as had vindicated themselves in defence of the city against the besiegers, or these were his great council of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was further to be done. And they were to look upon it as a great favour that he drank wine with them, for he may, in such as had vindicated themselves in defence of the city against the besiegers, or these were his great council of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was further to be done. And they were to look upon it as a great favour that he drank wine with them, for he may, in such as had vindicated themselves in defence of the city against the besiegers, or these were his great council of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was further to be done.

Now, in this sumptuous feast.

1. He put an affright upon the providence of God, and bade defiance to his judgments. His city was now besieged, a powerful enemy was at his gates, his life and kingdom lay at stake. In all this, the hand of the Lord was gone out against him, and by his hand he had,Him to the feast, and mourning, and drinking with s vs and. 5. Daniel's voice cried in the city, as Jonah to Nineveh, Yet forty days, or fewer, and Babylon shall be destroyed. He should therefore, like the king of Nineveh, have proclamed a fast; but, as one resolved to walk contrary to God, he proclaims a feast, and beheld, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, killing sheeps, eating flesh, and drinking wine, as if he dared the Almighty to do his worst, Is. xxvii. 12, 13. To show how little fear he had of being forced to surrender, for want of provisions, he spent thus extravagantly. Note, Security and sensuality are sad presages of approaching ruin. Those that will not be warned by the judgments of God, may expect to be wounded by them.

2. He put an affright upon the temple of God, and bade defiance to his sanctuary; (v. 2.) while he tasted the wine, he commanded to bring the vessels of the temple, that they might drink in them. When he tasted how rich and fine the wine was, "O," said he, "it is pity but we should have holy vessels to drink such delicate wine as this in," which was looked upon as a piece of wit, and to carry on the humour, the vessels of the temple were immediately sent for. Nay, there seems to have been something more in it than a frolic, and that it was done in a malicious despite to the God of Israel; the heart of his people was very much upon these sacred vessels, as appears from Jer. xxvii. 16, 18. They were solemnly taken away, their principal use, when they appeared, was about...
these, Ezra i. 7. Now, we may suppose, they had an expectation of their deliverance approaching, reckoning the seventy years of their captivity near a part of the whole time; and some of them might perhaps name given out some words to that purpose, that shortly they should have the vessels of the sanctuary restored to them, in defiance of which, Belshazzar here proclaims them to his own, will keep them in store no longer, but make use of them among his own plate. Note, That Mirth is sinful indeed, and fills the measure of men's iniquity apiece, which protracted wood and stone, and jests with them. The ripened Babylon for ruin—that no songs would serve them but the songs of Zion, (Ps. cxxxvii. 3.) no vessels but the vessels of the sanctuary. Let those who thus sacrilegiously alienate what is dedicated to God and his honour, know that he will not be mocked.

5. He put an affright on God himself, and bade defiance to his deity; for they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, v. 4. They gave that glory to images, the work of their own hands, and creatures of their own fancy, which is due to the true and living God only. They praised them either with sacrifices offered to them, or with songs sung in honour of them. When their heads were giddy, and their hearts merry with wine, they were in the fittest frame to praise the gods of gold and silver, wood and stone; for, on the wise thought that men in their senses, who had the command of a clear and sober thought, could not be guilty of so gross an absurdity; they must be intoxicated ere they could be so infatuated. Drunken worshippers, who are not men, but beasts, are the most proper for the service of dunghill deities, that are not gods, but devils. They have erred through wine, Isa. xxviii. 7. They drank wine, and praised their idol-gods, as if they had been the founders of their feats and the givers of all good things to them. Or, When they were drinking wine, they praised their gods by drinking healths to them, and the king drank wine before them, (v. 1.) he began the health, first to this god, and then to the other, till they went through the head-roll or Farrago of them, those of wood and stone not excepted. Note, Immorality and impiety, vice and profaneness, strengthen the hands, and advance the interests, one of another. Drunken fables were an introduction to idolatry, and then idolatrous healths were a shoeing-horn to further drunkenness.

II. See how God affrighted the king, and struck a terror upon him. Belshazzar and his lords are in the greatest splendour, and surrounding with show all manner of amazement, and all upon the merry pin, drinking confusion, it may be, to Cyrus and his army, and roaring out huzzas, in confidence of the speedy raising of the siege; but the hour was come when that must be fulfilled, which had been long ago said of the king of Babylon, when his city should be besieged by the Persians and Medes; (Isa. xxi. 2-6.) The night of his fall is fitter for him to be taken to. The midst of this ball at court must be spoiled, and a dump cast upon their jollity, though the king himself be master of the revels; immediately, when God speaks the word, we have him and all his guests in the utmost confusion, and the end of their mirth, heaviness.

1. There appear the fingers of a man's hand, and a written hand in the language of the Chaldeans, before the king's face; (v. 5.) the angel Gabriel, say the Rabbins, directing these fingers and writing by them. "That divine hand" (says a rabbin of our own, Dr. Lightfoot) "that had written the two tables for a law to his people, now writes the doom of Babel and Belshazzar upon the wall." Here was nothing sent to frighten them, which made a noise, or threatened their lives; no claps of thunder, nor flashes of lightning; no destroying angel with his sword drawn in his hand; only a pen in the hand, writing upon the wall, over against the candlestick, where they might all see it. How little did they see what mercy God's written word is sufficient to put the proudest, boldest sinners into a fright, when he is pleased to give the setting on. The king saw the part of the hand that wrote, but saw not the person whose hand it was, which made the thing more frightful. Note, What we see of God, the part of the hand that writes in the book of the creatures, and in the book of the scripture (La., these are parts of one story, Job xxvi. 14.) may be to observe with awe, with awful thoughts concerning that of God which we do not see. If this be the finger of God, what is his arm made bare? And what is he!

2. The king is immediately seized with a panic fear, v. 6. His countenance was changed; his colour went and came; the joints of his loins were loosed, so that he had no strength in them, but was struck with a pain in his back, as is usual in a great fright; his knees smote one against another, so violently did he tremble, like an aspen-leaf. But what was the matter? Why is he in such a fright? He perceives not what is written, and how does he know but it may be some happy presage of deliverance to him and to his kingdom? But the business was, He, having troubled him; his own guilty conscience friends; his own conscience must have shown him no reason to expect any good news from Heaven, and that the hand of an angel could write nothing but terror to him. He that knew himself liable to the justice of God, immediately concludes this is an arrest in his name, a summons to appear before him. Note, God can seen awaken the most secure, and make the heart of the stoutest sinner to tremble, and there needs no more to do it than to let lose his own thoughts upon him; they will soon play the tyrant, and give him trouble enough.

3. The wise men of Babylon are immediately called in, to see what they can make of this writing upon the wall, v. 7. The king cried aloud, as one in haste, as one in earnest, to bring the whole college of magicians, to try if they can read this writing, and shew the interpretation of it; for the king and all his lords cannot pretend to it, it is out of their sphere; the study of divine revelation, (such as they had, or thought they had,) and converse with the world of spirits, were by the heathen confined to one profession, and none other meddled with it; but what is written to us by the finger of God, is legible to all; whoever will, may read the mind of God, and is capable of shewing what men can do to exert the utmost of their skill in this manner, and provoke them to an emulation in the attempt, he promises, that whoever would give him a satisfactory account of this writing, should be dignified with the highest honours of the court. He knew what these pretenders to wisdom aimed at, and what would please them, and therefore promises them a scarlet robe, and a golden chain, and a golden sceptre, and a stately house, and a name that knoweth no better. Nay, he should be primus pars regni—chief minister of state, the third ruler in the kingdom, next to the king, and his heir apparent.

4. The king is disappointed in his expectations from them; they could none of them read the writing, much less interpret it, (v. 8.) which increases the king's confusion; (v. 9.) he likes the writing, and the handwriting, but doth not like the hand that is toward him. His lords also, that had been partner's with him in his jollity, are now sharers with him in his terrors; they also were astonished, and at their wits' end; and neither their numbers nor their refreshment by wine would serve to keep up their spirits. The reason why the wise men could not read the writing was, not because it was written in any language or characters unknown to them, but
God either cast a mist before their eyes, or put such confusion upon their spirits, that they could not read it; that the honour of expounding this mystical writing might be reserved for Daniel. Note, The terror of an awakened, convinced conscience may justly be increased by the utter insufficiency of all creatures to give it ease or satisfaction.

10. **Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house; and the queen spoke and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:** 11. There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and, in the days of thy father, light, and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; 12. Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. 13. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14. I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light, and understanding, and excellent wisdom, is found in thee. 15. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing: 16. And I have heard of thee that thou canst make interpretations and dissolve doubts: now, if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. 17. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18. O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour. 19. And, for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slow, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down.

20. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21. And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. 22. And thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knowest all this; 23. But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. 24. Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. 25. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. 27. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. 29. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Here is,

I. The information given to the king, by the queen-mother, concerning Daniel, how fit he was to be consulted in this difficult case. It is supposed that this queen was the widow of Evil-merodach, and was that famous Nitocris whom Herodotus mentions as a woman of extraordinary prudence. She was not present at the feast, as the king's concubines were; (v. 7.) It was not agreeable to her age and gravity to keep a merry night. But tidings of the fright which the king and his lords were put into being brought to her apartment, she came herself to the banqueting-house, to recommend to the king a physician for his melancholy. She entreats him not to be discouraged by the insufficiency of his wise men to solve this riddle, for that there was a man in his kingdom, that had more than once helped his grandfather at such a dead lift, and, no doubt, could help him, v. 11, 12. She could not undertake to read the writing herself, but directs him to one that could; let Daniel be called now, who should have been called first. Now observe,

II. The high character she gives of Daniel; He is a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, who has something in him more than human, not only the spirit of a man, which, in all, is the candle of the
Lord, but a divine spirit. According to the language of her country and religion, she could give a higher encomium of any man than the speaker, and add (2) that he had an admirable good head; Light and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him. Such an insight had he into things secret, and such a foresight of things to come, that it was evident he was divinely inspired; he had knowledge and understanding beyond all the other wise men for interpreting of dreams, explaining enigmas, or hard sentences, and revealing secrets. He had a wonderful sagacity of this kind: but it should seem that in these things Daniel had more of an immediate divine direction; Behold a greater than Solomon himself is here. Yet what was the wisdom of them both, compared with the treasures of the wisdom hid in Christ? (2.) He had an admirable good heart; An excellent spirit was found in him, which was great ornament to his wisdom and knowledge, and qualified him to receive that gift; for God gives to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy. He was of an humble, holy, heavenly spirit, had a devout and gracious spirit, a spirit of zeal for the glory of God and the good of men. This was indeed an excellent spirit.

II. The account she gives of the respect that Nebuchadnezzar had for him: he was much in his favour, and was preferred by him; the king thy father, (that is, thy grandfather, but even to many generations Nebuchadnezzar might well be called the father of that royal family, for he it was that raised it to such a pitch of grandeur,) the king, I say, thy father, made him master of the magicians. Perhaps Bishuzzar had sometimes, in his pride, spoken slightly of Nebuchadnezzar, and his politics, and the methods of his government, and the ministers he employed, and thought himself wiser than he; and therefore his mother harps upon that. The king, I say, thy father, to whose good management all thou hast is owing, he pronounced him chief of, and gave him dominion over all, the wise men of Babylon, and named him Beslshazzar, according to the name of his god, thinking thereby to put honour upon him: but Daniel, by constantly making use of his Jewish name himself, (which he resolved to keep, in token of his faithful adherence to his religion,) had worn out that name; only the queen-dowager remembered it, otherwise he was generally called Daniel. Note, It is a very good office to revive the remembrance of the good services of worthy men, who are themselves modest, and willing that they should be forgotten.

3. The motion she makes concerning him; Let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. By this it appears that Daniel was now forgotten at court; Belshazzar was a stranger to him, knew not that he had such a jewel in his kingdom; with the new king there came in a new ministry, and the old one was laid aside. Note, There are a great many men, esteemed of great men, and in great employments, whose employment is made very useful, that lie long buried in obscurity; and some that have done eminent services, that live to be overlooked, and taken no notice of; but whatever men are, God is not unrighteous to forget the services done to his kingdom. Daniel being turned out of his place, lived privately, and sought not any opportunity to come into notice again; yet he lived near the court, and within call, though Babylon was now besieged, that he might be ready, if there were occasion, to do any good office, by what interest he had among the great ones, for the children of his people. But Providence so ordered it, that now, just at the fall of that monarchy, he should by the queen’s means be brought to court again, that he might lie there ready for preference in the ensuing government. Thus do the righteous shine forth out of obscurity, and before honour is humility.

II. The account of Daniel’s calling to the king, and his request to him to read and expand the writing. Daniel was brought in before the king, v. 13. He was now near 90 years of age, so that his years, and honours, and former preferences, might have entitled him to a free admission into the king’s presence; yet he was willing to be conducted in, as a stranger, by the master of the ceremonies. Note, 1. The king asks, with an air of haughtiness, Art thou the one that bringest this interpretation? Being a Jew, and a captive, he was loath to be beholden to him, if he could have helped it. 2. He tells him what an encomium he had heard of him, (v. 14.) that the spirit of the gods was in him; and he had sent for him to try whether he deserved so high a character or not. 3. He acknowledges that all his wise men of Babylon were baffled; they could not bring this writing, nor show the interpretation, v. 15. But, 4. He promises him the same rewards that he had promised them, if he would do it, v. 16. It was strange that the magicians, when now, and in Nebuchadnezzar’s time, once and again, they were nonplussed, did not offer at something, to save their credit; if they had with a good assurance said, “This is the meaning of such a dream, such a writing;” and he might have done them, but God ordered it, that they had nothing at all to say, as, when Christ was born, the heathen cradles were struck dumb.

III. The interpretation which Daniel gave of these mystic characters, which was so far from easing the king of his fears, that he may suppose it increased them rather. Daniel was now in years, and Belshazzar was young; and therefore he seems to take a greater liberty of dealing plainly and freely with him than he had done upon the like occasions with Nebuchadnezzar. In reproving any man, especially great men, there is need of wisdom to consider all circumstances: for they are the proofs of instruction, that are the way of life. In Daniel’s discourse here,

1. He undertakes to read the writing which gave them this alarm, and to show them the interpretation of it, v. 17. He shews the offer he made him of rewards, is not pleased that it was mentioned, for he is none of those that divine for money; what gratuities Belshazzar gave him afterward, he thankfully accepted, but he scorned to intend for them, or to read the writing to the king, for and in consideration of such and such honours promised him. Note, (1.) They that give gifts be to themselves, for they will not be long time, and give thy fee to another, to any of the wise men which thou worstest have most wished to earn it; I value it not.” Daniel sees his kingdom now at its last gasp, and therefore looks with contempt upon his gifts and rewards. And thus should we despise all the gifts and rewards this world can give, did we see, as we may by faith, its final period hastening on. Let it be not only despising them, but all that any creature can give us; as soon as our eyes and hearts upon; but let us do our duty in the world, do it all the real service we can, read God’s writing to it in a profession of religion, and by an agreeable conversation make known the interpretation of it, and then trust God for his gifts, his rewards, in comparison with which all the world can give is mere trash and nothing.

He relates to the king God’s dealings with his father Nebuchadnezzar, which were intended for instruction and warning to him, v. 18—21. This is not intended for a flourish or an amazement, but is a necessary preliminary to the interpretation of the writing. Note, That we may understand aright what God is doing with us, it is of use to us to review what he has done with others.
(1.) He describes the great dignity and power to which the Divine Providence had advanced Nebuchadnezzar; (v. 18, 19.) He had a kingdom, and majesty and honour, for he knew, above what any heathen prince ever had before him; he thought that he got it by his own extraordinary conduct and courage, and ascribed his successes to a projecting, active genius of his own; but Daniel tells him, who now enjoyed what he had laboured for, that it was the most high God, the God of gods, and Lord of kings, as Nebuchadnezzar himself had called him before, that dominion, that vast authority, that majesty wherewith, he presided in the affairs of it, and that glory and honour which by his prosperous management he had acquired. Note, Whatever degree of outward prosperity any arrive to, they must own that it is of God's giving, not their own getting. Let it never be said, My might, and the power of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth, this preeminence; but let it always be remembered that it is God that gives men power to get wealth, and gives success to their endeavours. Now the power which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar is here described to be very great in respect both of ability and of authority. [1.] His ability was so strong, that it was irresistible; such was the might, the majesty, and power of God, and at that time, which he had at command, and such an admirable dexterity he had at commanding them, that, which way soever his sword turned, it prospered; he could captivate and subdue nations by threatening them, without striking a stroke, for all people trembled and feared before him, and would compound with him for their lives upon any terms. See what force is, and what the fear of it does. It is that by which the brutal part of the world, even of the world of mankind, both governors, and is governed. [2.] His authority was so absolute, that it was uncontrollable. The power which was allowed him, which descended upon him, or which, at least, he assumed, was without contradiction, was absolute and despotic, none shared with him either in the legislative or in the executive part of it; but in every punishment, he condemned or acquitted at pleasure; Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he saved alive; though both were equally innocent, or equally guilty. The Jesuites et necis—The power of life and death, was entirely in his hand. In dispensing rewards he granted or denied preferments at pleasure; Whom he would he set up, and whom he would he cast down; and in the punishment of crime, without giving a reason so much as to himself; but it is all exerno motu—of his own good pleasure, and statio ratione voluntatis—He will stand for a reason. Such was the constitution of the eastern monarchies, such the manner of their kings. (2.) He sets before him the sins which Nebuchadnezzar had been guilty of, whereby he had provoked God to such a manifest greatness and severity of displeasure against him. He provoked God by his pride, by his haughty and tyrannical and oppressive. The description given of his power intimates his abuse of his power, and that it was directed in what he did by humour and passion, not by reason and equity; so that he often confirmed the innocent, and acquitted the guilty, both which are an abominable thing to the Lord. He deposed men on his apprehension, and preferred men by his will, to the great detriment of the public, for this he is accountable to the most high God that gave him his power. Note, It is a very hard and rare thing for men to have an absolute, arbitrary power, and not to make an ill use of it. Camden has a distich of Giraldus, wherein he speaks of it as a rare instance, common none such till now Henry the Second of England, that never any man had so much power, and did so little hurt with it. But that was not all. [2.] He behaved insolently toward the God above him, and grew proud and haughty; (v. 20.) His heart was lifted up, and there his sin and ruin began; his mind was hardened in pride, hardened against the commandments of God and his judgments; he was withal and obstinate, and neither the word of God nor his rod made any impression upon him. Note, Pride is a sin that hardens the heart in all other sins, and renders the means of repentance and reformation ineffectual. (3.) He reminds him of the judgments of God, that were brought upon him for his pride and obstinacy. How he was deprived of his reason, and so deprived from his kingly throne, (v. 20.) driven from among men, to dwell with the wild asses, v. 21. He that would not govern his subjects by rules of reason, had not reason sufficient for the government of himself. Note, Justly does God deprive men of their reason, when they become unreasonable, and will not use it, and of their power, when they become oppressive, and use it ill. He continued like a brute, till he knew and embraced that first principle of religion, That the most high God rules. And it is rather by God's grace than his merit that he is distinguished from, and dignified above, the beasts; and it is more his honour to be a subject to the supreme Creator than to be lord of the inferior creatures. Note, Kings must know, or shall be made to know, that the most high God rules in their kingdoms, that is, an imperium in imperio—an empire within an empire, not to be excepted against; and that he appointed over them whomever he will. As he makes heirs, so he makes princes. 3. In God's name, he exhibits articles of impeachment against Belshazzar; before he reads him his doom, from the hand-writing on the wall, he shows him his crime, that God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. Now that which he lays to his charge is, (1.) That he had not taken warning by the judgments of God upon his fathers; (v. 22.) Thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this. Note, It is a great offence to God, if our hearts be not humbled before him, to comply both with his precepts and with his providences, humbled by repentance, obedience, and submission to Christ, this is the first duty of men that their hearts should be humbled before him, by an acknowledgment that, great as they are, to him they are accountable. And it is a great aggravation of the unmercifulness of our hearts, when we know enough to humble them, but do not consider and improve it; particularly when we know how others have been broken, that would not bend, how others have fallen that would not stoop, and yet we continue stiff and inflexible. It makes the sin of children the more heinous, if they tread in the steps of their parents' wickedness, though they have seen how dear it has cost them, and how pernicious the consequences of it have been. Do we know this, do we know all this, and yet are we not humbled? (2.) That he had affronted God more impudently than Nebuchadnezzar himself had done; witness the revels of this very night, in the midst of which he was seized with this horror; (v. 23.) Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, hast swelled with rage against him, and taken up arms against his crown and dignity, in this particular instance, that thou hast profaned the vessel of his house, and made the utensils of his sanctuary instruments of thine iniquity, and, in an actual di
signed contempt of him, hast praised the gods of silver and gold, which see not, nor hear, nor know anything, as if they were to be preferred before the God that sees, and hears, and knows everything. So they were ready to lay hands on our sins, and well enough pleased with gods that neither see, nor hear, nor know, for then they may sin securely; but they will find, to their confusion, that though those are the gods they choose, those are not the gods they must be judged by, but one to whom all things are naked and open.

(3.) That he had not answered the end of his explanation and instruction; The God in whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. This is a general charge, which stands good against us all; let us consider how we shall answer it. Observe, [1.] Our dependence upon God as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Owner, and Ruler; not only from his hand our breath was at first, but in his hand our breath is still; it is he that holds our souls in life, and if he take away our breath we die. Our times being in his hand, so is our breath, by which our times are measured. In him we live, and move, and have our being; we live by him, live upon him, and cannot live without him. The way of man is not in himself, not at his own command, at his own disposal, but his are all our ways; for our hearts are in his hand, and so are the hearts of all men, of all the world, of the whole creation; [2.] Our duty to God, in consideration of this dependence; we ought to glorify him, to devote ourselves to his honour, and employ ourselves in his service; to make it our care to please him, and our business to praise him. [3.] Our default in this duty, notwithstanding that dependence; we have not done it; for we have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God. This is the universal charge against all men; there needs no proof, it is made good by the notorious evidence of the fact, and his own conscience cannot but plead guilty to it. And therefore,

4. He now proceeds to read the sentence, as he found it written upon the wall; "Then" (says Daniel) "when thou wast come to such a height of impiety as thus to tamper upon the most sacred things of God, although thou wast in the midst of thy sacrilegious, idolatrous feast, then was the part of the hand, the writing fingers, sent from him, from that God whom thou didst so daringly affront, who had borne so long with thee, but would bear no longer; he sent them, and this writing; thou sawest, was written, v. 24. It is he that now writes bitter things against thee, and makes thee to perceive thy iniquities," Job xxxiii. 26. Note, As the sin of sinners is written in the book of God's omniscience, so the doom of sinners is written in the book of God's law; and the day is coming when these books shall be opened, and they shall be judged by them.

Now the writing was, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, v. 25. It is well that we have an authentic inscription, and found the name, as that we could make little of them, so concise are they; the significations of them is, He has numbered, he has weighed, and they divide. The Chaldæan wise men, because they knew not that there is but one God only, could not understand who this He should be, and for that reason (some think) the writing puzzled them. [1.] Mene; that is repeated, for the thing is certain. [2.] Mene; that is repeated, for the thing is certain. [3.] Tekel; that signifies, in Hebrew and Chaldee, He has numbered and finished; which Daniel explains thus, (v. 26.) "God has numbered thy kingdom, the years and days of the continuance of it; these were numbered in the counsel of God, and now they are finished;" the term is expired for and during which thou wast to hold it, and now it must be surrendered. Here is an end of thy kingdom.

(2.) Tekel; that signifies, in Chaldee, Thou art weighed, and in Hebrew, Thou art too light. So Dr. Lightfoot. For this king and his actions are weighed in the just and unerring balances of divine equity. God does as perfectly know his true character as the goldsmith knows the weight of that which he has weighed in the neatest scales. God does not give judgment against him till he has first pondered his actions, and considered the merits of his case; but thou art found wanting unworthily, to have such a trust lodged in thee, a vain, light, empty man; a man of no weight or consideration. [3.] Upharsin; which should be rendered, and Pharsin, or Pera. Parsin, in Hebrew, signifies the Persians; Parsin, in Chaldee, signifies dividing; Daniel puts both together; (v. 28.) "Thy kingdom is divided, is rent from thee, and given to the Medes and Persians, as a prey to be divided among them."

Now this may, without any force, be applied to the doom of sinners. Mene, Tekel, Persia, may easily be made to signify, death, judgment, and hell. At death, the sinner's days are numbered and finished; after death, the judgment, when he will be weighed in the balance, and found wanting; and after judgment, the sinner will be cut asunder, and given to the devil and his angels. Daniel does not here give Belshazzar such advice and encouragement to repent as he had given Nebuchadnezzar, because he saw the decree was gone forth, and he would not be allowed any space to repent.

One would have thought that Belshazzar would have been exasperated against Daniel, and seeing his own doom declared to him, would have avenged himself against him. But he was so far convicted by his own conscience of the reasonableness of all he said, that he objected nothing against it; but, on the contrary, gave Daniel the reward he promised him, put on him the scarlet gown, and the gold chain, and proclaimed him the third ruler in the kingdom; (v. 28.) because he would be as good as his word, and because it was not Daniel's fault if the exposition of the hand-writing was not such as he desired. Note, Many show great respect to God's prophets, who yet have no regard to his word. Daniel did not value those titles and ensigns of honour, yet would not refuse them, because they were tokens of his prince's good will; but we have reason to think that he received them with a smile, foreseeing how soon they would all wither with him that bestowed them. They were like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night, and perished in a night, and therefore it was folly for him to be exceeding glad of them.

30. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

Here is, 1. The death of the king. Reason enough he had to tremble, for he was just falling into the hands of the king of terror, v. 50. In that night, when his heart was merry with wine, the besiegers broke into the city, aimed at the palace, where they found the king, and gave him his death's wound; he could not find any place so secret as to conceal him, or so strong as to protect him. Heathen writers speak of Cyrus's taking Babylon by surprise, with the assistance of two deserters that showed him the best way into the city. And it was foretold what a consternation it would be to the court, Jer.
li. 11, 39. Note, Death comes as a snare upon those whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.

2. The transferring of the kingdom into other hands. From the head of gold we now descend to the head of iron, to show the change to be effectual. And, as Daniel had foreseen the change, so he also foresees the change of the king's character. He not only saw that the Medes would take the kingdom in partnership with, and by the consent of, Cyrus who had conquered it, v. 31. They were partners in war and conquest, and so they were in dominion, ch. vi. 28. Notice is taken of his age, that he was now sixty-two years old; for which reason Cyrus, who was his nephew, gave him the precedence. Some observe, that he being now sixty-two years old in the last year of the Medo-Persian empire, he was born in the eighth year of it, and that was the year when Jehoiachin was carried captive, and all the nobles, &c. See 2 Kings xxiv. 13, 15. Just at that time when the most fatal stroke was given, was a prince born, that in process of time should avenge Jerusalem upon Babylon, and heal the wound that was now given. Thus deep are the counsels of God concerning his people, thus kind are his designs toward them.

CHAP. VI.

Daniel does not give a continued history of the reigns in which he lived, nor of the state-affairs of the kingdoms of Chaldea and Persia, though he was himself a great man in those affairs; for what are those to us? But he selects such particular passages of story as serve for the concrete illustration of those great and important truths, that the obedience to us for the glory and advancement of our King and Lord, and the encouragement of his servants in all ages to be resolute and constant, both in their adherence to that which is evil, and in their adherence to that which is good, whatever it cost them. In this chapter we have, I. Daniel's preferment in the court of Darius, v. 1. 3. II. The envy and malice of his enemies against him, v. 4. 5. 11. The decree they obtained against prayer for thirty days, v. 6. 9. IV. Daniel's constancy and constancy in prayer, notwithstanding that decree, v. 10. V. Information given against him for it, and the casting of him into the den of lions, v. 11. 15. VI. His miraculous preservation in the lions' den, and deliverance out of it, v. 18. 20. VII. The casting of his accusers into the den, and their destruction there, v. 24. VIII. The decree which Darius made in honour of Daniel the Mede, and the prosperity of Daniel afterward, v. 25. 26. And this God is our God for ever and ever.

1. It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2. And over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was first; that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. 3. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. 4. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. 5. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

We are here told concerning Daniel, 1. What a great man he was. When Darius, upon his accession to the crown of Babylon by conquest, new-modelled the government, he made Daniel prime minister of state, set him at the helm, and made him first commissioner both of the treasuries, and of the state-affairs; and his power was very large; all he got by his conquests and conquests was, that he had so many more countries to take care of; no more can be expected from himself than what one man can do, and therefore others must be employed under him. He set over the kingdom 120 princes, (v. 1.) and appointed them their districts, in which they were to administer justice, and to be sure that none should introduce any evil into the king's revenue. Note, Inferior magistrates are ministers of God to us for good as well as the sovereign; and therefore we must submit ourselves both to the king as supreme, and to the governors that are constituted and commissioned by him, 1 Pet. iii. 13. 14. Over these princes there was a triumvirate, or three presidents, who were to take and state the public accounts, to receive appeals from the princes, or complaints against them in case of mal-administration, that the king should have no damage, (v. 2.) that he should not sustain loss in his revenue, and that the power he delegated to the princes might not be abused to the oppression of the subject, for by that the king (whether he thinks so or no) receives real damage, both as it alienates the affections of his people from him, and provokes the displeasure of his God against him. Of these three Daniel was the chief, because he was found to go beyond them all in manner of princely qualifications. He was preferred above the presidents and princes; (v. 3.) and so wonderfully well pleased the king was with his management, that he thought to set him over the whole realm, and let him place and discharge at his pleasure.

Now, (1.) We must take notice of it to the praise of Darius, that he would prefer a man thus purely for his personal merit, and his fitness for business; and those sovereigns that would be well served, must go by that rule. Daniel had been a great man in the kingdom that was conquered, and for that reason, one would think, should have been looked upon as an enemy; and as such imprisoned or banished; he was a man of sixty-two years of age, and a ruined one, and upon that account might have been despised as a stranger and captive: but Darius, it seems, was very quick-sighted in judging of men's capacities, and was soon aware that this Daniel had something extraordinary in him, and therefore, though no doubt, he had creatures of his own, yet a few, that expected preferment in this newly-established kingdom, and were gaping for it, and those that had been long his confidants would depend upon it that they should be now his presidents, yet so well did he consult the public welfare, that finding Daniel to excel them all in prudence and virtue, and probably having heard of his being divinely inspired, he made him his right hand. (2.) We must take notice of it, to the glory of God, that though Daniel was very old, (it is above seventy years since he was brought a captive to Babylon,) yet he was as able as ever for business both in body and mind; and that he who had continued faithful to his religion, through all the temptations of the foregoing reigns, in a new government was as much respected as ever. He kept in by being an oak, not by being a willow; by a constancy in virtue, not by a pliability to vice. Such honesty is the best policy, for it secures a reputation; and those who thus honour God, he will honour them.

2. What a good man he was; An excellent spirit was in him, v. 3. And he was faithful to every trust, dealt fairly between the sovereign and the subject...
and took care that neither should be wronged, so that there was no error, or fault, to be found in him, v. 4. He was not only not chargeable with any treachery or dishonesty, but not even with any mistake or indiscretion. He never made any blunder, nor had any occasion to plead inadvertency or getfulness for his excuse. This is recorded for an example to all that are in places of public trust, to approve themselves both careful and conscientious, that they may be free, not only from fault, but from error; not only from crime, but from mistake.

3. What all will was borne him, both for his greatness and for his goodness. The presidents and princes envied him, because he was advanced above them, and, probably, hated him, because he had a watchful eye upon them, and took care they should not wrong the government, to enrich themselves. See here, (1.) The cause of envy; and that is every thing that is good. Solomon complains of it as a vexation, that for every right work a man is envied of his neighbour; (Eccl. iv. 4.) that the better a man is, the worse he is thought of by his rivals. Daniel is envied because he has a more excellent spirit than his neighbours. (2.) The effect of envy; and that is every thing that is bad. Those that envied Daniel, sought no less than his ruin; his disgrace would not serve them, it was his death that they desired. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who can stand before envy? Prov. xiv. 22. How should a man know the way of life? Let him watch his step in the management of his place; they sought to find occasion against him, something on which to ground an accusation concerning the kingdom; some instance of neglect or partiality, some hasty word spoken, some person borne hard upon, or some necessary business overlooked. And if they could but have found the mote, the muck-hill, of a mistake, a blunder, or a slip, the beam, to the mountain, of an unpatronable misdemeanor. But they could find no occasion against him; they owned that they could not. Daniel always acted honestly, and now the more warily, and stood the more upon his guard, because of his observers, Ps. xxvi. 11. Note, We have all need to walk circumspectly, because we have many eyes upon us, and some that watch for our halting. These especially have need to carry their cup even, that it have full. They concluded, at length, that they should not find any occasion against him, except concerning the law of his God, v. 5. It seems then that Daniel kept up the profession of his religion, and held it fast without wavering or shrinking; and yet that was no bar to his preferment; there was no law that required him to be of the king's religion, or incapacitated him to bear office in the state, unless he were. It was all one to the king what God he prayed to, so long as he did the business of his place faithfully and well; he was at the king's service sine qua non—'as far as the altar;' but there he left him. In this matter therefore his enemies hoped to insnare him. Quae verum est crimen levi, quod non in animatorem?—that cannot be charged upon him, he was accused of nothing. Grutius. Note, It is an excellent thing, and much for the glory of God, when those who profess religion conduct themselves so inefficently in their whole conversation, that their most watchful, spiteful enemies may find no occasion of blaming them, save only in the matters of their God, in which their work according to their conscience or defect. It is observable that when Daniel's enemies could find no occasion against him concerning the kingdom, they had so much sense of justice left, that they did not soburn witnesses against him to accuse him of crimes he was innocent of, and to swear treason upon him, wherein they shame many that were called Jews, and are called Christians.

6. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 9. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. 10. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Daniel's adversaries could have no advantage against him from any law now in being; they therefore contrive a new law, by which they hope to insnare him, and in a matter in which they knew they should be sure of him; and such was his fidelity to his God, that they gained their point. Here is,

Daniel's impiety and law. I call it Darius's because he gave the royal assent to it, and otherwise it had not the force of a law. All those presidents of the kingdom, the governors, princes, counsellors, and captains, had consulted together about it, and that they not only agreed to it, but advised it, for divers good causes and considerations, that they had done what they could to establish it for a firm decree; nay, they intimate to the king, that it was carried neminem contradicente—unanimously; All the presidents are of this mind; and yet we are sure of one thing. Daniel, the chief of the three presidents, did not agree to it; and have reason to think that many more of the princes excepted against it, as absurd and unreasonable. Note, It is no new thing for that to be represented, and with great assurance too, as the sense of the nation, which is far from being so; and that which few alyvere of, is sometimes confirmed by every one. Here they say, We do not only desire that he should be cast into the mouth of the lions, but that he should be put to death after the most barbarous manner, should be cast into the den of lions. v. 7. This is the bill they have been hatching, and they lay it before the king to be signed, and passed into a law. Now, 1. There is nothing in it that has the least appearance of good, but that it magnifies the king, and makes him seem both very great, and
very kind to his subjects, which, they suggest, will be of good service to him now that he is newly come to his throne, and will confirm his interests. All men must be made to believe that the king is so rich, and withal so ready to all petitioners, that none in any want or distress need apply themselves either to God or man for relief, but to him only. And, the law thus dertained, they would not give audience to all that have any petition to present to him. It is indeed much for the honour of kings, to be benefactors to their subjects, and to have their cars open to their complaints and requests; but if they pretend to be their sole benefactors, and undertake to be to them instead of God, and challenge that respect from them, which is due to God only, it is contrary to the nature of his dignity, and of his service. There is a great deal in it that is apparently evil; it is bad enough to forbid asking a petition of any man, must not a beggar ask an alms, or one neighbour beg a kindness of another? If the child want bread, must he not ask it of his parents, or be cast into the den of lions if he do? Nay, they that have business with the king, may they not petition those about him to influence them? But it was much worse, and an impudent affront to all religion, to forbid asking a petition of any god. It is by prayer that we give glory to God, fetch in mercy from God, and so keep up our communion with God; and to interdict prayer for thirty days, is for so long to rob God of all the tribute he has from man, and to rob man of all the comfort he has in God. When the light of nature teaches us that the prayer of the just has the power to be answered, does not the law of nature oblige us by prayer to acknowledge God, and seek to him? Does not every man's heart direct him, when he is in want or distress, to call upon God, and must this be made high treason? We could not live a day without God; and can men live thirty days without prayer? Will the King himself be tied up so firmly to the office of praying to God; or if it be allowed, will he undertake to do it for all his subjects? Did ever any nation thus slight their gods? But see what absurdities maiee will drive men to. Rather than not bring Daniel into trouble for praying to his God, they will deny themselves and all their friends the satisfaction of praying to theirs. Had they proposed only to prohibit the Jews from praying to their God, Daniel would have been suffered to continue; but because they knew the king would not pass such a law, and therefore made it thus general. And the king, puffed up with a fancy that this would set him up as a little god, was fond of the feather in his cap, (for so it was, and not a flower in his crown,) and signed the writing and the decree, (v. 9,) which, being once done according to the constitution of the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians, was valid upon any pretence whatsoever to be altered or dispensed with, or the breach of it pardoned.

II. Daniel's pious disobedience to this law, v. 10. He did not retire into the country, or abscond for some time, though he knew the law was levelled against him; but because he knew it was so, therefore he stood his ground, knowing that he had now a good foundation of his right to pray to God before him, and showing that he preferred his favour, and his duty to him, before life itself. When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he might have gone to the king, and expostulated with him about it; nay, he might have remonstrated against it, as grounded upon a misformation that all the presidents had consented to it, whereas he that was chief of them, and was ever ready to bring such persons as he liked, came into his house, and applied himself to his duty, cheerfully trusting God with the event. Now observe, 1. Daniel's constant practice, which we were not informed of before this occasion, but which we have reason to think was the general practice of the pious Jews. (1.) He prayed in his house, sometimes himself alone, and sometimes with his family about him, and made a solemn business of it. Cornelius was a man that prayed in his house, Acts x. 50. Note, Every house not only may be, but ought to be, a house of prayer; there should be both a civil and a spiritual religion; the one to have an altar, and on it we must offer spiritual sacrifices. (2.) In every prayer he gave thanks; when we pray to God for the mercies we want, we must praise him for those we have received. Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer. (3.) In his prayer and thanksgiving he had an eye to God as his God, his in covenant; and set himself as in his presence, to do this as a mark of his regard to him. (4.) When he prayed and gave thanks, he kneeled upon his knees, which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and most expressive of humility, and reverence, and submission to God. Kneeling is a begging posture, and we come to God as beggars, beggars for our lives, when it concerns to be important. (5.) He opened the windows of his chamber, that the sight of the visible heavens might be before him, and that through the aperture of that God, who dwells above the heavens; but that was not all; he opened them toward Jerusalem, the holy city, though now in ruins, to signify the affection he had for its very stones and dust, (Ps. ciii. 14,) and the remembrance he had of its concerns daily in his prayers. Thus, though he himself lived great in Babylon, yet he testified his concurrence with the meanest of his race, and all the former Babylonians, in the days of Solomon's temple, and preferring it before his chief joy, Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6. Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen to put his name there; and when the temple was dedicated, Solomon's prayer to God was, that if his people should in the land of their enemies pray unto him with their eye toward the land which he gave them, and the city he had chosen, and the house which was built to his name, then he would hear and maintain their cause. (1 Kings viii. 48, 49,) to which prayer Daniel had reference in this circumstance of his devotions. (6.) He did this three times a day, three times every day, according to the example of David, (Ps. li. 17,) Morning, evening, and at noon I will pray. It is good to have our hours of prayer, not to bind, but to mind, conscience; and for him who thinks they would require refreshment by food thrice a day, can there be reason to observe our souls? This is surely as little as may be to answer the command of praying always. (7.) He did this so openly and avowedly, that all who knew him, knew it to be his practice; and he thus showed it, not because he was proud of it, (in the place where he was,) there was no room for that temptation, for it was not reputation, but reproach, that attended it, but because he was not ashamed of it. Though Daniel was a great man, he did not think it below him to be thrice a day upon his knees before his Maker, and to be his own chaplain; though he was an old man, he did not think himself past it, nor, though it had been his practice from his youth up, was he weary of this well-doing. Though he was a man of business, vast business, for the service and certain parts of the garrison, yet he had not such a ten, God could afford him, from the daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable then are they who have but little to do in the world, and yet will not do thus much for God and their souls! Daniel was a man famous for prayer, and for success in it; (Ezek. xiv. 14,) and he came to be so by thus making a conscience of prayer, and making a business of it daily; and in this doing, he reached great success with God.

2. Daniel's constant adherence to this practice, even when it was made by the law a capital crime. When he knew that the writing was signed, he continued to do it as aforetime, and altered not one
circumstance of the performance. Many a man, yea, and many a good man, would have thought it prudence to omit it for these thirty days, when he could not do it without hazard of his life; he might have prayed so much the oftener when those days were expired, and the danger was over, or he might have performed the duty at another time, and another place, so secretly, that it should not be possible for his enemies to discover it; and so he might both satisfy his conscience, and keep up his communio

1. Proof made of Daniel’s praying to his God, notwithstanding the late edict to the contrary; (v. 11.) These men assembled; they came tumultu-

2. Complaint made of it to the king. When they had found occasion against Daniel concerning the law of his God, they lost no time, but applied themselves to the king; (v. 12.) and having appealed to him, who was not to be despised by a law made, and gained from him a recognition of it, and that it was so ratified that it might not be altered, they proceeded to accuse Daniel, v. 13. They describe him so, in the information they give, as to exasperate the king, and incense him the more against him; “He is of the children of the captivity of Ju-

3. The great concern the king was in hereupon. He now perceived that, whatever they pretended, it was not to honour him, but in spite to Daniel, that they had proposed that law, and now he is sore displeased with himself, for gratifying them in it, v. 14. Note, When men indulge a proud vainglorious humour, and please themselves with that which feeds it, they know not what they do, for they are

4. The violence with which the prosecutors de-
5. The executing of the law upon Daniel. The king himself, with the utmost reluctance, and against his conscience, signs the warrant for his execution; and Daniel, that venerable, grave man, who carried such a mixture of majesty and sweetness in him, who so often looked great upon the bench, and at the council-board, and greater upon his knees, who had power with God and man, and had prevailed, is brought, purely for worshipping his God, as if he had been one of the vilest of malefactors, and thrown into the den of lions, to be devoured by them, v. 16. One cannot think of it without the utmost compassion to the guilty objects of such exceeding compassion; and no lenity on the part of so many most wicked and obdurate prosecutors. To make sure work, the stone laid upon the mouth of the den is sealed, and the king (an over-easy man) is persuaded to do it with his own signet, (v. 17.) that unhappy signet with which he had confirmed the law that Daniel falls by. But his lords cannot trust him, unless they add their signets too. Thus when Christ was betrayed, his adversaries sealed the stone that was rolled to the door of his sepulchre.

6. The encouragement which Darius gave to Daniel to trust in God; Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee, v. 16. Here, (1.) He justifies Daniel from guilt, owning all his crime to be serving his God continually, and continuing to do so, m. 13. He was not guilty, or (2.) He leaves it to God to fetch him from perishing, that it could not prevail to do it; He will deliver thee. He is sure that God can deliver him, for he believes him to be an almighty God, and he has reason to think he will do it, having heard of his delivering Daniel’s companions in a like case from the fiery furnace, and concluding him to be always faithful to those who approve themselves faithful to him. Note, Those who serve God continually he will continually preserve, and will bear them out in his service.

18. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him. 19. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel; and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21. Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. 23. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. 24. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Here is, 1. The melancholy night which the king had, upon Daniel’s account, v. 18. He had said indeed, that God would deliver him out of the danger, but at the same time he could not forgive himself for throwing him into the danger; and justly, for God deprived him of a friend whom he had himself used so barbarously. He went to his palace, vexed at himself for what he had done, and calling himself unwise and unjust for not adhering to the law of God and nature, with a non obstante — a negative, to the law of the Medes and Persians. He ate no supper, but passed the night fasting: his heart was already full of grief and fear. He forsook the wine, yet he could not forget the unpleasing and unaccustomed songs sung to a heavy heart. He went to and fro, and could not get no sleep; was full of tossing and turning till the dawning of the day. Note, The best way to have a good night is, to keep a good conscience; then we may lay ourselves down in peace.

2. The solicitous inquiry he made concerning Daniel the next morning, v. 19, 20. He was up early, very early; for how could he lie in bed when he could not sleep for dreaming of Daniel, nor lie awake quietly for thinking of him? And he was no sooner up than he went in haste to the den of lions, for he could not satisfy himself to send a servant, (that would not sufficiently testify his affection to Daniel,) nor had he patience to stay so long as till a servant would return. When he comes to the den, not without some hopes that God had greatly undone what he had wickedly done, he cries with a lamentable voice, as one full of concern and trouble, O Daniel, art thou alive? He knows, to know, yet trembles to ask the question, fearing to be answered with the roaring of the lions after more prey; O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? If he might not understand himself when he called him the living God, he could not doubt of his ability to keep Daniel alive, for he that has life in himself, quickens whom he will; but has he thought fit in this case to exer-
his power? What he doubted of, we are sure of, that the servants of the living God have a Master who is well able to protect them, and bear them out in his service.

3. The joyful news he meets with—that Daniel is alive, is safe and well, and unhurt in the lions' den, v. 21, 22. Daniel knew the king's voice, though it was now a lamentable voice, and spake to him with all the deference and respect that were due to the power he was under. The king does not reproach him for his unkindness to him, and his carelessness in yielding to the malice of his prosecutors; but, to show that he has heartily forgiven him, he meets him with his good wishes. Note, We should not upbraid those with the diskindness they have done us, who, we know, did them with reluctance, and are very ready to upbraid themselves with them. The king, before Daniel gives the king is very pleasant, it is triumphant.

(1.) God has preserved his life by a miracle. Darius had called him Daniel's God; (thy God whom thou servest;) to which Daniel does as it were echo back, Yes, he is my God, whom I own, and who owns me, for he has sent his angels; the same bright and glorious Being that was seen in the form of the son of God with the three children in the fiery furnace, and who met Daniel in the den, and kept Daniel company all night, and had shut the lions' mouths, that they had not in the least hurt him. The angel's presence made even the lions' den his strong hold, his palace, his paradise; he never had had a better night in his life. See the power of God over the fiercest creatures, and believe his power to restrain the roaring lion that goes about, intrudingly seeking to devour, from hurting those that are his. See the care God takes of his faithful worshippers, especially when he calls them out to suffer for him. If he keep their souls from sin, comfort their souls with his peace, and receive their souls to himself, he does in effect stop the lions' mouths, that they cannot hurt them. See how ready the angels are to minister for the good of God's people, for they own themselves their dwellings.

(2.) God has therein pleased his cause. He was represented to the king as disaffected to him and his government; we do not find that he said any thing in his own vindication, but left it to God to clear up his integrity as the light; and he did it effectually by working a miracle for his preservation. Daniel, in what he had done, had not offended either to God or the king; whom I prayed to, innocence was found in me. He pretends not to a meritorious excellence; but the testimony of his conscience concerning his sincerity is his comfort; As also that before thee, O king, I have done no hurt, nor designed thee any affront.

4. The discharge of Daniel from his confinement. His prosecutors cannot but own that the law is satisfied, though they are not, or, let it be altered, it is by no means superior to that of the Medes and Persians; and therefore no cause can be shown why Daniel should not be fetched out of the den; (v. 23.) The king was exceeding glad to find him alive, and gave orders immediately that they should take him out of the den, as Jeremiah out of the dungeon; and which, they searched, no manner of hurt was found upon him, but he was alive, and not weakened, well, and kept perfectly well, because he believed in his God. Note, Those who boldly and cheerfully trust in God to protect them in the way of their duty, shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, but shall always find him a present Help.

5. The committal of his prosecutors to the same prison, or place of execution rather, v. 24. Darius is animated by this miracle wrought for Daniel, and now begins to take courage, and act like himself. Those that would not suffer him to show mercy to Daniel, shall, now that God has done it for him, be made to feel his resentments; and he will do justice for God who had showed mercy for him. Daniel's accusers, now that his innocence is cleared, and Heaven itself is become his Compurgator, have the same punishment inflicted upon them which they designed against him, according to the law of retaliation. Though they were never so much as suspected of the thing, yet they were now, and such were they, as should be made to feel the unkindness of their own past actions. Such they were to be reckoned now that Daniel was proved innocent; for though the fact was true, yet it was not a fault. They were cast into the den of lions, which perhaps was a punishment newly invented by themselves; however, it was what they maliciously designed for Daniel. Nee lex est justior nulla, quam nee artifices arte perier suo. No law can be more just than that which adjudges the devisers of barbarity to perish by it, Ps. vii. 15, 16. —ix. 15, 16. And now Solomon's observation is verified, (Prov. vi. 8.) The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. In this execution we may observe, (1.) The king's severity in ordering their wives and children to be thrown to the lions with them. How righteous are God's statutes above these of the nations! For God often punishes not the children for the fathers' crimes, Deut. xxiv. 16. Yet it was done in extraordinary cases, as that of Achan, and Saul, and Human. (2.) The lions' fierceness. They had the mastery of them immediately, and tore them to pieces before they came to the bottom of the den. This verified and magnified the miracle of their sparing Daniel; for hereby it appeared that it was not because they had not appetite, but because they had not leave. Mastiffs that are kept muzzled, are the more fierce when the muzzle is taken off; so were these lions. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes.

25. Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27. He delivereth and reserveth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. 28. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Darius here studies to make some amends for the dishonour he had done both to God and Daniel, in casting Daniel into the lion's den, by doing honour to both.

1. He gives honour to God by a decree published to all nations, by which they are required to fear before him. And this is a decree which is indeed fit to be made unalterable, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians; for if he does not ordain, the gospel, preached to them that dwell on the earth, Rev. xiv. 7. Fear God, and give glory to him. Observe, (1.) To whom he sends this decree; to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth. v. 25. These are great words, and it is true that all the inhabitants of the earth are obliged to that which is here decreed; but here they mean no more than every dominion of his kingdom, which, though it contained many nations, contained
not all nations; but so it is, those that have much,
are ready the third that have all. (2.) What the
matter of the decrees; That men tremble and fear
before the God of Daniel. This goes further than
Nebuchadnezzar's decree upon the like occasion,
for that only restrained people from speaking amiss
of this God; but this requires them to fear before
him, to keep up and express awful, reverent
thoughts of him. And well might this decree be
prefaced, thus: Peace be to you, for the only foundation of true
and abundant peace is laid in the fear of God; for that is true
wisdom. If we live in the fear of God, and walk
according to that rule, peace shall be upon us.
Peace shall be multiplied to us. But though this
decree goes far, it does not go far enough; had
he done right, and come up to his present convictions,
he should have commanded all men not only to
tremble and fear before this God, but to love him
and trust in him, to forsake the service of their
idols, and to worship him only, and call upon him as
Daniel did. But idolatry had been so long and so
deeply rooted, that it was not to be extirpated by
the edicts of princes, not by any power less than
that, which went along with the glorious gospel of
Christ. (3.) This decree cannot be compared with
the former, moving him to make this decree. They are
sufficient to have justified a decree for the total sup-
pression of idolatry, much more will they serve to
support this. There is good reason why all men
should fear before this God: for, [1.] His being is
transcendent. He is the living God; lives as a
God, whereas the gods we worship are dead things,
have not so much as an animal life. [2.] His go-
vernment is incontestable; he has a kingdom, and a
dominion; he not only lives, but reigns as an abso-
late Sovereign. [3.] Both his being and his go-
vernment are unchangeable. He is himself stead-
fast for ever, and with him is no shadow of turning.
And his kingdom too is that which shall not be de-
stroyed by any external force, nor has his dominion
any thing in itself that threatens a decay or tends
thereby, and therefore it shall be even to the end.
[4.] He has an ability sufficient to support such an
authority, v. 27. He delivers his faithful servants
from trouble, and rescues them out of trouble; he
works signs and wonders, quite above the utmost
power of nature to effect, both in heaven and on
earth, by which it appears that he is sovereign of
both. He has given a declaration of all this, in
delivering his servant Daniel, from the
power of the lions. This miracle, and that of the
delivering of the three children, were wrought in the
eye of the world, were seen, published, and at-
tested by two of the greatest monarchs that ever
were, and were illustrious confirmations of the first
principles of religion, abstracted from the narrow
scheme of Judaism, effectual confutations of all the
evils and hopes of those who make the
ender of the world. This is a very proper preparation
for pure catholic Christianity.
2. He puts honour upon Daniel; (v. 28.) So this
Daniel prospered. See how God brought to him
good out of evil. This bold stroke which his en-
emies made at his life, was a happy occasion of tak-
ing them off, and their children too, who other-
wise would still have stood in the way of his prefer-
ment, and have been upon all occasions vexatious to
him; and now he prospered more than ever, was
more in favour with his prince and in reputation
with the people; which gave him a great oppor-
tunity of doing good to his brethren. Thus out of
the eater (and that was a lion too) came forth meat,
and out of the strong sweetness.

CHAP. VII.
The six former chapters of this book were historical; we
now enter with fear and trembling upon the six latter,
which are prophetical, wherein are many things dark,
and hard to be understood, which we dare not positively
determine the sense of, and yet many things plain and
profitable, which I trust God will enable us to make a
good use of. In this chapter, we have, I. Daniel's vision
of the four beasts, v. 1-8. II. His vision of God's
throne of government and judgment, v. 9-14. III. The
interpretation of these visions, given him by an angel
that stood by, v. 15-28. I. Neither of these visions look
as far into the end of time, or whether they were to
have a speedy accomplishment, is hard to say, nor
are the most judicious interpreters agreed concerning it.

1. IN the first year of Belshazzar king of
Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and
visions of his head upon his bed: then he
wrote the dream, and told the sum of the
matters. 2. Daniel spake and said, I saw
in my vision by night, and, behold, the four
winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.
3. And four great beasts came up from the
sea, diverse one from another. 4. The first
was like a lion, and had eagles' wings: I
beheld till the wings thereof were plucked,
and it was lifted up from the earth, and
made stand upon the feet as a man, and a
man's heart was given to it. 5. And, be-
hold, another beast, a second, like a bear,
and it raised up itself on one side, and it
had three ribs in the mouth of it between
the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it,
Arise, devour much flesh. 6. After this I
beheld, and lo, another, like a leopard,
which had upon the back of it four wings of
a fowl: the beast had also four heads; and
dominion was given to it. 7. After this I
saw in the night visions, and, behold, a
fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and
strong exceedingly; and it had great iron
teeth: it devour'd and brake in pieces, and
stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it
was diverse from all the beasts that were
before it: and it had ten horns. 3. I con-
sider'd the horns, and, behold, there came
up among them another little horn, before
whom there were three of the first horns
plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in
this horn were eyes like the eyes of man,
and a mouth speaking great things.

The date of this chapter places it before ch. v.
which was in the last year of Belshazzar, and ch. 6.
which was in the first of Darius; for Daniel had
those visions in the first year of Belshazzar, when
the captivity of the Jews in Babylon was drawing
near a period. Belshazzar's name here is, in the
original, spelled differently from what is used to be;
before it was Bel-sheshe-azar—Bel is he that treasures
up riches. But this is Bel-eshe-azar—Bel is on fire
by the enemy. Bel was the god of the Chaldeans:
he had prospered, but is now to be consumed.
We have, in these verses, Daniel's vision of the
four monarchies that were oppressive to the Jews.
Observe,
The circumstances of this vision. Daniel had
interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and now he
is himself honoured with like divine discoveries; (v.
1.) He had visions of his head upon his bed, when
he was asleep: so God sometimes revealed himself
and his mind to the children of men, when deep sleep fell upon them, Job xxxiii. 15. For when we are most retired from the world, and taken off from the things of sense, we are most fit for communion with God. But when he was awake, he wrote the dream for his own use, lest he should forget it as a dream which passes away; and he told the sum of the matters to his brethren the Jews for their use, and gave it them in writing, that it might be communicated to those at a distance, and preserved for their children after them, who should see these things accomplished. The Jews, misunderstanding some of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, flattered themselves with hopes, that, after their return to their own land, they should enjoy a complete and uninterrupted tranquillity; but that they might not so deceive themselves, and their calamities be made doubly grievous by the disappointment, God by this prophet lets them know that they shall have tribulation; these promises of their prosperity were to be accomplished in the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of grace; as Christ has told his disciples they must expect persecution, and the promises they depend upon will be accomplished in the eternal blessings of the kingdom of glory. Daniel both wrote these things, and spake them, to intimate that the church should be taught both by the scriptures, and by ministers' preaching, both by the written word, and by word of mouth; and ministers in their preaching are to tell the sum of the matters that are written.

II. The vision itself, which foretells the revolutions of government in those nations, which the church of the Jews, for the following ages, was to be under the influence of.

1. He observed the four winds to strive upon the great sea, v. 2. They strive which should blow strongest, and at length blow along. This represents the contests among princes for empire, and the shakings of the nations by these contests, to which those mighty monarchies, which he was now to have a prospect of, owed their rise. One wind from any point of the compass, if it blow hard, will cause a great commotion in the sea; but what a tumult must needs be: raised when the four winds strive for mastery? That is it which the kings of the earth, who contend for empire, are a noisy and violent as the battle of the winds; but how is the poor sea tossed and torn, how terrible are its concussions, how violent its convulsions, while the winds are at strife which shall have the sole power of troubling it! Note, This world is like a stormy, tempestuous sea; thanks to the proud, ambitious winds that visit it.

2. He saw four great beasts come up from the sea, from the troubled waters, in which aspiring minds love to fish. The monarchs and monarchies are represented by beasts, because too often it is by brutish rage and tyranny that they are raised and supported. These beasts were diverse one from another, (v. 3.) of different shape, to denote the different genius and complex of the nations in whose hands they were lodged.

(1.) The first beast was like a lion, v. 4. This was the Chaldean monarchy, that was fierce and strong, and made the kings absolute. This lion had eagles' wings, with which to fly upon the prey. It denotes the wonderful speed that Nebuchadnezzar made in his conquest of kingdoms. But he soon saw the wings plucked, a full stop put to the career of those eagles; and the very lions that had been tributaries to them, revolt from them, and make head against them; so that this monstrous animal, this winged lion, is made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart is given to it. It was lost the heart of a lion, which it had been famous for, (one of our English kings was called Cæsar de Lion—Lion-heart,) has lost its courage, and is become feeble and faint, dreading every thing, and dreading nothing; they are put in fear, and made to bewail themselves to be but men. Sometimes the vileness of a nation strangely sinks, and these cowards and effeminate, so that what was the head of the nations, in an age or two becomes the tail.

(2.) The second beast was like a bear, v. 5. This was the Persian monarchy, less strong and generous than the former, but no less ravenous. This bear raised up itself on one side against the lion, and soon mastered it. It raised up one head; so Nebuchadnezzar, and Persia and Media, which in Nebuchadnezzar's image were the two arms in one beast, now set up a joint government. This bear had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth, the remains of those nations it had devoured, which were the marks of its voraciousness; and yet an indication that though it had devoured much, it could not devour all; some ribs still stuck in the tooth of it, which it could not conquer. Whereupon it was said to it, Arise, devour much flesh; let alone the bones, the ribs, that cannot be conquered, and set upon that which will be an easier prey. The princes will stir up both the kings and the people to push on their conquests, and let nothing stand before them. Note, Conquests, unjustly made, are but like those of the beasts of prey, and in this much they are the same, the beasts of prey, and their own kind, as wicked and unreasonable men do.

(3.) The third beast was like a leopards, v. 6. This was the Grecian monarchy founded by Alexander the Great, active, crafty, and cruel, like a leopard; he had four wings of a fowl; the lion seems to have had but two wings; but the leopard has four, for though Nebuchadnezzar made great despatch in his conquests, Alexander made much greater. In six years' time he gained the great empire of Persia, a great part besides of Asia, made himself master of Syria, Egypt, India, and other nations; this beast had four heads; upon Alexander's death, his conquests were divided among his four chief captains; Seleucus Nicanor had Asia the Great; Perdiccas, and after him Antigonus, had Asia theLess: Cassander had Macedonia, and Asia Minor; Ptolemy had Syria, Egypt. Darius was given as this beast; it was given of God, from whom alone procession comes.

(4.) The fourth beast was more fierce, and formidable, and mischievous, than any of them, unlike any of the other, nor is there any among the beasts of prey to which it might be compared, v. 7. The learned are not agreed concerning this anonymous beast; some make it to be the Roman empire, which, when it was in its glory, comprehended ten kingdoms, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Britain, Sarmatia, Panonía, Asia, Greece, and Egypt; and then the little horn which rose by the fall of three of the other horns, (v. 8.) they make to be the Turkish empire, which rose in the room of Asia, Greece, and Egypt. Others make this fourth beast to be the kingdom of Seleucia, or Seleucizide, which was very cruel and oppressive to the people of the Jews, as we find in Josephus and the history of the Maccabees. And herein that empire was diverse from those which went before, that none of the preceding powers compelled the Jews to renounce their religion, but the kings of Syria did, and used them barbarously. Their armies and commanders were like great iron teeth, with their iron teeth they were at Native and bare in pieces the people of God, and they trampled upon the residue of them. The ten horns are then supposed to be ten kings that reigned successively in Syria; and then the little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes, the last of the ten, who by one means or other undermined three of the
kings and get the government. He was a man of great sagacity, and therefore is said to have eyes like the eyes of a man; and was very bold and daring, had a mouth speaking great things. We shall meet with him again in these prophecies.

9. I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 

10. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. 

11. I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 

12. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. 

13. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 

14. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Whether we understand the fourth beast to signify the Syrian empire, or the Roman, or the former as the figure of the latter, it is plain that these verses are intended for the comfort and support of the people of God, in reference to the persecutions they were often to endure: God is to sustain both from the one and from the other, and from all their proud enemies, in every age: for it is written for their learning on whom the ends of the world are come, that they also, through patience and comfort of this scripture, might have hope.

Three things are here discovered, that are very encouraging.

1. That there is a judgement to come, and God is the Judge. Now men have their day, and every pretender thinks he should have his day, and struggles for it. But he that sits in heaven, laughs at them, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps. xxxviii. 13. 

I beheld, (v. 9.) till the thrones were cast down, not only the thrones of these beasts, but all rule, authority, power, dominion, that are set up in opposition to the kingdom of God among men; (1 Cor. xv. 24.) such are the thrones of the kingdoms of the world, in comparison with God's kingdom; they that see them set up, need but wait awhile, and they will see them cast down. I beheld till thrones were set up, (so it may as well be read,) Christ's throne, and the throne of his Father. One of the rabbins confesses that these thrones are set up, one for God, another for the Son of David. It is the judgement that is here set, v. 10. Now this is intended, 1. To speak God's wise and righteous government of the world by his providence; and an unspeakable satisfaction it gives to all good men, in the midst of the convulsions and revolutions of states and kingdoms, that the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all; (Ps. cxxiv. 19.) that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, Ps. lxxvi. 11. 

2. Perhaps it points at the destruction brought by the providence of God upon the empire of Syria, or that of Rome, for their tyrannizing over the people of God. But 3. It seems principally designed to describe the last judgment, for though it began immediately upon the destruction of the fourth beast, may, though it be yet to come, perhaps many ages to come, yet it was intended that in every age the people of God should encourage themselves, under their troubles, with the belief and prospect of it. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it, Jude 14. Does the mouth of the enemy speak against the Lord? 

8. He maintains the matter great; as much as to say, which the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Many of the New Testament predictions of the judgment to come have a plain allusion to this vision here; especially St. John's vision of it, Rev. xxi. 12. 

1. The Judge is the Ancient of days himself, God the Father, the glory of whose presence is here described. He is called the Ancient of days, because he is God, from ever set to everlasting. Among men, we reckon that with the ancient is wisdom, and days shall speak; shall not all flesh then be silent before him who is the Ancient of days? The glory of the Judge is here set forth by his garment, which was white as snow, denoting his splendour and purity in all the administrations of his justice; and the brightness of his head clean and white, as a sign of that, as the white and hoary head, he may appear venerable.

2. The throne is very formidable. It is like the fiery flame, dreadful to the wicked that shall be summoned before it. And the throne being movable upon wheels, or, at least, the chariot in which he rode his circuit, the wheels thereof are as burning fire, to devour the adversaries; for our God is a consuming Fire, and he is everlasting burnings, Isa. xxxviii. 14. This is enlarged upon, v. 10. As to all his faithful friends there proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb a pure river of water of life, (Rev. xxi.) so to all his imparable enemies there issues and comes forth from his throne a fiery stream, a stream of brimstone, (Isa. xxx. 30.) a fire that shall devour before him. 

3. The attendants are numerous and very splendid. The Shechinah is always attended with angels, it is so here; (v. 10.) thousand thousands minister to him; and ten thousand ten thousand stand before him. It is his glory that he has such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needs them nor can be benefited by them. See how numerous the heavenly hosts are, there are thousands of angels; and how obsequious they were, they stand before God, ready to go on his errands, and to take the first intimation of his will and pleasure. They will particularly be employed as ministers of his justice in the last judgment; when the Son of man shall come, and all the holy angels with him. Enoch prophesied that the Lord should come with his holy myriads.

4. The process is fair and unexceptionable; The judgement is set, publicly, and openly, that all may have recourse to it; and the books are opened; as in courts of judgment among men, the proceedings are in writing and upon record, which is laid down when the cause comes to a hearing; the examination of witnesses is produced, and affidavits are read, to clear the matter of fact, the statute and common law books consulted to find out what is the law, so, in the judgment of the great day, the equity of the sentence will be as incontestably evident as if there were books opened to justify it.
II. That the proud and cruel enemies of the church of God will certainly be reckoned with, and brought down in due time, v. 11, 12. This is here represented to us,

1. In the destroying of the fourth beast. God's quarrel with this is the beginning of the persecution of the church which the horn spake, bidding defiance to Heaven, and triumphing over all that is sacred; this provokes God more than anything, for the enemy to behave himself proudly, Deut. xxxvii. 27. Therefore Pharaoh must be humbled, because he has said, Who is the Lord? and has said, I will pursue, I will overtake. Enoch foretold that therefore the Lord would come to judge the world, that he might pronounce all that are ungodly, of their hard speeches, Jude 15. Note, Great words are but idle words, for which men must give account in the great day. And see what comes of this beast that talks so big; he is slain and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. The Syrian empire, after Antiochus, was destroyed; he himself died of a miserable disease, his family was rooted out, the king of Persia took possession of it, and at length made a province of the Roman empire by Pompey. And the Roman empire itself, (if we take that for the fourth beast,) after it began to persecute Christianity, declined and wasted away, and the body of it was destroyed. So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord, and he shall slay before thee.

2. In the diminishing and weakening of the other three beasts; (v. 12.) They had their dominion taken from them, and were delivered, while they had dominion, they had done to the church and people of God; but a prolonging in life was given them, for a time and a season, a set time, the bounds of which they could not pass. The power of the foregoing kingdoms was quite broken, but the people of them still remained in a mean, weak, and low condition; we may allude to this, in describing the remainders of sin in the hearts of good people; they have corruptions in them, the lives of which are prolonged, so that they are not perfectly free from sin, but the dominion of them is taken away, so that sin does not reign in their mortal bodies. And thus God deals with his church's enemies; sometimes he breaks the teeth of them, (Ps. iii. 7.) when he does not break the neck of them; crushes the persecutors of his church, but leaves them space to repent. And it is fit that God, in doing his own work, should take his own time and way.

III. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, and kept up, in the world, in despite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness. Let the heathen rage and fret as long as they please, God will set his King upon his holy hill of Zion. Daniel sets his hopes in this, and says he will have nothing but these for his portion.

1. The Messiah is here called the Son of man; one like unto the Son of man; for he was made in the image of the Son of man; he was formed in fashion as a man. I saw one like unto the Son of man, one exactly agreeing with the idea formed in the divine counsels of him that in the fulness of time was to be the Mediator between God and man. He is like unto the Son of man, but is indeed the Son of God. Our Saviour seems plainly to refer to this vision, when he says, (John v. 27.) that the Father has given him all judgment in heaven and on earth. He is called the Son of man, and because he is the person whom Daniel saw in vision, to a kingdom and dominion were to be given.

2. He is said to come with the clouds of heaven. Some refer this to his incarnation; he descended in the clouds of heaven, came into the world unseen, as the glory of the Lord took possession of the temple in a cloud. The empires of the world were beasts that rose out of the sea; but Christ's kingdom is from above, he is the Lord from heaven. Again, God sent his Mediator to the world in the flesh, to reveal his feebleness; when he returned to the Father, the eye of his disciples followed him, till a cloud received him out of their sight, Acts i. 9. He made that cloud his chariot, wherein he rode triumphantly to the upper world. He comes swiftly, irresistibly, and comes in state, for he comes with the clouds of Heaven.

3. He is here represented as having a mighty interest in Heaven. When the cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples, it is worth while to inquire (as the sons of the prophets concerning Elia) in what like manner he carried it, whither it lodged him; and here we are told, abundantly to our satisfaction, that he came to the Ancient of days; for he ascended to his Father and our Father, and to his God and our God; (John xx. 17.) from him he came forth, and was made man by him, and sat down at his right hand. It was with a great deal of pleasure that he said, Now I go to him that sent me. But was he welcome? Yes, no doubt he was, for they brought him near before him; he was introduced into his Father's presence, with the attendance and adoration of all the angels of God, Heb. i. 6. God caused him to draw near and approach to him, as an Advocate and Defender for us, (Jer. xxx. 21.) that we through him might be made nigh. By this solemn near approach which he made to the Ancient of days, it appears that the Father accepted the sacrifice he offered, and the satisfaction he made, and was entirely well pleased with all he had done. He was brought near, as our High Priest, who for us enters within the veil, and as our Forerunner.

4. He is here represented as having a mighty influence upon this earth, v. 14. When he went to be glorified with his Father, he had a power given him over all flesh; (John xvi. 2, 5.) with the prospect of this, Daniel and his friends are here comforted, that not only the dominion of the church's enemies shall be taken away, (v. 12.) but the church's Head and best Friend shall have the dominion of his enemies, and shall be given him to do every tongue confess, Phil. ii. 9, 10. To him are given glory and a kingdom, and they are given by him who has an unquestionable right to give them, which, some think, with an eye to these words, our Saviour teaches us to acknowledge in the close of the Lord's prayer, For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. It is here foretold that the kingdom of the exalted Redeemer shall be, (1.) A universal kingdom, the only universal monarchy, whatever others have pretended to, or aimed at; All people, nations, and languages shall fear him, and be under his jurisdiction, either as his willing subjects, or as his conquered captives; to be either ruled, or overruled by him. One way or other, the kingdoms of the world shall all become his kingdoms. (2.) An everlasting kingdom; His dominion shall not pass away to any return, to be glorified by any invader, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed. Even the gates of hell, or the infernal powers and policies, shall not prevail against it. The church shall continue militant, to the end of time, and triumphant to the endless ages of eternity.

15. I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him
the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

17. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18. But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. 19. Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20. And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22. Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings, 25. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times and the dividing of time. 26. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. 28. Hithero is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Here is —

1. The deep impressions which these visions made upon the prophet. God in them put honour upon him, and gave him satisfaction, yet not without a great alloy of pain and perplexity: (v. 15.) I Daniel was grievéd in my spirit in the midst of my body. The word here used for the body properly signifies a scab or scabard, for the body is no more to the soul: that is the weapon, it is that which we principally to take care of. The visions of my head troubled me, and again, (v. 28.) my cogitations much troubled me. The manner in which these things were discovered to him, quite overwhelmed him, and silenced his thoughts. When the channel of the spirits failed him, and the trance he was in tired him, and made him faint. The things themselves that were discovered, amazed and astonished him, and put him into a confusion, till by degrees he recollected and conquered himself, and set the comforts of the vision over against the terrors of it.

11. His earnest desire to understand the meaning of them; nay, the earnestness of this desire was likely to stand by, to one of the angels that appeared attending the Son of man in his glory, and asked him the truth, the true intent and meaning of all this. Note, It is a very desirable thing to take the right and full sense of what we see and hear from God; and those that would know, must ask by faithful and fervent prayer, and by accomplishing a diligent search.

12. The key was given him, and opened up the understanding of this vision. The angel told him, and told him so plainly, that he made him know the interpretation of the things; and so made him somewhat more easy.

1. The great beasts are great kings and their kingdoms, great monarchies and their monarchies, which shall arise out of the earth, as those beasts did out of the sea, v. 17. That the beast and the horns and the ten horns and the ten kings, which shall arise out of the earth, and their foundation is in the dust; they are of the earth, earthly, and they are written in the dust, and to the dust they shall return.

2. Daniel pretty well understands the three first beasts, but concerning the fourth he desires to be better informed, because it differed so much from the rest, and was exceeding dreadful, and not only so, but very mischievous, for it devoured and broke in pieces, v. 19. Perhaps this was it that put Daniel into such a fright, and this part of the visions of his head troubled him more than any of the rest. But especially he desired to know what the little horn was, that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, and whose countenance was more fearless and formidable than that of any of his fellows, v. 21. While no more is intimated than that the children of men make war with one another, and prevail against one another, the prophet does not show himself so much concerned: (Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, and be dashed in pieces one against another;) but when they make war with the saints, when the pure sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are broken as earthen pitchers, it is time to ask, What is the meaning of this? Will the Lord cast off his people? Will he suffer their enemies to trample upon them, and triumph over them? What is this same horn that shall prevail so far against the saints?

20. To this the interpreter answers, (v. 23—25.) That this fourth beast is a fourth kingdom, that shall devour the whole earth, or, as it may be read, the whole land. That the ten horns are ten kings, and the little horn is another king that shall subdue three kings, and shall be very abive to God and his people, shall act, (1.) Very impulsively toward God; he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall employ his might against God, and his house, and his holy ones, with success.

(2.) Very impiously toward the people of God; he shall wear out the saints of the Most High; he will not cut them off at once, but wear them out by long oppressions, and a constant course of hardships put upon them; ruining their estates, and weakening their families. The design of Satan has been to wear out the saints of the Most High, that they may be no more in remembrance, but the attempt is vain, for while the world stands God will
have a church in it. He shall think to change times and laws, to abolish all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and to bring every body to say and do just as he would have them. He shall trample upon laws and customs, human and divine: Direcit, destruit, mutat, quadraturat:—He builds, he changes square into round, as if he meant to alter even the ordinances of heaven themselves. And in these daring attempts he shall for a time prosper, and have success; they shall be given into his hand until time, times, and half a time, for three years and a half, that famous prophetic measure of time which we meet with in the Revelation of John (x iii, 3) and elsewhere; and this is sometimes 1260 days, which come all to one. But at the end of that time the judgment shall sit, and take away his dominion (v. 26.) which he expounds, (v. 11.) of the beast being slain, and his body destroyed. And, as Mr. Mede reads, (v. 12.) As to the rest of the beast, the ten horns, especially the little ruflling horn, (as he calls it,) they had their dominion taken away.

Now the question is: Who is this enemy, whose rise, reign, and ruin, are here foretold? Interpreters are not agreed; some will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Scyeds, and the little horn to be Antiochus, and show the accomplishment of all this in the history of the Maccabees; so Junius, Piscator, Polkamp, Broughten, and many others; but others will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Three horns, i.e. the Three emperors, Caesar, Nero, and Domitian; and the succeeding emperors, as Calvin says: the anticleric, the papal kingdom, says Mr. Joseph Mede, that wicked one, which, as this little horn, is to be consumed by the brightness of Christ's second coming. The pope assumes a power to change times and laws, hotestas temporum:—an absolute and despotic power, as he calls it; others make the little horn to be the Thistle empires: so Luther, Vatablus, and others. Now I cannot prove either side to be in the wrong; and therefore since prophecies sometimes have many fulfillings, and we ought to give scripture its full latitude, (in this as in many other controversies,) I am willing to allow that they are both in the right; and that this prophecy has primary reference to the Syrian empire, and was intended for the encouragement of the Jews who suffered under Antiochus, and the Maccabees, who vanquished him. It has many times foretold, but might foresee a glorious issue of them at last, and the final overthrow of their proud oppressors: and, which is best of all, might foresee, not long after, the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, with the hopes of which it was usual with the former prophets to comfort the people of God in their distresses. But yet it has a further reference, and foretells the like persecuting power and rage in Rome heathen, and no less in Rome papal, against the Christian religion, that was in Antiochus against the pious Jews and their religion. And St. John, in his visions and prophecies which point primarily at Rome, has plain reference, in many particulars, to these visions here.

3. He has a joyful prospect given him of the present victory of God's kingdom among men, and its victory over all opposition at last. And it is very observable that in the midst of the predictions of the force and fury of the enemies, this is brought in abruptly, (v. 18.) and again, (v. 22.) before it comes, in the course of the vision, to be interpreted, v. 26, 27. And this also refers, (1.) To the prosperous days of the Jewish church after it had weathered the tempest of Antiochus, and the power which the Maccabees obtained over their enemies. (2.) To the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world by the preaching of his gospel. For judgment Christ comes into this world, to rule by his Spirit, and to make all his saints kings and priests to their God. (3.) To the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints shall judge the world, shall sit down with him on his throne, and triumph in the complete downfall of the devil's kingdom.

Let us see what is here foretold. [1.] The Ancient of days will come into the world by his Son, to whom he has committed all judgment; and, as an earnest of that, he comes for the deliverance of his oppressed people, comes for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. [2.] The judgment shall sit, v. 26. God will make it to appear that he judges in the earth, and will, both in wisdom and in equity, plead his people's righteous cause. He will humble the pride and haughtiness of that Man whom he has ordained [3.] The dominion of the enemy shall be taken away, v. 26. All Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool, and shall be consumed and destroyed to the end: these words the apostle uses concerning the man of sin; (2 Thess. ii. 8.) He shall be consumed with the spirit of Christ's mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming. [4.] Judgment is given to the saints of the Most High. The apostles are intrusted with the preaching of a gospel by which the world shall be judged: all the saints by their faith and obedience condemn an unbelieving, disobedient world; in Christ their Head they shall judge the world, shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, Mat. xix. 28. See what reason we have to honour them that war for the Lord; how great an object is the salvation of mankind, in the eye of the world, and how much contempt soever is poured upon them, they are the saints of the Most High; they are near and dear to God, and he owns them for his, and judgment is given to them. [5.] That which is most insisted upon, is that the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, v. 18. And again, (v. 22.) This saw came that the saints possess the kingdom. And again, (v. 27.) The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. For be it from us to infer from hence, that dominion is founded on grace, or that this will warrant any, under pretence of saints'ship, to usurp kingdom; no, Christ's kingdom is not of this world; but this speaks the assurance of the dominion of the saints over their own lusts and corruptions, their victories over Satan and his temptations, and the triumphs of the martyrs over death and its terrors. It likewise promises that the gospel-kingdom shall be set up, a kingdom of light, holiness, and love, a kingdom of grace; the privileges and comforts of which now, under the heavens, shall be the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory in the heavens; when the empire became Christian, and princes used their power for the defence and advancement of Christianity, then the saints possessed the kingdom. The saints rule by the Spirit's ruling in them, and this is the victory over-coming the world, even their faith, and by making the kingdoms of this world to become Christ's kingdom. But the full accomplishment of this will be the everlasting happiness of the saints, the kingdom that cannot be moved, which we, according to his promise, look for, that is, the greatness of the kingdom, the crown of glory that fades not away, this is the everlasting kingdom. See what an emphasis is laid upon this: (v. 18.) The saints shall possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever: and the reason is, Because he whose name is called the Lord of hosts shall possess the kingdom, and shall reign forever and ever, v. 27. His is so, and therefore theirs shall be so; Because I live, you shall live also; John xiv. 19. His kingdom is theirs; they reckon themselves exalted in his exaltation; and desire no greater honour and satisfaction to themselves than that all domi-
And the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones, toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And a host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spoke, How long shall the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days: then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Here is,

I. The date of this vision, v. 1. It was in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, which proved to be his last year, as many reckon; so that this chapter also should be, in order of time, before the fifth. That Daniel might not be surprised at the destruction of Babylon, now at hand, God gives him foresight of the destruction of other kingdoms hereafter, which in their day had been as potent as that of Babylon. Could we foresee the changes that shall be hereafter, when we are gone, we should the less admire, and be less affected with the changes in our own day; for that which is done, is that which shall be done, Excl. i. 9. Then it was, that a vision appeared to me, Daniel. Here he solemnly attests the truth of it; it was to him, even to him, that the vision was shown; he was the eye-witness of it. And this vision puts him in mind of a former vision, which appeared to him at the first, in the first year of this reign, which he makes mention of, because this vision was an explanation and confirmation of that, and points at many of the same events. That seems to have been a dream, a vision in his sleep; this seems to have been when he was awake.

II. The scene of this vision; the place where
that was laid, was in Shushan the palace, one of the royal seats of the kings of Persia, situated on the banks of the river Ulai, which surrounded the city; it was in the province of Elam, and that part of Persia which lay next to Babylon. Daniel was then in Persia, for he was now in Babylon, a captive, in some employment under Belshazzar, and might not go to such a distant country, especially being now an enemy's country; but he was there in vision; as Ezekiel, when a captive in Babylon, was often brought, in the spirit, to the land of Israel. Note, The soul may be at liberty when the body is in captivity; for when we are bound, the Spirit of the Lord ideaeth with our spirit, and maketh the prisoners of hope to be as strongly as if he had really been there.

III. The vision itself, and the process of it.

1. He saw a ram with two horns, v. 3. This was the second monarchy, of which the kingdom of Media and Persia were the two horns. The horns were very high; but that which came up last was the higher, and got the start of the former. So the last shall be first, and the first last. The kingdom of Persia, which rose last, in Cyrus, became more eminent than that of the Medes.

2. He saw this ram pushing all about him with his horns, (v. 4.) westward, toward Babylon, Syria, Greece, and the lesser Asia; northward, toward the Danube, Scythia, and Russia; and southward, toward Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt; for all these nations did the Persian empire, one time or other, make attempts upon for the enlarging of their dominion. And at last it became so powerful, that no beasts might stand before him. The ram, which is a species of animals often preyed upon, becomes formidable even to the beasts of prey themselves, so that there was no standing before him, no escaping him, none that could deliver out of his hand, but all must yield to him. The kings of Persia did according to their will, prospered in all their ways abroad, had an uncontrollable power at home, and became great; he thought himself great, because he did what he would: but to do good is that which makes men truly great.

3. He saw this ram overcome by a he-goat. He was considering the ram, (presuming that so weak an animal should come to be so pre- eminent) and thinking what would be the issue; and behold, a he-goat came, v. 5. This was Alexander the Great, the son of Philip king of Macedonia; he came from the west, from Greece, which lay west from Persia; he fetched a great compass with his army, he came upon the face of the whole earth; he did in effect conquer the world, and then sat down and worshipped, because there was not another world to be conquered. Natus Pelissone juveni non sufficit orbis—One world was too little for the youth of Pelle. This he-goat (a creature famed for incomeliness in going, Prov. xxx. 31.) went on with incredible swiftness, so that he touched not the ground, so lightly did he move; he rather seemed to fly above the ground than to go upon the ground; or, none tethered him in the earth, he met with little or no opposition. This he-goat, or buck, had a notable horn between his eyes, like a unicorn. He had strength, and knew his own strength; he saw himself a match for all his neighbours. Alexander pushed his conquests on so fast, and with so much fury, that none of the kingdoms he attacked had courage to make a stand, or give check to the progress of his victorious arms. He made this the greatest part of the then known world. Well might he be called a notable horn, for his name still lives in history, as the name of one of the most celebrated commanders in war that ever the world knew. Alexander's victories and achievements are still the entertainment of the ingenious. This he-goat came to the ram that had two horns, v. 6. Alexander with his victorious army attacked the kingdom of Persia, an army consisting of no more than 30,000 and 5,000 horse. He ran unto him, to surprise him ere he could get intelligence of his motions, in the fury of his power; he came close to the ram. Alexander with his army came up with Darius Codomans, then emperor of Persia, being moved with choler against him, v. 7. It was with the greatest violence that Alexander pushed on his war against Darius, who, though he brought vast numbers into the field, yet, for want of conduct, was not able to match for him, so that Alexander was too hard for him whenever he engaged him; smote him, cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him; which three expressions, some think, refer to the three famous victories that Alexander obtained over Darius, at Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela, by which he was at length totally routed, having in the last battle, had 600,000 men killed, so that Alexander became absolute master of all the Persian empire; brake his two horns, the kingdoms of Media and Persia; the ram that had destroyed all before him, (v. 4.) now is himself destroyed; Darius has no power to stand before Alexander, nor has he any friends or allies to help to deliver him out of his hand. Note, Those kingdoms, which, when they had power, abused it, and, because none could withstand them, became master of the whole Persian empire; but when he was about thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, when he was strong, in his full strength, he was broken; he was not killed in war, in the bed of honour, but died of a drunken surfeit, or, as some suspect, by poison, and left no child living behind him, to enjoy that which he had endlessly laboured for, but left a lasting monument of the vanity of worldly power, and his insufficiency to make a man happy.

5. He saw this kingdom divided into four parts, and that instead of that one great horn there came up four notable ones, Alexander's four captains to whom he bequeathed his conquests; and he had so much, that, when it was divided among four, they had each of them enough for any one man. These four notable horns were toward the four winds of heaven, the same with the four heads of the leopard; (ch. vii. 6.) the kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, Asia and Greece—Syria lying to the east, Greece to the west, Asia Minor to the north, and Egypt to the south. Note, Those that heap up riches, know not who shall gather them, nor whose all those things shall be, which they have provided.

6. He saw a dove was in his original, (whence there were others between him, and the kingdom, and he was of a base, servile disposition, had nothing in him of princely qualities, and had been for some time a hostage and prisoner at Rome, whence he made his escape, and, though the youngest brother, and his elder living, got the kingdom,
He waxed exceeding great toward the south, for he seized upon Egypt, and toward the east, for he invaded Persia and Armenia. But that which is here especially taken notice of, is, the mischief that he did to the people of the Jews. They are not expressly named, for prophecies must not be too plain; but they are here so described that it would be easy for those who understood scripture-language, to know what mischief he did. The events of this before, might be awakened to prepare themselves and their children beforehand, for these suffering, trying times.

(1.) He set himself against the pleasant land, the land of Israel, so called, because it was the glory of all lands, for fruitfulness and all the delights of human life, but especially for the tokens of God's presence in it, and its being blessed with divine relations and institutions; it was mount Zion that was beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, Ps. xlvii. 2. The pleasantness of that land was, that there the Messiah was to be born, who would be both the Consolation and the Glory of his people Israel. Note, We have reason to reckon that a pleasant place, which is a holy place, in which God dwells, and where we may have opportunity of communing with him. Surely, It is good to be here.

(2.) He fought against the host of heaven, the people of God, the church, which is the kingdom of heaven, the church-militant here on earth. The saints, being born from above, and citizens of heaven, and doing the will of God, by his grace, in some measure, for they are called the host of heaven, or, they may be called a heavenly host; or the priests and Levites, who were employed in the service of the tabernacle, and there warred a good warfare, were this host of heaven. These Antichus set himself against, he waxed great to the host of heaven, in opposition to them, and in defiance of them.

(3.) He cast down some of the host, that is, of the stars (for they are called the host of heaven,) to the ground, and stumped upon them. Some of those that were most eminent both in church and state, that were burning and shining lights in their generation, he either forced to comply with his idolatries, or put them to death; he got them into his hands, and then trampled upon them, and triumphed over them; as good old Eleazar, and the seven brethren also, and Jesaiah the Rabbin, who was put to death, because they would not eat swine's flesh, 2 Mac. vi. 7. He gloried in it, that herein he insulted Heaven itself, and excelled his throne above the stars of God, Isa. xiv. 13.

(4.) He magnified himself even to the prince of the host. He set himself against the High Priest, Onias, whom he deprived of his dignity; or, rather, against God himself, who was Israel's King of old, who reigns for ever as Zion's King, who himself heads his own hosts that fight his battles. Against him Antichus magnified himself; as Pharaoh, when he said, Who is the Lord? Note, Those who persecute the people of God, persecute God himself.

(5.) He took away the daily sacrifice, the morning and evening lamb, which God appointed to be offered against God himself, who was Israel's King of old. Antichus forbade and restrained the offering of. No doubt, he took away all other sacrifices, but the daily sacrifice only is mentioned, because that was the greatest loss of all other; for in that they kept up their constant communion with God, which they preferred before that which is only occasional. God's people reckon their daily sacrifices, their morning and evening exercises of devotion, most needful of their daily business, and the most delightful of their daily comforts, and would not for all the world part with them.

(6.) He cast down the place of his sanctuary. He did not burn and demolish the temple, but he cast it down, when he profaned it, made it the temple of Jupiter Olympius, and set up his image in it. He also cast down the truth to the ground, trampled upon the book of the law, that word of truth, tore it, and burnt it, and did what he could to have destroyed it quite, that it might have been lost and forgotten for ever. These were the projects of that wicked prince, and they seem to have been carried into execution. And do you think in these he prospered? He carried the matter very far, seemed to have gained his point, and went near to have extirpated that holy religion which God's right hand had planted.

But lest he or any other should triumph, as if herein he had prevailed against God himself, and been too hard for him, the matter is here explained, and set in a true light. [1.] He could not have done this, if God had not permitted him to do it; could have had no power against Israel, unless it had been given him from above. God put this power into his hand, and gave him a host against the daily sacrifice. God's providence put that sword into his hand, by which he was enabled thus to bear down all before him. Note, We ought to eye and own the hand of God in all the events of our church and the successes of the church's enemies against the church. They are but the rod in God's hand. [2.] God would not have permitted it, if his people had not provoked him to do so. It is by reason of transgression, the transgression of Israel, to correct them for that, that Antichus is employed to give them all this trouble. Note, When the pleasant land and its pleasant places are trampled upon, all the churches and the successes of the church's enemies against the church. Who gave Jacob to the spoil? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? Isa. xlii. 24. The great transgression of the Jews after the captivity, (when they were cured of idolatry,) was, a contempt and profanation of the holy things; snuffing at the service of God, bringing the torn and the lame for sacrifice, as if the table of the Lord were a contemptible thing; (so we find, Mal. i. 7, 8, &c.) and that the priests were guilty of this; (Mal. ii. 1, 8,) and therefore God sent Antichus to take away the daily sacrifice, and cast down the place of his sanctuary. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the privileges of his house, who despise and profane them; and to make them know the worth of the things they have lost; and to make want of them, who would not know it by the enjoyment of them.

Lastly, He heard the time of this calamity limited and determined; not the time when it should come, that is not here fixed, because God would have his people always prepared for it, but how long it should last; that, when they had no more any prophets to tell them how long, (Ps. cvxv. 9, which seems to have been calculated for the church,) when the dark and doleful day, they might have this prophecy to give them a prospect of deliverance in due time.

Now concerning this, we have here,

(1.) The question asked concerning it, v. 13. Observe, [1.] By whom the question was put; I heard one saint speaking to this purpose, and then another saint seconded him: O that we knew how long! and I (or, how long it seems to have been calculated for the church,) and be beckoned to by Peter, to ask Christ a question, John xiii. 23, 24. [2.] To whom the question was put. He said unto Palmoni that shake. Some make this certain saint to be a superior angel who order
stood more than the rest, to whom therefore they came with their inquiries. Others make it to be the eternal Word, the Son of God. He is the unknown One. Palmeni seems to be compounded of Peloni. Almoni, which is used, Ruth iv. 1, for Ho, such a one, and, 2 Kings vi. 8, for such a place. Christ was yet the nameless One. Wherefore asked they, after a time, "Where is this man?" xix. 18. He is the numberer of secrets, as some translate it; for from him there is nothing hid; the wonderful numberer, so others. His name is called wonderful. Note, If we would know the mind of God, we must apply ourselves to Jesus Christ, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not hid from us, but displayed to us. So that which was asked, "How long shall the vision concerning the daily sacrifice? How long shall the prohibition of it continue? How long shall the pleasant land be made unpleasant by that severe interdict? How long shall the transgression of desolation, the image of Jupiter, that great transgression which makes all our sacred things desolate, how long shall that stand in the temple? How long shall the desolate sanctuary and the holy place and the holy persons that minister in it, be trodden under foot by the oppressor?" Note, Angels are concerned for the prosperity of the Church on earth, and desire to see an end of its desolations. The angels asked, for the satisfaction of Daniel, not doubting but he was desirous to know, how long these calamities should last. The question taken in great part, they that should not last always; the rest of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, though it may come upon their lot. Christ comforted himself in his sufferings with this, The things concerning me have an end; (Luke xxii. 37.) and so may the church in hers. But it is desirable to know how long they shall last, that we may provide accordingly. 

14. The answer given to this question, v. 14. Christ gives instruction to the holy angels, for they are our fellow-servants; but here the answer was given to Daniel, because for his sake the question was asked; He said unto me. God sometimes gives in great favours to his people, in answer to the inquiries and requests of their friends for them. Now Christ assures him, [1.] That the trouble shall end; it shall not continue 2300 days, and no longer; so many evenings and mornings, (so the word is,) so many reg, 

2. So many natural days, reckoned as in the beginning of Genesis, by the evenings and mornings; because it was the evening and the morning sacrifice that they most lamented the loss of, and thought the time passed very slowly when they wanted them. Some make the morning and the evening, in this number, to stand for two; and then 2300 evenings and as many mornings will make but 1150 days; and about so many days it was that the daily sacrifice was interrupted, and this comes nearer to the computation (ch. vii. 25.) of a time, times, and the dividing of a time. But it is less forced to understand them of so many natural days; 2300 days make six years and three months, and eleven evenings and mornings, and from the defection of the people, procured by Medius the High Priest in the 142d year of the kingdom of the Schicade, the sixth month of that year, and the sixth day of the month, (so Josephus dates it,) to the cleansing of the sanctuary, and the re-establishment of religion among them, which was in the 148th year, the ninth month, and the twenty-fifth day of the month. I Mac. iv. 32. God reckons the time of his people's affliction by days, for in all their afflictions he is afflicted; (Rev. iii. 10.) Then shall have tribulation ten days. [2.] He assures him, that they should see better days after; Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. Note, The cleansing of the sanctuary is a happy token for good to any people; when they begin to be reformed, they will soon be relieved. Though the righteous God may, for the correction of his people, suffer his sanctuary to be profaned for awhile, yet the jealous God will, for his own glory, see to the cleansing of it in its due time. Christ died to cleanse his church, and he will so cleanse it as at length to present it blameless to himself.

15. And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. 17. So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. 18. Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face to the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation; for at the time appointed the end shall be. 20. The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21. And the rough goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. 23. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. 26. And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true; wherefore shut thou up the vision: for it shall be for many days. 27. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days: afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

Here we have, 

1. Daniel's earnest desire to have this vision explained to him; (v. 15.) I sought the meaning. Note, Those that rightly know the things of God cannot but desire to know more and more of them.
and to be led further into the mystery of them; and those that would find the meaning of what they have seen or heard from God, must seek it, and seek it diligently; Seek and ye shall find. Daniel considered the thing, compared it with the former discoveries, to try if he could understand it; but especially he sought by prayer, as he had done; (ch. ii. 13.) and he did not seek in vain.

11. Orders given to the angel Gabriel to inform him concerning this vision; one in the appearance of a man, who, some think, was Christ himself, for who besides could command angels? He orders Gabriel to make Daniel understand this vision. Sometimes God is pleased to make use of the administration of angels, to protect his children, but to instruct them; to serve the kind intentions, not only of his providence, but of his grace.

111. The consternation that Daniel was in, upon the approach of his instructor; (v. 17.) When he came near, I was afraid. Though Daniel was a man of great prudence and courage, and had been conversant with the visions of the Almighty, yet the approach of an extraordinary messenger from heaven put him into this fright. He fell upon his face, not to worship the angel, but because he could no longer bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. Nay, being prostrate upon the ground, he fell into a deep sleep, (v. 18.) which came not from any neglect of the vision, or indifference towards it, but was an effect of his faintness, and the oppression of spirit he was in upon his instructor’s approach to him. The disciples in the garden slept for sorrow; and as there, so here, the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Daniel would have kept awake, and could not.

IV. The relief which the angel gave to Daniel, with great encouragement to him to expect a satisfactory discovery of the meaning of this vision. I. He talked with him comfortably about it. The king, he said, saith, Stand up, Daniel, and what is the thing which is found in the vision of mine head? He talked with him himself, and delivered his mind to him; for this was not to be communicated to others.

Thus when John, in a like case, was in a like consternation, Christ laid his right hand upon him, Rev. i. 17. It was a gentle touch that the angel here gave to Daniel, to show that he came not to hurt him, not to plead against him with his great power, or with a hand heavy upon him, but to help him, to put strength into him, (Job xxix. 7.) which God was about to do, in the prophecies, the thinking and groveling on this earth, we are very unfit to hear from God, and to converse with him. But if God design instruction for us, he will by his grace awaken us out of our slumber, raise us from things below, and set us upright. 2. He promised to inform him; “Understand, O son of man, v. 17. Thou shalt understand, if thou wilt but apply thy mind to understand.” He calls him son of man, intimating that he would consider his frame, and would deal tenderly with him, accommodating himself to his capacity as a man. Or, thus he preaches humility to him; though he be admitted to converse with angels, he must not be puffed up with it, but must remember that he is a son of man. Or, perhaps, this title puts an honour upon him; the Messiah was frequently called the Son of man, (ch. v. 21.) and Daniel is akin to him, and a figure of him, as a prophet, and one greatly beloved. He assures him that he shall be made to know what shall be in the last end of the indignation, v. 19. Let it be laid up for a comfort to those who shall live to see these calamitous times, that there shall be an end of them, the indignation shall cease, (Isa. xxv. 26.) it shall be overpast, Isa. xxvi. 20. It may intermit and return again, but the last end shall be glorious; good will follow it, and, and good will be brought out of it. He tells him, (v. 17.) “At the time of the end shall be the vision; when the last end of the indignation comes, when the course of this providence is completed, then the vision shall be made plain and intelligible by the event, as the event shall be made plain and intelligible by the vision.” Or, “At the time of the end of the Jewish church, in the latter days of it, shall this vision be accomplished, three or four hundred years hence; understand it therefore, that thou mayest leave it on record for the generations to come.” But it may ask more particularly, “When is the time of the end? And how long will it be before it arrive?” Let this answer suffice, (v. 19.) At the time appointed the end shall be; it is fixed in the divine counsel, which cannot be altered, and which must not be tried into.

V. The exposition which he gave him of the vision.

1. Concerning the two monarchies of Persia and Greece, v. 20—22. The ram signifies the succession of the kings of Media and Persia; the rough goat signifies the kings of Greece; the great horn was Alexander; the four horns that rose in his room were the four kingdoms into which his conquests were cantonned, of which before, v. 8. They are said to stand up out of the nations, but not in his power; none of them ever made the figure that Alexander did. Josephus relates, that when Alexander had taken Tyre, and subdued Palestine, and was upon his march to Jerusalem, Jaddas, who was then High Priest, (Nehemiah mentions one of this name, ch. xii. 11.) fearing his rage, had recourse to God by prayer and sacrifice for the common safety, and was by him warned in a dream, that upon Alexander’s death this city should be delivered into the hands of his satraps, and the power of the city, and that he and the rest of the priests should go forth to meet him in their habits, and all the people in white. Alexander, seeing this company at a distance, went himself alone to the High Priest, and having prostrated himself before that God whose name was engraved in the golden plate of his mitre, he first saluted him; and, being asked by one of his officers why he did it, he said, “That while he was yet in Macedonia, mining on the conquest of Asia, there appeared to him a man like unto this, and thus attired, who invited him into Asia, and assured him of success in the conquest of it. The priests led him to the temple, where he offered sacrifice to the God of Israel as they had directed him; and there they showed him this book (Daniel vii.) which said, that in that hour a Grecian should come, and destroy the Persians, which animated him very much in the expedition he was now meditating against Darius. Herod, he took the Jews and their religion under his protection, promised to be kind to these of their religion in Babylon and Media, whither he was now marching; and, in honour of him, all the priests that had sons born that year, called them Alexander. Joseph. 16. 11.

2. Concerning Antiochus, and his oppression of the Jews. This is said to be in the latter time of the kingdom of the Greeks, when the transgressors are come to the full; (v. 23.) when the degenerate Jews have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are ripe for this destruction, this sentence, says this prophet, is in the midst of the city, and shall stand up this king, to be flagellum Dei—the rod in God’s hand for the chastising of the Jews. Now observe here,

(1.) His character: He shall be a king of fierce countenance, insolent and furious, neither fearing God nor regarding man; understanding dark sentences, and knowing not what is done under heaven; he was master of all the arts of dissimulation and deceit, and knew the depths of Satan as well as any man. He was wise to do evil.

(2.) His success: He shall make dreadful havoc of the nations about him; His power shall be mighty, bear down all before it, but not by his own power, (v. 24.) but partly by the assistance of his allies.
Eumenes and Attalus, partly by the baseness and treachery of many of the Jews, even of the priests that came into his interests, and especially by the divine permission; it was not by his own power, but by a power given him from above, that he destroyed wonderfully, and thought he made himself a great man by being a great destroyer. He destroys wonderfully indeed, for he destroys, and the princes of Egypt cannot stand before him with all their forces, but he practises against them and prospers. Note, The mighty ones of the earth commonly meet with those at length that are too hard for them, that are more mighty than they.

Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, but let him study to be a sound mind in a sound body; and he can be sure that there were not more mighty than he. Hence he, whom the holy people, or the people of the holy ones, and their sacred character does neither deter him from destroying them, nor defend them from being destroyed. All things come alike to all, and there is one event to the mighty and to the holy in this world.

(3.) The methods by which he will gain this success, not by true courage, wisdom, or justice, but by false policy and treacherous invention, and serpentine subtility; He shall cause craft to prosper; so cunningly shall he carry on his projects, that he shall gain his point by the art of wheedling. By peace he shall destroy many, as others do by war; under the pretence of treaties, leagues, and alliances with them, he shall encroach on their rights, and trick them into a subjection to him. Thus sometimes what a nation truly brave has gained a righteous war, a nation truly base has regained in a treacherous peace, and craft has been caused to prosper.

(4.) The mischief that he shall do to religion; He shall magnify himself in his heart, and think himself fit to prescribe and give law to every body, so that he shall stand up against the Prince of princes, against God himself; he will profane his temple and alter his worship, and persecute his worshippers. See what a height of impudence some men's impiety brings them to; they openly bid defiance to God himself, though he is the King of kings.

(5.) The ruin that he shall bring him to at last; He shall be broken without hand, without the hand of man; he shall not be slain in war, nor shall he be assassinated, as tyrants commonly are, but stricken through with the stroke of the living God, and die by an immediate stroke of his vengeance. He, hearing that the Jews had cast the image of Jupiter Olympius out of the temple, where he had placed it, was so enraged at the Jews, that he vowed he would make Jerusalem a common burying-place, and determined to march thither immediately: but no sooner had he spoken these proud words, than he was struck with an incurable plague in his bowels, worms bred so fast in his body, that whole flakes of flesh sometimes dropped from him, his torments were violent, and the stench of his disease such, that none could endure to come near him. He continued in this misery very long; at first, he persisted in his menaces against the Jews, but, at length, despising of his recovery, he called his friends together, and acknowledged all those miseries to have fallen on him for those impieties he had done to the Jews and his profaning the temple at Jerusalem; then he wrote courteous letters to the Jews, and vowed that if he recovered, he would let them have the free exercise of their religion. But, finding his disease grow upon him, when he could no longer endure his own smell, he said, It is meet to submit to God, and for man which is mortal not to confound himself in competition with God, and did miserably in a strange land, on the mountains of Pacata near Babylon: so Usher's Annals, at M. 3840, about 160 years before the birth of Christ.

3. As to the time fixed for the continuance of the cessation of the daily sacrifice, it is not explained here, but only confirmed; (v. 26.) That vision of the evening and morning is true, in the proper sense of the words, and needs no explanation. How unlikely is it that God should suffer his own sanctuary to be thus profaned, yet it is true, it is too true, so it shall be.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of this vision, and here,

1. The charge given to Daniel to keep it private for the present; Shut thou up the vision; let it not be publicly known among the Chaldeans, lest the Persians, who were now shortly to possess the kingdom, should be encircled against the Jews because the downfall of their kingdom was foretold by it, which would be unseasonable now that the edict for their release was expected from the king of Persia. Shut it up, for it shall be for many days; it was about 300 years from the time of this vision to the time of the accomplishment of it, therefore he must shut it up for the present, even from the time he received it, till he should be in the land of the Persians, and let it be kept safe for the generations to come, that should live about the time of the accomplishment of it, for to them it would be both most intelligible and most serviceable. Note, What we know of the things of God should be carefully laid up, that hereafter, when there is occasion, it may be faithfully laid out; and what we have not now any use for, yet we may have another time; divine things should be so be laid up among our treasures, that we may find them again after many days.

2. The care he took to keep it private, having received such a charge; (v. 27.) He feigned, and was sick, with the multitude of his thoughts within him occasioned by this vision, which oppressed and overwhelmed him the more, because he was forbidden to publish what he had seen, so that his belly was as neste which has no vent, he was ready to burst like new bottles, Job xxxii. 19. However, he kept it to himself, stifled and smothered the concern he was in; so that these he conversed with could not perceive it, but he did the king's business according to the duty of his place, whatever it was. Note, As long as we live in this world we must have some thing to do in it; and even those whom God has most dignified with his favours must not think themselves too big to make use of small services to their King. Note, All must the more zealous for the cause of communion with God take us of from the duties of our particular callings, but still we must in them abide with God. Those especially that are intrusted with public business, must see to it that they conscientiously discharge their trust.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter we have, 1. Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the Jews who were in captivity; in which, he confesses sin, and acknowledges the justice of God in their captivity; 2. His repair to Ecbatana, where God had yet in store for them, v. i. 18. An immediate answer sent him by an angel to his prayer; in which, 1. He is assured of the discharge of the Jews out of their captivity, v. 20. 24. And, 2. He is informed concerning the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of which that was a type, what should be the nature of it, and when it should be accomplished, v. 24. 27. And it is the clearest, brightest prophecy of the Messiah, in all the Old Testament.

1. In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2. In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord
came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.

We left Daniel, in the close of the foregoing chapter, employed in the king's business; but here we have him employed in better business than any the king had for him, speaking to God, and hearing from him, not for himself only, but for the church, whose mouth he was to God, and for whose use the oracles of God were committed to him, relating to the days of the Medes and Persians. Observe, 1. When it was that Daniel had this communion with God; (v. 1) in the first year of Darius the Mede, who was newly made king of the Chaldeans, Babylon being conquered by him and his nephew, or grandson, Cyrus. In this year, the seventy years of the Jews' captivity ended, but the decree for their release was not yet issued out; so that this address of Daniel's to God seems to have been really in vain, but it was but a cast to the lions' den. And one powerful inducement, perhaps, it was to him then to keep so close to the duty of prayer, though it cost him his life, that he had so lately experienced the benefit and comfort of it.

2. What occasioned his address to God by prayer; (v. 2.) He understood by books, that seventy years was the time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Jerusalem. The book by which he understood this was, the book of the prophecies of Jeremiah, in which he found it expressly foretold, (Jer. xxix. 10.) After seventy years be accomplished in Babylon, and therefore they must be reckoned from the first captivity, in the third year of Jehoiakim, which Daniel had reason to remember by a good token, for it was in that captivity that he was carried away himself, ch. i. 1.) I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you. It was likewise said, (Jer. xxv. 11.) This whole land shall be seventy years a desolation, (Chorobath,) the same word that Daniel here uses for the desolations of Jerusalem, which shows that he had that prophecy before him when he wrote this. Though Daniel was himself a great prophet, and one that was well acquainted with the visions of God, yet he was a diligent student in the scripture, and thought it no disparagement to him to consult Jeremiah's prophecies. He was a great politician, and prime minister of state to one of the greatest monarchs upon earth, and yet could find both heart and time to converse with the word of God. The greatest and best men in the world must not think themselves above their Bibles.

3. How serious and solemn his address to God was, when he understood that the seventy years were just upon expiring; (for it appears, by Ezekiel's dating of his prophecies, that they exactly computed the years of their captivity;) then he set his face to seek God by prayer. Note, God's promises are intended, not to supersede, but to excite and encourage, our prayers; and when we see the day of the performance of them approaching, we should the more earnestly plead them with God, and put them in suit. So Daniel did here; he prayed three times a day, and, no doubt, in every prayer made mention of the desolations of Jerusalem; yet he did not think that enough, but even in the midst of his business set time apart for an extraordinary application to Jerusalem's behalf. God had said to Ezekiel, that though Daniel, among others, stood before him, his intercession should not prevail to prevent the judgment; (Ezek. xiv. 14.) yet he hopes, now that the warfare is accomplished, (Isa. xl. 2,) his prayer may be heard for the removing of the judgment. When the day of deliverance dawns, it is time for God's praying people to bestir themselves; something extraordinary is then expected and required from them, beside their daily sacrifice. Now Daniel sought by prayer and supplications, for fear lest the sins of the people should provoke him to defer their deliverance longer than was intended; or rather, that the people might be prepared by the grace of God for the deliverance, now that the providence of God was about to work it out for them. Now observe, (1.) The intenseness of his mind in this prayer; I set my face unto the Lord God to seek him; which denotes the fixedness of his thoughts, the firmness of his faith, and the fervency of his devout affections, in the duty. We must, in prayer, set God before us, and set ourselves as in his presence; to him we must direct our prayer, and must look up. Probably, in token of his setting his face toward God, he did, as usual, set his face toward Jerusalem, to affect his own heart the more with the desolations of it. (2.) The mortification of his body in this prayer; in token of his deep humiliation before God for his own sins, and the sins of his people, he cast sackcloth, and put away his dawns, in ashes, the more to affect himself with the desolations of Jerusalem, which he was praying for the repair of, and to make himself sensible that he was now about an extraordinary work.

4. And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments: 6. Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him: 10. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. 12.
And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. 14. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all this works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast giveth thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. 17. Now, therefore, O Lord our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 18. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thine name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. 19. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken, and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

We have here Daniel's prayer to God as his God, and the confession which he joined with that prayer; I prayed, and made my confession. Note, In every prayer we must make confession, not only of the sins we have been guilty of, (which we commonly call confession,) but of our faith in God, and dependence upon him, our sorrow for sin, and our resolutions against it. It must be our confession, the language of our own convictions, and that which we ourselves do heartily subscribe to.

Let us go over the several parts of this prayer, which we have reason to think that he offered up much larger than is here recorded; and that these are only parts of it. 1. Here is his humble, serious, reverent address to God; in which he gives glory to God, 1. As a God to be feared, and whom it is our duty always to stand in awe of; "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, that art able to deal with the greatest and most terrible of the church's enemies." 2. As a God to be trusted, and whom it is our duty to depend upon, and put a confidence in; keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and, as a proof of their love to him, keep his commandments. If we do our part of the bargain, he will not fail to do his. He will be to his people as good as his word, for he keeps covenant with them, and not one jot of his promise shall fall to the ground; nay, he will be better than his word, for he keeps mercy to them, something more than was in the covenant. It was proper for Daniel to have his eye upon God's mercy, now that he was to lay before him the miseries of his people; and upon God's covenant now, he was to set his performance of it forth. Note, We should, in prayer, seek both at God's greatness and his goodness, his majesty and mercy in conjunction.

II. Here is a penitent confession of sin, the procuring cause of all the calamities which his people had for so many years been growing under, v. 5, 6. When we seek to God for national mercies, we ought to humble ourselves before him for national sins; these are the sins Daniel here laments. We may here observe the variety of words he makes use of to set forth the greatness of their provocations; (for it becomes penitents to lay load upon themselves;) We have sinned in many particular instances, nay, we have committed iniquity, we have driven a trade of sin, we have done wickedly with a hard heart and a stiff neck, and herein we have rebelled against his face; we have taken up arms against the King of kings, his crown and dignity. Two things aggravated their sins:

1. That they had violated the express laws God had given them by Moses; "We have departed from thy precepts and from thy judgments, and have not conformed to them. And (v. 10) we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." That which speaks most to the measure of it, is that it is the transgression of the law, does sufficiently speak the malignity of it: if sin be made to appear sin, it cannot be made to appear worse; its sinfulness is its greatest hatefulness, Rom. vii. 13. God has set his laws before us plainly and fully, as the copy we should write after, yet we have not walked in them, but turned aside, or turned back.

2. That they had slighted the fair warnings God had given them by the prophets, which in every age he had sent to them, rising up betimes, and sending them; (v. 6) "We have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets, who have put us in mind of thy laws, and of the sanctions of them; though they spake in thy name, we have not regarded them; though they delivered their message faithfully, with a show of a presumption, that their degrees of men, to our kings and princes, whom they had the courage and confidence to speak to, to our fathers, and to all the people of the land, whom they had the condescension and compassion to speak to, yet we have not hearkened to them, nor heard them, or not heeded them, or not complied with them." Mocking God's messengers, and despising his words, was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. This confession of sin is repeated here, and much insisted on; penitents should again and again accuse and reproach themselves till they find their hearts thoroughly broken. All Israel have transgressed thy law, v. 11. It is Israel, God's professing people, who have known better, and from whom better is expected; Israel, God's peculiar people, whom he made for himself a peculiar people, a kingdom of priests, his own possession. But not here and there one, but it is all Israel, the generality of them, the body of the people, that has transgressed by departing and getting out of the way, that they might not hear, and so might not obey, thy voice. This disobedience is that which all true penitents do most sensibly charge upon them selves; (v. 14.) We obeyed not his voice, and (v 15,) we have sinned, we have done wickedly. Those that would find mercy, must thus confess their sins.

III. Here is a self-abasing acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in all the judgments that were brought upon them: and it is evermore the
way of true penitents thus to justify God, that he may be clear when he judges, and the sinner may bear all the blame.

1. He acknowledges that it was sin that plunged them in all these troubles. Israel is dispersed through all the countries afor and so weakened, impoverished, and exposed. God's hand has driven them hither and thither, some near, where they are known, and others far off, where they are not known, and therefore the more abandoned, and it is because of their trespass that they have trespassed; (v. 7.) they mingled themselves with the nations, that they might be debauched by them, and now God mingleth them with the nations, that they might be stript by them.

2. He offers righteousness to make atonement for it; that he had borne them no wrong in all he had brought upon them, but had dealt with them as they deserved; (v. 7.) "O Lord, righteousness belongs to thee, we have no fault to find with thy providence, no exceptions to make against thy judgments; for, (v. 14.) the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth, even in the sore calamities we are now under, for we obeyed not the words of his mouth, and therefore justly feel the weight of his hand."

This seems to be borrowed from Lam. i. 18.

3. He takes notice of the fulfilling of the scripture in what was brought upon them; In very faithfulness he afflicted them; for it was according to the word which he had spoken. The curse is poured upon us, and the oath, the curse that was ratified by an oath. Therefore he has confirmed his words which he spake against us, because we broke his laws, and against our judges that judged us, because they did not according to the duty of their place punish the breach of God's laws; he told them many a time, that if they did not execute justice, as tyrants to evil-workers, he must and would take the work into his own hands; and now he has confirmed what he has confirmed us as a great evileavour when the princes and judges themselves deeply shared.

Note. It contributes very much to our profiting by the judgments of God's hand, to observe how exactly they agree with the judgments of his mouth.

4. He aggravates the calamities they were in, lest they should seem, having been long used to them, to make light of them, and so to lose the benefit of the chastening of the Lord by desisting it; "It is not some of the common troubles of life that we are complaining of, but that which has in it some special marks of divine displeasure; for under the whole heaven has not been done, as has been done upon Jerusalem," v. 12. It is Jeremiah's lamentation, in the name of the church, Was ever sorrow like unto our sorrow? This must supplant another like question, Was ever sin like unto my sin?

5. He puts shame upon the whole nation, from the highest to the lowest; and if they will say Amen to his prayer, as it was fit they should if they would come in for a share in the benefit of it, they must all put their hand upon their mouth, and their mouth in the dust; "Let us be confused of face as at this day; (v. 7.) we lie under the shame of the punishment at this day, and we ought to accommodate ourselves to it, and to accept of the punishment of our iniquity, for shame is our due." If Israel had retained their character, and had continued a holy people, they had been high above all nations in praise, and name, and honour; (Dunt. xxvi. 19.) but now that they have sinned and done wickedly, confusion and disgrace belong to them, to the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the inhabitants both of the country and of the city, for they have been all alike guilty before God; it belongs to all Israel, both to the two tribes, that are near, by the rivers of Babylon, and to the ten tribes, that are afar off, in the land of Israel; this belongs not to the common people of our land, but to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, (v. 8.) who should have set a better example, and have used their authority and influence for the checking of the threatening torrent of vice and profligacy.

6. He imputes the continuance of the judgment to the iniquity under it; (v. 13, 14.) "All this evil is of thy servants' sins, of the sins of all Israel, which made not our prayer before the Lord our God, not in a right manner, as we should have made it, with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart; we have been smitten, but have not returned to him that smote us;" (We have not entreated the face of the Lord our God, so the word is;) "we have taken no care to make our peace with God, and reconcile ourselves to him, as it was true in the example of praying continually, but he was sorry to see how few there were that followed his example; in their affliction, it was expected, they would seek God early, but they sought him not, that they might turn from their iniquities, and understand his truth. The errand upon which afflictions are sent, is, to bring men to turn from their iniquities, and to understand God's truth; is from God, and not us; Job xxxvi. 10. God by them opens men's ears to discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity. And if men were brought rightly to understand God's truth, and to submit to the power and authority of it, they would turn from the error of their ways. Now the first step toward this is, to make our prayer before the Lord our God, that the affliction may be sanctified before it is removed, and that the grace of God may go along with the providence of God, to make it answer the end. Those who in their affliction make not their prayer to God, who cry not when he binds them, are not likely to turn from iniquity, or to understand his truth; Therefore because we have not improved the affliction, and God has watched upon the evil, as the judge takes care the servant does not, according to the sentence; because we have not been melted, he has kept us still in the furnace, and watched over it, to make the heat yet more intense; for when God judges he will overcome, and will be justified in all his proceedings.

IV. Here is a believing appeal to the mercy of God, and to the ancient tokens of favour to Israel, and the concern of his own glory.

1. It is some comfort to them, (and not a little,) that God has been always ready to pardon sin; (v. 9.) To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses; this refers to that proclamation of his name, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) The Lord God, gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity. Note. It is very encouraging to poor sinners, to recollect that merits belong to God, as it is, and which are acknowledged and humbling to them, to recollect that righteousness belongs to him; and they who give him the glory of his righteousness, may take to themselves the comfort of his mercies, Ps. lxii. 12. There are abundant mercies in God, and not only forgiveness but forgivenesses; he is a God of pardons; (Neh. ix. 17.) many. He multiplied his favours on his people, and blessed them; (Isa. iv. 1.) They have rebelled against him in hisbservable kindness; with him there is mercy, pardoning mercy, even for the rebellions.

2. It is likewise a support to them, to think that God had formerly glorified himself by delivering them out of Egypt; so far he looks back for the en
encouragement of his faith; (v. 15.) 4 Thou hast formerly brought thy people out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and wilt thou not now with the same mighty hand bring them out of Babylon? Were they then formed into a people; and shall they not now be reformed and new-formed? Are they now sinful and unworthy; and were they not so then? Are their oppressors now mighty and haughty; and were they not so then? And was it not said that their deliverance out of Babylon shall outshine that of Egypt? Jer. xvi. 14, 15. The force of this plea lies in that, "Thou hast gotten the renown, hast made ther a name," (so the word is,) "as at this day, even to this day, by bringing us out of Egypt; and wilt thou lose the credit of that by letting us perish in Babylon? Didst thou get a renown but that deliverance which we have so often commemorated; wilt thou not now renew by this which we have so often prayered for, and so long waited for?"

V. Here is a pathetic complaint of the reproach that God's people lay under, and the ruins that God's sanctuary lay in, both which rebounded very much to the dishonour of God, and the diminution of that name and renown which God had gained by his holy works of Egypt.

1. God's holy people were despised; by their sins and the iniquities of their fathers they had profaned their crown, and made themselves despicable, and then though they are, in name and profession, God's people, and, upon that account, truly great and honourable, yet they are become a reproach to all that are round about them. Their neighbours laugh at them as vultures, and triumph in their desolation.

Note, Sin is a reproach to any people, but especially to God's people, that have more eyes upon them, and have more honour to lose, than other people.

2. God's holy place was desolate. Jerusalem, the holy city, was a reproach; (v. 16.) when it lay in ruins, it was an astonishment and a hissing to all that passed by. The sanctuary, the holy house, was desolate; (v. 17.) the altars demolished, and all the buildings laid in ashes.

Note, The desolations of the sanctuary are the grief of all the saints, who reckon all their comforts in this world buried in the ruins of the sanctuary.

VI. Here is an importunate request to God for the restoring of the poor captive Jews to their former enjoyments again. His petition is very pressing, for God gives us leave in prayer to wrestle with him: "O Lord, I beseech thee, v. 16. If ever thou wilt do any thing for me, do this; it is my heart's desire and prayer, now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplication, v. 17." and grant an answer of peace to it." Now what are his petitions? What are his requests?

1. That God would turn away his wrath from them; that is it which all the saints dread and deprecate more than any thing; O let thine anger be turned away from thy Jerusalem, thy holy mountain, v. 16. He does not pray for the turning again of their captivity; (let the Lord do with them as seems good in his eyes;) but they pray first for the turning away of God's wrath. Take away the cause and the effect will cease.

2. That God would lift up the light of his countenance upon them; (v. 17.) Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, return in mercy to us, and show that thou art reconciled to us, and then all shall be well. Note, The shining of God's face upon the desolations of the sanctuary, is all in all towards the repair of it: and upon that foundation all things are built. If therefore its friends would begin their work at the right end, they must first be earnest with God in prayer for his favour, and recommend his desolate sanctuary to his smiles; Cause thy face to shine, and then we shall be saved, Ps. lxxx. 3.

3. That he would forgive their sins, and then hasten their deliverance; (v. 12.) O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. That the mercy prayed for may be granted in mercy, let the sin that threatens to come between us and it, be removed; "O Lord, hearken and do. Not hearken and speak only, but hearken and do; do that for which I do beseech thee, and that shall be the accomplishment of the appointed day approaching, he could in faith pray that God would make haste to them, and not defer. David often prays, Make haste, O God, to help me.

VII. Here are several pleas and arguments to enforce the petitions. God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him; which is nothing else, but to show him what he will do, but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith.

1. They disdained a dependence upon any righteousness of their own; they pretend not to merit any thing at God's hand but wrath and the curse; (v. 18.) "We do not present our supplications before thee, with hope to speed for our righteousnesses, as if we could have any thing worthy of God's approbation from us, or done by us, or could demand any thing as a debt; we cannot insist upon our own justification, no, though we were more righteous than we are; nay, though we knew nothing amiss of ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified, nor would we answer, but we would make supplication to our Judge. Moses had told Israel long before, that, whatever God did for them, it was not for their righteousnesses, Deut. ix. 4, 5. And Ezekiel had of late told them that their return out of Babylon would be not for their sakes, Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32. Note, Whenever we come to God for mercy, we must lay aside all conceit of, and confidence in, our own righteousness.

2. They take their encouragement in prayer from God only; as knowing that his reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, and therefore from him we must borrow all our pleas for mercy, and so give honour to him when we are suing for grace and mercy from him.

(1.) "Do it for thine own sake, (v. 19.) for the accomplishment of thine own counsel, the performance of thine own promise, and the manifestation of thine own glory." Note, God will do his own work, not only in his own way and time, but for his own sake, and so we must take it.

(2.) "Do it for the Lord's sake, for the Lord Christ's sake; for the sake of the Messiah promised, who is the Lord; so the most and best of our Christian interpreters understand it. For the sake of Adonai, sa David called the Messiah, (Ps. cx. 1.) and mercy is prayed for, for the church, for the sake of the Son of man, (Ps. lxxx. 17.) and for thy Word's sake, 2 Sam. vii. 21. Note, Christ is the Lord, he is Lord of all. It is for his sake that God causes his face to shine upon sinners, when they repent, and turn to him; because of the satisfaction he has made. In all our prayers, that therefore must be our plea, we must make mention of his righteousness, even of his only, Ps. lxxi. 16. Look upon the face of the Avointed. He has himself directed us to ask in that way.

(3.) "Do it according to all thy righteousness;" (v. 16.) plead for us against our persecutors and oppressors, according to thy righteousness. Though we are ourselves unrighteous before God, yet with reference to them we have a righteous cause, which we leave it with the righteous God to appear in the defence of. Or, rather, be not the righteousness of God, (g) here is meant his faithfulness to his promise which God had, according to his righteousness, executed the threatening; (v. 11.) *Now. Lord, wilt thou
not do according to all thy righteousness? Wilt thou not be as true to thy promise as thou hast been to thy threatenings, and accomplish them also?"

(4.) "Do it for thy great mercies, (v. 18.) to make it to appear that thou art a merciful God." The good things we ask of God we call mercies, because we expect them purely from God's mercy. And because misery is the proper object of mercy, the prophet here spreads the deplorable condition of the church before God, as it were to move his compassion; "Often thine eyes, and behold our desolations, especially the desolations of the sanctuary. O look with pity upon a pitiable case." Note, The desolations of the church must in prayer be laid before God, and laid with a heart that would move him to pity.

(5.) "Do it for the sake of the relation we stand in to thee. The sanctuary that is desolate, is thy sanctuary, (v. 17.) dedicated to thine honour, employed in thy service, and the place of thy residence; Jerusalem is thy city and thy holy mountain, (v. 16.) it is the city which is called by thy name," v. 18. (It was the city which God had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there.) "The people that are become a reproach, are thy people, and thy name suffers in the reproach cast upon them;" (v. 16.) they are called by thy name, v. 19. Lord, thou hast a property in them, and therefore art interested in their interests; wilt thou not provide for thine own, for these of thine own house? They are thine, save them," Ps. cxix. 94.

20. And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21. Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. 25. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.

We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer, and it is a very memorable one, as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel-grace, that is extant in all the Old Testament. If John Baptist was the morning star, this was the day-break to the Sun of righteousness; the day-spring from on high.

Here is,

1. The time when this answer was given.
   1. It was while Daniel was at prayer. This he observed, and laid a strong emphasis upon; While I was speaking, (v. 20.) yea, while I was speaking in prayer, (v. 21.) before he rose from his knees, and while there was yet night, as he was about to say. He mentions the two heads he chiefly insisted upon in prayer, and which perhaps he designed yet further to enlarge upon. (1.) He was confessing sin, and lamenting that; both my sin and the sin of my people Israel. Daniel was a very great and good man, and yet he finds sin of his own to confess before God, and is ready to confess it. For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not; nor that sins, and repenteth not; St. John puts himself into the number of those who deceive themselves, if they say that they have no sin, and who therefore confess their sins. 1 John i. 8. Good men find it an ease to their consciences, to pour out their complaints before the Lord against themselves; and that is confessing sin. He also confessed the sin of his people, and bewailed that. Those who are heartily concerned for the glory of God, the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, will mourn for the sins of others as well as for their own. (2.) He was making supplication before the Lord his God, and presenting it to him as an intercessor for Israel; and in this prayer his concern was for the holy mountain; i.e., the temple or sanctuary, in the midst of which the commandment lay near his heart than those of the city and the land; and the repair of that, and the setting up of the public worship of the God of Israel again, were what he had in view, in the delivery he was preparing for, more than the re-establishment of their civil interests. Now while Daniel was thus employed, [1.] He had a grant made of the mercy he prayed for. Note, God is very ready to hear prayer, and to give an answer of peace. Now was fulfilled what God had spoken, (Isa. lxv. 24.) While they are yet speaking, I will hear. Daniel grew very fervent in prayer, and his affections were very strong, v. 18, 19. And while he was speaking with such fervour and ardency, the angel came to him with a gracious answer. God is most pleased with lively devotions. We cannot now expect that God should send us answers to our prayer by angel's, but if we pray with fervency for that which God has promised, we may by faith take the promise as an immediate answer to the prayer; for he is faithful that has promised. [2.] He had a discovery made him of a far greater and more glorious redemption, which God would work out for his church in the latter day. Note. Those that would be brought acquainted with Christ and his grace, must be much in prayer.

2. It was about the time of the evening oblation, v. 21. The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation offered upon it, but, it should seem, the
pious Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour were ready to weep at the remembrance of it, and desired and hoped that their prayer should be set forth before God as incense, and the life of those holy vessels, and their hearts with their hands, should be acceptable in his sight as the evening sacrifice, Ps. xlvi. 2. The evening oblation was a type of the great sacrifice which Christ was to offer in the evening of the world, and it was in the virtue of that sacrifice, that Daniel's prayer was accepted, when he prayed for the Lord's sake; and for the sake of that, this glorious discovery of redemptive grace was made to him; "The Lamb opened the seals in the virtue of his own blood.

II. The messenger by whom this answer was sent. It was not given him in a dream, or by a voice from heaven, but, for the greater certainty and solemnity of it, an angel was sent on purpose, appearing in a human shape, to give this answer to Daniel. Observe,

1. Who this angel, or messenger, was; it was the man Gabriel. If Michael the archangel be, as many suppose, no other than Jesus Christ, this Gabriel is the only created angel that is named in scripture. Gabriel signifies, the mighty one of God; for the angels are great in power and might, 2 Pet. ii. 11. It was he whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning. Daniel heard him called by his name, and thence learned it; (Dan. vii. 16.) and then he appeared to him so carefully, that now he knew him again, knew him to be the same that he had seen at the beginning, and, being somewhat better acquainted with him, was not so terrified at the sight of him as he had been at first. When this angel said to Zacharias, I am Gabriel, (Luke i. 19.) he intended thereby to put him in mind of this notice which he had given to Daniel of the Messiah's coming, when it was at a distance, for the confirming of his faith in the notice he was then about to give of it as at the door.

2. The instructions which this messenger received from the Father of lights to whom Daniel prayed; (v. 23.) At the beginning of thy supplications, the word, the commandment, came forth from God. Not the visible appearance of the angel, but the counsel of God, which they were desirous to look into; and orders given to Gabriel to go immediately, and bring the notice of it to Daniel. By this it appears that it was not any thing which Daniel said that moved God, for the answer was given as he began to pray; but God was well pleased with his serious, solemn address to the duty, and, in token of that, sent him this gracious message. Or, perhaps it was at the beginning of Daniel's supplications, that Cyrus's word, or commandment, went forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, that going forth spoken of, v. 25. The thing is done this very day; the proclamation of liberty to the Jews is signed this morning, just then when thou wast praying for it; and now, at the close of this fast-day, Daniel has notice of it; as, at the close of the commandment, the public-trumpet sounded to proclaim liberty.

3. The haste he made to deliver his message; He was caused to fly swiftest, v. 21. Angels are winged messengers, quick in their motions, and delay not to execute the orders they receive; they run and return like a flash of lightning, Ezek. i. 14. But, it should seem, sometimes they are more expeditious than was usual, and make a quicker despatch; as here, the angel was caused to fly swiftest, he was ordered, and he was enabled, to fly swiftly; angels do their work in obedience to divine command, and in dependence upon divine strength. Though they excel in wisdom, they fly swifter or slower as God directs; and though they excel in power, they fly but as God causes them to fly. Angels themselves are to us what he makes them to be; they are his ministers, and do his pleasure. Ps. ciii. 21.

4. The prefaces, or introductions, to his message.

(1.) He touched him, (v. 21.) as before, (ch. vii. 18.) which was not usual in his manner, but to give him a hint to break off his prayer, and to attend to that which he has to say in answer to it. Note, In order to the keeping up of our communion with God, we must not only be forward to speak to God, but as forward to hear what he has to say to us; when we have prayed, we must look up, must look back to our prayers, must set ourselves upon our watch-towers, to hear what God has to say.

(2.) He talked familiarly with him, as one friend talks with another, his terror might not make him afraid. He informed him on what errand he came, that he was sent from heaven on purpose with a kind message to him; I am come to show thee, (v. 23.) to tell thee that which thou didst not know before. He had showed him the troubles of the church under Antiochus, and the period of those troubles, (ch. viii. 19.) but now he has greater things to show him; for he that is faithful in a little, shall be intrusted with more; Nay, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding, (v. 22.) not only to show thee these things, but to make thee understand them.

(3.) He assures him that he was a favourite of God, such as he had not had this intelligence sent him, and he must take it for a favour; I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved. Thou art a man of great desires; acceptable to God, and whom he has a favour for. Note, Though God loves all his children, yet there are some that are more than the rest greatly beloved. Christ had one disciple that lay in his bosom; and that beloved disciple was he that was intrusted with the prophetic visions of the New Testament, as Daniel was with those of the Old. For what greater token can there be of God's favour to any man than for the secrets of the Lord to be with him? Abraham is the friend of God; and therefore, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? Gen. xlvii. 17. Note, Those may reckon themselves greatly beloved of God, to whom, in whom, he reveals his Son. The most obnoxious to God, or those most enemies to him, which have given him occasion to hate them, and to show his displeasure to, and severity towards them, God most lovingly and most freely gives to the Virgin Mary, was much the same with this which he here gives to Daniel, as if he designed to put her in mind of it; Thou art highly favoured, as Daniel, greatly beloved.

(4.) He demands his serious attention to the discovery he was now about to make him: Therefor understand the matter, and consider the vision, v. 23. This intimates that it was a thing well worthy of his regard, above any of the visions he had been before favoured with. Note, Those who would understand the things of God, must consider them, must apply their minds to them, ponder upon them, and compare spiritual things with spiritual. The reason why we are so much in the dark concerning the revealed will of God, and mistake concerning it, is want of consideration. This vision both requires and deserves consideration.

III. The message itself; it was delivered with great solemnity, received, no doubt, with great attention, and recorded with great exactness; but in it, as is usual in prophecies, there are things dark, and hard to be understood. Daniel, who understood by the book of the prophet Jeremiah the expiration of the seventy years of the captivity, is now informed, besides, he had not made known to the church another more glorious release, which that was but a shadow of, at the end of another seventy, or years, but weeks of years. He prayed over that prophecy, and received this in answer to that prayer. He had prayed for his people, and the holy city, that they
might be released, that it might be rebuilt; but God answers him above what he was able to ask or think. God not only grants, but outdoes, the desires of them that fear him, Ps. xxi. 4.

1. The times here determined are somewhat hard to be understood. In general, it is seventy weeks, seventy times seven years, which makes just 490 years; the great affairs that are yet to come concerning the people of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, will lie within the compass of these years. These years are thus described by weeks, (1.) In conformity to the prophetic style, which is, for the most part, abstruse, and out of the common road of speaking, that the things foretold might not be too obvious. (2.) To put an honour upon the division of time into weeks, which is made purely by the sabbath-day, and to signify that that should be perpetual. (3.) With reference to the seventy years of the captivity; as they had been so long kept out of the possession of their own land, so, being now restored to it, they should seven times as long be kept in the possession of it. So much more does God delight in showing mercy than in punishing. The land had enjoyed its sabbaths, in a melancholy sense, seventy years, Lev. xxvi. 34. But now the people of the Lord shall, in a comfortable sense, enjoy their sabbaths seven times seventy years, and in them seventy sabbatical years, which make ten jubilees. Such proportions are there in the dispensations of Providence, as show forth the wisdom of him who has determined the times before appointed.

The difficulties that arise about these seventy weeks, are,

[1.] Concerning the time when they commence, and whence they are to be reckoned. They are here determined by two commandments to restore and build Jerusalem, v. 25. I should most incline to understand this of the edict of Cyrus, mentioned, Ezra i. 1. for by it the people were restored; and though express mention be not made there of the building of Jerusalem, yet that is supposed in the building of the temple, and was foretold to be done by Cyrus; (Isa. xlv. 28.) He shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built. That was, both in prophecy and in history, the most famous decree for the building of Jerusalem; nay, it should seem, this going forth of the commandment, (which may as well be meant of God's command concerning it as of Cyrus's,) is the same with that going forth of the commandment mentioned, v. 23. which was at the beginning of Daniel's supplication, and it looks very greatful, that the seventy weeks should begin immediately upon the expiration of the seventy years. And there is nothing to be objected against this, but that by this reckoning the Persian monarchy, from the taking of Babylon by Cyrus to Alexander's conquest of Darius, lasted about 150 years; whereas by the particular account given of the reigns of the Persian emperors, it was computed by the ancients, that the time was divided by Aratus, Xenophon, and others reckon. Those who fix it to that first edict, set aside these computations of the heathen historians as uncertain and not to be relied upon. But others, willing to reconcile them, begin the 490 years, not at the edict of Cyrus, (Ezra i. 1.) but at the second edict for the building of Jerusalem, issued out by Darius Nabor, above 30 years after mentioned, Ezra vi. Others fix it on the seventh year of Artaxerxes Mecenas, who sent Ezra with a commission, Ezra vii. 8—12. The learned Mr. Poole, in his Latin Synopsis, has a vast and most elaborate collection of what has been said, pro and con, concerning the different beginnings of these weeks, with which the learned may entertain themselves.

[2.] Concerning the period of them; and here likewise interpreters are not agreed. Some make them to end at the death of Christ, and think the express words of this famous prophecy will warrant us to conclude that from this very hour when Gabriel spake to Daniel, at the time of the evening oblation, to the hour when Christ died, which was towards evening too, it was exactly 490 years; and I am willing enough to be of that opinion. But others think, because it is said that in the midst of the week, the last of the seventy weeks, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, they end three years and a half after the death of Christ, when, the Jews having rejected the gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles. But they who make them to end precisely at the death of Christ, read it thus, He shall make strong the testament to the many; the last seven, or the last week, v. 23, half that seven, or half that week, (namely, the latter half, the three years and a half, which Christ spent in his public ministry,) shall bring to an end sacrifice and oblation. Others make these 490 years to end with the destruction of Jerusalem, about thirty-seven years after the death of Christ; because these seventy weeks are said to be determined upon the people of the Jews, and the holy city; and much is said concerning the destruction of the city, and the sanctuary.

[3.] Concerning the division of them into seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks, and one week; and the reason of this is as hard to account for as any thing else in the prophecy. In the whole number of the years, this is the case, the temple and city were built; and in the last single week, Christ preached his gospel, by which the Jewish economy was taken down, and the foundations laid of the gospel city and temple, which were to be built upon the ruins of the former.

But, whatever uncertainty we may labour under concerning the exact fixing of these times, there is enough of certainty to serve us as a guide to the ends of determining them. First, It did serve them to raise and support the expectations of believers. There were general promises of the coming of the Messiah made to the patriarchs; the preceding prophets had often spoken of him, as one that should come, but never was the time fixed for his coming until now. And though they might be so much doubt concerning the date of his coming, reckoning that they could not ascertain the time just to a year, yet by the light of this prophecy they were directed about what time to expect him. And we find, accordingly, that when Christ came, he was generally looked for, as the Conqustion of Israel, and redemption in Jerusalem by him, Luke ii. 25. 38. And everywhere there was a prophetic eye, for the reason, that the kingdom of God should immediately appear; (Luke xix. 11.) and some think this was it that brought a more than ordinary concourse of people to Jerusalem, Acts ii. 5. Secondly, It does serve still to refute and silence the expectations of unbelievers, who will not own that Jesus is he who should come, but still look for another; this prediction silenced them, and put them in the way of knowing it was he. That seventy weeks from which of the commandments to build Jerusalem we please, it is certain that they are expired above 1500 years ago; so that the Jews are for ever without excuse, who will not own that the Messiah is come, when they are gone so far beyond their utmost reckoning for his coming. But by this we are confirmed in our belief of the Messianical being, and the Messiah is he. For he came just at the time prefixed, a time worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.

2. The events here foretold are more plain, and easy to be understood, at least to us now. Observe what is here foretold, (1.) Concerning the return of the Jews now speedily to their own land, and their settlement again there, which was the thing that Daniel now principally prayed for; and yet it is but
briefly touched upon here in the answer to his prayer. Let this be a comfort to the pious Jews, that a commandment shall go forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, that it shall not be in vain; for though the times will be troublous, and this good work will meet with great opposition, yet it shall be carried on, and brought to perfection at last; the street shall be built again, as spacious and splendid as ever it was; and the walls even in troublous times. Note, As long as we are here in this world, we must expect to be troubled with mischiefs and calamities. And yet the worst of these will pass away when we have joyful times, we must rejoice with trembling; it is but a gleam, it is but a liable interval of peace and prosperity; the clouds will return after the rain; when the Jews are restored in triumph to their own land, yet there they must expect troublous times, and prepare for them. But this is our comfort, that God will carry on his own work, he will build up his Jerusalem, will beautify it, will fortify it, even in troublous times: may the troublousness of the times may by the grace of God contribute to the advancement of the church. The more it is afflicted, the more it multiplies.

(2.) Concerning the Messiah and his undertaking. The carnal Jews looked for a Messiah that should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them temporal power and wealth. Wonders were to come, and a kingdom to be set up; but that the Messiah should come in another errand, purely spiritual, and upon the account of which he should be the more welcome.

1. Christ came to take away sin, and to abolish that. Sins had made a quarrel between God and man, had alienated man from God, and provoked God against man; that was it that put dissonance up in God, and brought misery upon mankind, that was the great mischief-maker. He that would do God a real service, and man a real kindness, must be the destruction of that. Christ undertakes to be so, and for this purpose he is manifested to destroy the works of the devil. He does not say, to finish your transgressions and your sins, but transgression and sin in general, for he is the Propitiation not only for our sins, that are Jews, but for the sins of the whole world. He came, First, To finish transgression; to restrain it; (so some;) to break the power of it, to bruise the head of that serpent that had done so much mischief; to take away the usurped dominion of that tyrant, and to set up a kingdom of holiness and love in the hearts of men, upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom there; that, where sin and death had reigned, righteousness and life through grace might come by Jesus, and sin be no more, and death have no more dominion. Sin has now had its death's wound given it; like Simon's, Let me die with the Philistines; Ani- manque in vulnere ponit—He inflicts the wound, and dies. Secondly, To make an end of sin, to abolish it, that it may not rise up in judgment against us, to obtain the pardon of it, that it may not be our ruin; to seal up sins, (so the margin reads it;) that they may not appear or break out against us, to accuse and condemn us. And thirdly, To make an end of the bottomless pit, he set a seal upon him, Rev. vi. 3. When sin is pardoned, it is sought for, and not found, as that which is sealed up. Thirdly, To make reconciliation for iniquity, as by a sacrifice to justify the justice of God, and so to make peace, and bring God and man together; not only as an Undertaker, but also as a Referee, who only brings the contending parties to go out of their controversy, whether as a Surety, or Undertaker, for us. He is not only the Peace-Maker, but the Peace. He is the Atonement.

2. He came to bring in an everlasting righteousness. God might justly have made an end of the sin by making an end of the sinner; but Christ found out another way, and so made an end of sin as to save the sinner from it, by providing a righteousness for him. We are all guilty before God, and shall be condemned as guilty, if we have not a righteousness provided for us to stand in, and so be justified, but we stood, our iniquity would have been our righteousness, but, being fallen, we must have something else to plead; and Christ has provided us a plea; the merit of his sacrifice is our righteousness; with this we answer all the demands of the law; Christ has died, yea, rather, is risen again. Thus Christ is the Lord our Righteousness; for he is made of God to be Righteousness, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. But we must apply this to ourselves, and plead it with God, and our faith is imputed to us for righteousness, Rom. iv. 3, 5. This is an everlasting righteousness for Christ, who is our Righteousness, and the Prince of our peace is the everlasting Father. It was from everlasting in the counsel of it, and will be to everlasting in the consequences of it. The application of it was from the beginning, for Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and will be to the end, for he is able to save to the uttermost. It is of everlasting virtue, (Heb. x. 12.) it is the rock that follows us to Canaan.

3. He came to seal up the vision and prophecy, all the prophetical visions of the Old Testament, which had reference to the Messiah; he sealed them up, he accepted them, and answered them to a tittle; all things that were written in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning the Messiah, were fulfilled in him; thus he confirmed the truth of them as well as his own mission. He sealed them up, he put an end to that method of God's discovering his mind and will, and took another course by completing the scripture-canons in the New Testament, which is the more sure word of prophecy than that by vision, 2 Pet. i. 19. Heb. i. 1.

4. He came to anoint the Most Holy, himself the Holy One who was anointed, that is, appointed to his work, and qualified for it by the Holy Ghost, that oil of gladness which he received without measure above his fellows; or, to anoint the church, his spiritual temple, or holy place, to sanctify and cleanse it, and appropriate it to himself; (Eph. v. 26.) or, to consecrate for us a new and living way into the holiest, by his own blood, (Heb. x. 20.) as the sanctuary was anointed, Exod. xxx. 25, &c. He is called Messiah, (v. 25, 26.) which signifies Christ; Anointed, (John i. 41.) because he received the unction, both for himself and for all that are his.

5. In order to all this, the Messiah must be cut off, must die a violent death, and so be cut off from the land of the living, as was foretold, Isa. liii. 8. Hence, when Paul preaches the death of Christ, he says that he preached nothing but what the prophets said should come, Acts xxvi. 22, 23. And thus it behoved Christ to suffer. He must be cut off, but not for himself; not for any sin of his own, but, as Caliphas prophesied, he must die, that his people might be saved. For my advantage of his own; the glory he purchased for himself was no more than the glory he had before, John xvii. 4, 5. No, it was to atone for our sins, and to purchase life for us, that he was cut off.

6. He must confirm the covenant with many. He shall introduce a new covenant between God and man, a covenant of grace; since now we are in the New Testament, and our old covenant, the old testament, is no more; for any advantage of his own; the glory he purchased for himself was no more than the glory he had before, John xvii. 4, 5. No, it was to atone for our sins, and to purchase life for us, that he was cut off.

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by it. He confirmed it to the many, to the common people; the poor were evangelized, with the rulers and the mighty. Or, he confirmed it with many, with the Gentile world. The New Testament was not (like the Old) confined to the Jewish church, but was committed to all nations; Christ gave his life a ransom for many.

[7.] He must cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; by offering himself a sacrifice once for all he shall put an end to all the Levitical sacrifices; shall support them no longer. When the time should come, the shadows shall be done away. He ceases all the peace-offerings to cease, when he has made peace by the blood of his cross, and by it confirmed the covenant of peace and reconciliation. By the preaching of his gospel to the world, with which the apostles were intrusted, he took men off from Expecting remission by the blood of bulls and goats, and so caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease. The apostle to the Hebrews shows what a better priesthood, altar, and sacrifice, we have now than they had under the law, as a reason why we should hold fast our profession.

(3.) Concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation; and this follows immediately upon the cutting off of the Messiah, and the cessation of all those things, which had their foundation in Christ; and the confirmation of peace, and reconciliation. For the persons of those that put him to death, which was the sin that filled up the measure of their iniquity, and brought ruin upon them, but because, as things were, it was necessary to the perfecting of one of the great intentions of his death. He died to take away the ceremonial law, quite to abolish that law of commandments, and to vacate the obligation of it. But the Jews would not be persuaded to quit it, still they kept it up with more zeal than ever, they would hear no talk of parting with it, they stoned Stephen (the first Christian martyr) for saying that Jesus should change the customs which Moses delivered them; (Acts vi. 14. ) so that there was no way to abolish the Mosaic economy but by destroying the temple, and the holy city, and the Levitical priesthood, and that whole nation which so incurably doted on them; this was effectually done in less than forty years after the death of Christ, and it was a desolation that could never be repaired to this day. And this is it which is here largely foretold, that the Jews who returned out of captivity might not be overmuch lifted up with the rebuilding of their city and temple, because in process of time they would be utterly destroyed and wiped out of the earth for seven hundred years only, but might rather rejoice in hope of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, which should never be destroyed. Now, [1.] It is here foretold that the people of the prince that shall come, shall be the instruments of this destruction, that is, the Roman armies, belonging to a monarchy yet to come, Christ is the defender that shall come, and they are employed by him in this service; they are his armies; (Matt. xxvii. 7. ) or, the Gentiles, who, though now strangers, shall become the people of the Messiah, shall destroy the Jews. [2.] That the destruction shall be by war, and the end of that war should be this desolation determined. The wars of the Jews with the Romans were by their own obstinacy made very terrible destructions; and they issued in the utter extirpation of that people. [3.] That the city and sanctuary should in a particular manner be destroyed, and fall quite waste. Thus, the Roman general would fame have saved the temple, but his soldiers were so enraged against the Jews, that he could not restrain them from burning it to the ground, that the people might be fulfilled. [4.] That all the resistance that was made to this destruction should be in vain; The end of it shall be with a flood. It shall be a deluge of destruction, like that which swept away the old world, and which there will be no making head against. [5.] That here by the sacrifice and oblation should be made to cease. And it must needs cease, when the family of the priests was so extirpated, and the genealogies of it were so confounded, that (as they say) there is no man in the world that can prove himself of the seed of Aaron. [6.] That there should be an overspreading of abominations, a general corruption in the Jewish nation, and an abounding of iniquity among them, for which it should be made desolate, 1 Thess. ii. 16. Or, it is rather to be understood of the armies of the Romans, which were abominable to the Jews, they could not endure them; which overspread the nation, and by which it was made desolate. For these are the words which Christ refers to, Matth. xxiv. 15. When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee, which is by coming three and twenty-six. When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then flee. [7.] That the desolation should be total and final; He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation; he shall make it completely desolate. It is a desolation determined, and it will be accomplished to the utmost. And when it was made desolate, it should seem, there is something remaining, but after a little while the desolation of the desolate; (v. 27. ) and what should that be but the spirit of slumber, (Rom. xi. 8, 25. ) that blindness which is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in? And then all Israel shall be saved.

CHAP. X.

This chapter and the two next (which conclude this book) make up one entire vision and prophecy, which was communicated by Daniel for the use of the church, as the signs and figures, as before, (eh. vii. and viii.) but by express words; and this was about two years after the vision in the vision in the fourteenth chapter. Daniel prayed daily, but had a vision only now and then. In this chapter we have some things introductory to the prophecy in the eleventh chapter, the particular predictions, and ch. xii. the conclusion of it. This chapter shows us, I. Daniel's solemn fasting and humiliation, before he had this vision, v. 1. 3. 11. A glorious appearance of the Son of God to him, and the deep impression it made upon him, v. 4. 9. 11. The encouragement that was given him to expect some discovery of the truth, and how probably satisfactory and useful both to others and to himself; and that he should be enabled both to understand the meaning of this discovery, though difficult, and to bear up under the distress of it, though dazzling and dreadful, v. 10. 21.

1. In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. 2. In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel: 5. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girted with fine gold of Uphaz: 6. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps
of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. 7. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. 3. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. 9. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

This vision is dated in the third year of Cyrus, which is, of his reign, after the conquest of Babylon, his third year since Daniel became acquainted with him, and is a subject to him.

Here is, 1. A general idea of this prophecy; (v. 1.) The thing was true; every word of God is so; it was true that Daniel had such a vision, and that such and such things were said, this he solemnly attests upon the word of a prophet: Et hoc facinus est verificatum—He was prepared to verify it; and if it was a word spoken from heaven, no doubt it is steadfast, and may be depended upon. But the time appointed was long; as long as to the end of the reign of Antiochus, which was 300 years, a long time indeed, when it is looked upon as to come. Nay, and because it is usual with the prophets to glance at things spiritual and eternal, there is that in this prophecy, which looks in type as far forward as to the end of the world, and the resurrection of the dead; and then he might well say, The time appointed was long: it was, however, made as plain to him as if it had been a history rather than a prophecy; he understood the thing; so distinctly was it delivered to him, and received by him, that he could say he had understanding of the vision: it did not so much operate upon his fancy as upon his understanding.

2. An account of Daniel's mortification of himself before he had this vision; not in expectation of it, nor, when he prayed that solemn prayer, ch. ix. does it appear that he had any expectation of the vision in answer to it; but purely from a principle of devotion, and from a sense of his own sins and frailty, and tenderness for the afflicted people of God. He was mourning full three weeks, (v. 2.) for his own sins, and the sins of his people, and their sorrows. Some think that the particular occasion of his mourning was, the slothfulness and indifference of many of the Jews, who, though they had liberty to return to their own land, continued still in the land of their captivity, not knowing how to value it, or not sufficiently laboring in different things; and this troubled him the more, because they that did so justified themselves by the example of Daniel, though they had not that reason to stay behind which he had. Others think that it was because he heard of the obstruction given to the building of the temple by the enemies of the Jews, who hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, (Ezr. iv. 4, 5.) all the days of Cyrus, and who delayed their point from his son Cambyses, or Artaxerxes, who governed while Cyrus was absent in the Scythian war. Note, Good men cannot but mourn to see how slowly the work of God goes on in the world, and what opposition it meets with; how weak its friends are, and how active its enemies. During the days of Daniel's mourning, he ate no pleasant bread; he could not live without meat, but he ate little, and very sparingly, and mortified himself in the quality, as well as the quantity, of what he ate, which may truly be reckoned fasting, and a token of humiliation and sorrow. He did not eat the flesh brought to eat, but what was common; and as he was a very great man, and might plead that, being used to dainty meats, he could not be without them, it would prejudice his health if he were, yet, when it was both to testify and to assist his devotion, he could thus deny himself; be it noted, to the shame of many young ordinary people who cannot forswear themselves thus to deny themselves.

3. A description of that glorious Person whom Daniel saw in vision; which, it is generally agreed, could be no other than Christ himself, the eternal Word; He was by the side of the river Hiddekel, (v. 4.) probably walking there, not for diversion, but devotion and contemplation, as Isaac walked in the field, to meditate; and, being a person of distinction, he had his attendants attending him at some distance from him, as Cyrus, and the king of Persia, had one alone, a certain Man, even the Man Christ Jesus; it must be he, for he appears in the same resemblance wherein he appeared to St. John in the isle of Patmos, Rev. i. 13—15. His dress was priestly, for he is the High Priest of our profession, clothed in linen, as the High Priest himself was on the day of atonement, that great day; his loins were girded with a golden girdle, of the finest gold, that of Uphaz, for every thing about Christ is the best in its kind. The girding of the loins denotes his ready and diligent application to his work, as his Father's Servant in the business of our redemption. His shape was amiable, his body like the beryl, a precious stone of a sky-colour; his countenance was awful, and enough to strike a terror on the beholders, for his face was as the appearance of lightning, which dazzles the eyes, both frightens and threatens; his eyes were bright and sparkling, as lamps of fire; his arms and feet shone like polished brass, v. 6. His voice was loud, and strong, and very piercing, like the voice of a multitude. The Voice of the Lord. The Voice of the Lord is heard, and he should enslave us. (1.) To think highly and honourably of him. Now consider how great this man is, and in all things let him have the pre-eminence. (2.) To admire his condensation for us and our salvation. Over all this splendour he drew a vail, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and emplaced himself. This is all that is here revealed, it is the particular circumstance that this appearance had upon Daniel and his attendants, and the terror that it struck upon him and them.

(1.) His attendants saw not the vision, it was not fit that they should be honoured with the sight of it; there is a divine revelation vouchsafed to all, from converse with which none are excluded, who do not exclude themselves; but such a vision must be kept secret that none of His own companions were aware of the light, but saw no man, Acts ix. 7—xxii. 9. Note, It is the honour of those who are beloved of God, that what is hid from others is known to them. Christ manifests himself to them, but not to the world, John xiv. 22. But though they saw not the vision, they were seized with an unaccountable trembling, either from the voice they heard, or from some strange confusion.
or vibration, of the air they felt, so it was, that a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves, probably among the willows that grew by the river's side. Note. Many have a spirit of bondage to fear, who never receive a spirit of adoption, to whom Christ has been, and will be never otherwise than, a Terror. Now the fright that Daniel's attendants were in, is a confirmation of the truth of the vision; it could not be Daniel's fancy, or the product of a heated imagination of his own, for it had a real, powerful, and strange effect upon those about him.

(2.) He himself saw it, and saw it alone, but he was not able to bear the sight of it. It not only dazzled his eyes, but overpowered him with the fear of it. The terror which he felt, the terror and strength in him, v. 8. He said, as Moses himself, I exceedingly fear and quake. His spirits were all so employed, either in an intense speculation of the glory of this vision, or in the fortifying of his heart against the terror of it, that his body was left in a manner lifeless and spiritless; he had no vigour in him, and was but one remove from a dead carcase; he looked as pale as death, his colour was gone, and his comeliness in him was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength. Note, The greatest and best of men cannot bear the immediate discoveries of the divine glory; no man can see it and live, it is next to death to see a glimpse of it, as Daniel here; but glorified saints see Christ as he is, and can bear him, though Daniel was thus so dispirited with the vision of Christ, yet he heard the voice of his words, and knew what he said. Note, We must take heed lest our reverence of God's glory by which we should be awakened to hear his voice, both in his word and in his providence, should degenerate into such a dread of him as will disable or indispose us to hear him. Note, That when one is so terrorized and Christ terrified Daniel, the voice of his words soon pacified and composed him, silenced his fear, and laid him to sleep in a holy security and serenity of mind; When I heard the voice of his words, I fell into a slumber, a sweet slumber, on my face, and my face toward the ground. When he saw the vision, he threw himself prostrate into a posture of the open, and he was so taken up, as he was not at all careless of what he heard and saw, but charmed with it. Note, How dreadful soever Christ may appear to those who are under convictions of sin, and in terror by reason of it, there is enough in his word to quiet their spirits, and make them easy, if they will but attend to it, and apply it.

10. And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands: 11. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. 13. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. 14. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days; for yet the vision is for many days. 15. And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. 16. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, 19. And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee: be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. 20. Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

Much ado here is to bring Daniel to be able to bear what Christ has to say to him; still we have him in a fright, hardly and very slowly recovering himself; but is still answered and supported with good words and comfortable words. Let us see how Daniel is by degrees brought to himself and gather up the several passages that are to the same purpose.

I. Daniel is in a great consternation, and finds it very difficult to get clear of it. The hand that touched him, set him at first upon his knees, and the palms of his hands, v. 10. Note, Strength and comfort commonly come by degrees to those that have been tried, and have not only been brought low, but have first helped up a little, and then more. After two days he will revive us, and then the third day he will raise us up. And we must not despise the day of small things, but be thankful for the beginnings of mercy. Afterward he is helped up, but he stands trembling, (v. 11.) for fear lest he fall again. Note Before God gives strength and favor unto his people he makes us sensible of their own weakness. I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble, Hab. iii. 16.

But when, afterward, Daniel recovered so much strength in his limbs, that he could stand steady, yet he tells us, (v. 13.) that he set his face toward the ground, and became dumb; he was as a man astonnished, and was astonished with admiration and fear, and is loath to enter into discourse with one so far above him; he kept silence, even, even from good, till he had recollected himself a little. Well, at length he recovered, not only the use of his feet, but the use of his tongue; and when he opened his mouth, (v. 16.) that which he had to say was, to excuse his having been so long silent, for really he durst not speak, he could not speak; "O my lord," (so, in great humility, this prophet calls the angel, though the angels, in great
Therefore, dealing the bear
He Note, That "From him, It becomes at this discovery of the divine glory, and these discoveries of the divine will; now, there is no breath left in me. Such a deliquium did he suffer, that he could not draw one breath after another, but hanted and languished, and was in a manner breathless. See how well it is for us, that the treasure of divine revelation is put into earthen vessels, that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, and not by angels. Whatever we may wish, in a peevish dislike of the method God takes in dealing with us, it is certain that if we were tried, we should all be of Israel's mind at mount Sinai, when they said to Moses, Speak thou to us, and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die, Exod. xx. 19. If Daniel could not hear it, how could we? Now this he insists upon as an example, to shew that he, who had been blame-worthy; How can the servant of this my lord, speak with this my lord? v. 17. Note, Whenever we enter into communion with God, it becomes us to have a due sense of the vast distance and disproportion that there are between us and the holy angels, and of the infinite distance, and no proportion at all, between us and the holy God, and to acknowledge that order our speech by reason of darkness. How shall we that are dust and ashes, speak to the Lord of glory!

II. The blessed angel that was employed by Christ to converse with him, gave him all the encouragement and comfort that could be. It should seem, it was not he whose glory he saw in vision, (v. 5, 6.) that here touched him, and talked with him, for that was Christ, but this seems to have been the angel Gabriel, whom Christ had once before ordered to instruct Daniel, ch. viii. 16. That glorious appearance (as that of the God of glory to Abraham, Acts vii. 2.) was to give authority and to gain attention, to what the angel should say. Christ himself comforted John, when he in a like case fell at his feet as dead; (Rev. 1. 17.) but here he did it by the angel, whom Daniel saw in a glory much inferior to that of the vision in the verses before; for he was like the similitude of the sons of men, (v. 16.) one like the appearance of a man, v. 18. When he only appeared, as he had done before, (ch. ix. 21.) we do not find that Daniel was put into any disorder by it, as he was by this vision; and therefore he is here employed a third time with Daniel.

1. He lent him his hand to help him, touched him, and helped him up, (v. 10.) else he had still lain grovelling; touched his lips, (v. 16.) else he had been still dumb; again he touched him, (v. 18.) and put strength into him, else he had still been staggering and trembling. Note, The hand of God's power going along with the word of his grace, is alone effectual to redress all our grievances, and to rectify whatever is amiss in us. One thing is from heaven brings us to our knees; and the other, is, he sets us on our feet, opens our lips, and strengthens us; for it is God that works on us, and works in us, both to will and to do that which is good.

2. He assured him of the great favour that God had for him; Thou art a man greatly beloved, v. 11. And again, (v. 19.) O man greatly beloved. Note, Nothing is more likely, nothing more effectual, to revive the drooping spirits of the saints than to be assured of God's love to them. These are greatly beloved indeed, whom God loves; and it is comfort enough to know that angels are appointed to see after them. 3. He silenced his fears, and encouraged his hopes with good words and comfortable words. He said unto him, Fear not, Daniel, v. 12. And again, (v. 19.) O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. Never did any tender mother quiet her child, when any thing had grieved or frightened it, with more compassion and affection than the angels here spake to Daniel. Those that are beloved of God, have no reason to be afraid of any evil; peace is to them; God himself speaks peace to them; and they ought, upon the warrant of that, to speak peace to themselves; and that peace, that joy of the Lord, will be their strength. Will God plead against us with his great power, will he take the advantage against us of our being overcome by his terror? No, but he will put strength into us, Job xxxii. 6. So be he did into Daniel here, when, by reason of the lustre of the vision, no strength of his own remained in him; and he acknowledges it, (v. 19.) When he had spoken to me, I was strengthened. Note, God by his word puts life, and strength, and spirit into his people; for if he says, Be strong, power goes along with the word. And now that Daniel has experienced the efficiency of God's word, and discovered it to be enough for his teacher; "Now, let my lord speak, and I can hear it, and I can bear it, and I am ready to do according to it, for thou hast strengthened me." Note, To these that (like Daniel here) have no might, God increases strength, Isa. xl. 29. And we cannot keep up our communion with God but by strength derived from him; but when he is pleased to put strength into us, we ought more especially to regard and admire it. God's word, Ps. Ix. 5. Not to him that dwelleth on high, says St. Paul, for God speaks to the sinner, Acts xiv. 17. Let God enable us to comply with his will, and then, whatever it is, we shall stand complete in it. Da quod judicis et judice tuo—Give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt. 4. He assures him that his fasting and prayers were come up for a memorial before God, as the angel told Cornelius, (Acts x. 4.) Fear not, Daniel, v. 13. It is natural to God, when he is afraid of an extraordinary messenger from heaven, as dreading to hear evil tidings thence; but Daniel needs not fear, for he has by his three weeks' humiliation and supplication sent extraordinary messengers to heaven, which he may expect to return with an olive-branch of peace; From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand the word of God, that is to be the rule of thy prayers, and to call upon thyself before thy God, that thou mightest put an edge upon thy prayers, thy words were heard, as before, at the beginning of thy supplication, ch. ix. 23. Note, As the entrance of God's word is enlightening to the upright, so the entrance of their prayers is pleasing to him, Ps. cxix. 130. From the first day that we begin to look toward God in our desires and diligent supplication, it is no time to lose an hour of mercy. Thus ready is God to hear prayer. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest. 5. He tells him that he was sent to him on purpose to bring him a prediction of the future state of the church, as a token of God's accepting his prayers for the church; Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? If thou knewest what manner of thing this is, thou wouldst be put to much greater internals by it. Note, If we rightly understand the meaning of God's dealings with us, and the methods of his providence and grace concerning us, we should be better reconciled to them. I am come for thy words, (v. 12.) to bring thee a gracious answer to thy prayers; thus, when God's praying people call to him, he says, Here I am; (Isa. lvii. 9) what would you
have with me? See the power of prayer, what glorious things it has, in its time, fetched from heaven, what strange discoveries! On what errand did this angel come to Thessalonica? To make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days. Daniel was a curious, inquisitive man, that had all his days been searching into secret things, and it would be a great gratification to him to be let into the knowledge of things to come. Daniel had always been concerned for the church, its interests lay much upon his heart, and it would be a particular satisfaction to him to know what its state should be, and he would know the better what to pray for as long as he lived. He was now lamenting the difficulties which his people met with in the present day; but that he might not be offended in these, the angel must tell him what greater difficulties are yet before them; and if they be assured, in that they only run with the footmen, how shall they contend with horses? Note, it would abate our resentment of present troubles, to consider that we know not but much greater are before us, which we are concerned to provide for. Daniel must be made to know what shall befall his people in the latter days of the church, after the cessation of prophecy, and when the time drew nigh for the church to bear the Lord's reproach. And this must be told him, for many days; the principal things that this vision was intended to give the church the foresight of, would come to pass in the days of Antiochus, near 300 years after this. Now, that which the angel is intrusted to communicate to Daniel, and which Daniel is encouraged to expect from him, is not any curious speculations, moral prognostications, or rational prospects of his own, though he is an angel, but what he has received from the Lord. It was the revelation of Jesus Christ, that the angel gave to St. John, to be delivered to the churches, Rev. i. 1. So here, (v. 21.) I will show thee what is written in the scriptures of truth, what is fixed in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The decree of God is a thing written, it is a scripture which remains, and cannot be altered; What I have written, I have written. As there are scriptures for the revealed will of God, the letters patent which are published to the world, so there are scriptures for the secret will of God, the close rolls which are sealed among his treasures; the book of his decrees, both are scriptures of truth, nothing shall be added to, or taken from, either of them. The secret things belong not to me, only to the chief; and these transcripts have been copied out from the book of God's counsels, and delivered to the prophets for the use of the church, as here to Daniel; but they are the things revealed, even the words of this law, which belong to us, and to our children; and we are concerned to study what is written in these scriptures of truth, for they are things which belong to our convalescing heart.

6. He gives him a general account of the adversities of the church's cause, from whom it might be expected that troubles would arise; and of its patrons, under whose protection it might be assured of safety and victory at last. (1.) The kings of the earth are, and will be, its adversaries; for they set themselves against the Lord, and exalt themselves against his Anointed, Ps. ii. 2. The angel tells Daniel that he was to come to him with a gracious answer to his prayers, but that the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him one and twenty days, just the three weeks that Daniel had been fasting and praying. Cambyses king of Persia had been very busy to embarrass the affairs of the Jews, and to do that which the chief he could, and the angel had been all this time employed to counter-work him; so that he had been constrained to defer his visit to Daniel till now, for angels can be in one place at a time. Or, as Dr. Lightfoot says, This new king of Persia, by hindering the temple, had hindered those good tidings which the trans- motions of the kings and kingdoms of this world were indeed sometimes helpful to the church, but more often they were injurious to it. "When I am gone forth from the kings of Persia, when their monarchy is brought down for their unkindnesses to the Jews, then the prince of Greece shall come," v. 29. The Grecian monarchy, though it was in a measure an image of the true kingdom of God, yet come to be revolting to them; such is the state of the church militant, when it is get clear of one enemy, it has another to encounter; and such a hydra's head is that of the old serpent, when one storm is blown over, it is not long before another rises.

(2.) The God of heaven is, and will be, its Protector, and, under him, the angels of heaven its patrons and guardians. [1.] Here is the angel Gabriel busy in the service of the church; making his part good in defence of it twenty-one days, against the prince of Persia, and remaining there with the kings of Persia, as counsel, or liege-ambassador, to take care of the affairs of the Jews in that court, and to do them service, v. 13. A king is doing against them by his agents. He says, God, (Permitting it,) it is probable that much more mischief would have been done them, and they would have been quite ruined, (witness Haman's plot,) if God had not prevented it by the ministration of angels. Gabriel resolves, when he has dispatched this errand to Daniel, that he will return to fight with the prince of Persia, will continue to oppose him, and will at length humble and bring down that proud monarchy, (v. 20.) though he knows that another as mischievous, even that of Greece, will rise instead of it.

[2.] Here is Michael our Prince, the great Protector of the church, and the Patron of its just but injured cause. The first of the chief princes, v. 13. Some understand it of a created angel, but an archangel of the highest order, 1 Thess. iv. 16. Jude 9. Others think that Michael the archangel is no other than Christ himself, the Angel of the covenant, and the Lord of the angels, he whom Daniel saw in a vision, v. 5. He came to help me; (v. 13.) and there is none but he that holds with me in these things, v. 21. Christ is the church's Prince; angels are not, Heb. ii. 5. He presides in the affairs of the church, and effectually provides for its great interest. He is said to hold with the angels, for it is he that makes them serviceable to the heirs of salvation; and if he were not on the church's side, its case were bad. But, says David, and so says the church, The Lord takes my part with them that help me, Ps. cxviii. 7. The Lord is with them that uphold my soul, Ps. liv. 4. CHAP. XI.

The angel Gabriel, in this chapter, performs his promise made to Daniel in the foregoing chapter, that he would show him what should befall his people in the latter days, according to that which was written in the scriptures of faith; very particularly does he foretell the fortunes of the kings of Persia and Greece, and the affairs of their kingdoms, especially the mischief which Antiochus Epiphanes did in his time to the church, which was foretold before, ch. vii. 11, 12. This is, I. A brief prediction of the setting up of the Grecian monarchy, and of the ruins of the Persian monarchy, which was now newly begun, v. 1-4. II. A prediction of the affairs of the two kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, with reference to each other, v. 5-8. III. A prophecy of the successes of Antiochus Epiphanes, and his actions and successes, v. 21-29. IV. Of the great mischief that he should do to the Jewish nation and religion, and his contempt of all religion, v. 30-34. V. Of his fall and ruin at last, when he is in the heat of his pursuit, v. 40-45.
1. Also I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, 2. stood to confirm and to strengthen him. 3. And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; 4. and the fourth shall be richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. 5. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 6. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides those.

Here, 1. The angel Gabriel lets Daniel know the good service he had done to the Jewish nation: (v. 1.) "In the first year of Darius the Mede, who destroyed Babylon, and released the Jews out of that house of bondage, I stood a strength and fortress to him, I was instrumental to protect him, and give him success in his wars, and, after he had conquered Babylon, to confirm him in his resolution to release the Jews, which was likely, with which military disposition. Thus by the angel, and at the request of the watcher, the golden head was broken, and the axe laid to the root of the tree. Note, We must acknowledge the hand of God in the strengthening of those that are friends to the church for the service they are to do it, and confirming them in their good resolutions; herein he uses the ministry of angels more than any other; and the more instances we have known of God's care of his church formerly, encourage us to depend upon him in future straits and difficulties.

2. He foretells the reign of four Persian kings; (v. 2.) "Now I will tell thee the truth, the true meaning of the visions of the great image: and of the four beasts, and expand in plain terms what was before represented by dark types. 1. There shall stand up three kings in Persia, beside Darius, in whose reign this prophecy is dated, ch. ix. 1. Mr. Broughton makes these three to be Cyrus, Artaxerxes, or Artaxerxes, called by the Greeks Cambyses, and Ahasuerus that married Esther, called Darius, son of Hystaspes. To these three the Persians gave these attributes—Cyrus was a father, Cambyses a master, and Darius a boader up. So Herodotus. 2. There shall be a fourth, far richer than they all, Xerxes, of whose wealth the Greek authors take notice. By his strength, his vast army, consisting of 800,000 men at least, and his riches, with which he maintained and paid that vast army, he stirred up all against the realm of Greece. Xerxes' expedition against Greece is famous in history, and his shameful defeat that he met with. He who, when he went up to the borders of Greece, in his return was the scorn of Greece. Daniel needed not he told the what disappointment he would meet with, for he was a hinderer of the building of the temple; but, soon after, about thirty years after the first return from captivity, Darius, a young king, revived the building of the temple, owning the hand of God against his predecessors for hindering it, Ezra vi. 7. Heforetells Alexander's conquests, and the partition of his kingdom. v. 3. He is that mighty king that shall stand up against the kings of Persia, and he shall rule with great dominion over many kingdoms, and with a despotic power, for he shall do according to his will, and undo, likewise, which by the law of the Medes and Persians, their kings could not. When Alexander, after he had conquered Asia, would be worshipped as a god, then this was fulfilled, that he shall do according to his will. That is God's prerogative, but his was his in tension. But (v. 4.) his kingdom shall be broken, and divided into four parts, but not to his posterity; nor shall any of his successors reign according to his dominion; none of them shall have such large territories, nor such an absolute power. His kingdom was plucked up for others besides those of his own family. Aridens, his brother, was made king in Macedon. Of Alexander's mother, he killed him, and poisoned Alexander's two sons, Heracles and Alexander; thus was his family rooted out by its own hands. See what decaying, perishing things worldly pomp and possessions are; and the powers by which they are got. Never was the vanity of the world and its greatest things showed more evidently than in the story of Alexander; all is vanity and vexation of spirit.
The vision; but they shall fall. 15. So the
king of the north shall come, and cast up a
mount, and take the most fenced cities; and
the arms of the south shall not withstand,
neither his chosen people, neither shall there
be any strength to withstand. 16. But he
that cometh against him shall do according
to his own will, and none shall stand before
him; and he shall stand in the glorious land,
which by his hand shall be consumed. 17.
He shall also set his face to enter with the
strength of his whole kingdom, and upright
ones with him; thus shall he do: and he
shall give him the daughter of women, cor-
rupting her; but she shall not stand on his
side, neither be for him. 18. After this shall
he turn his face unto the isles, and shall
take many; but a prince for his own behalf
shall cause the reproach offered by him to
cease; without his own reproach he shall
cause it to turn upon him. 19. Then he
shall turn his face toward the fort of his own
land: but he shall stumble and fall, and
not be found. 20. Then shall stand up in
his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of
the kingdom: but within few days he shall
be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle.

Here are fortecld,

I. The rise and power of two great kingdoms out
of the remains of Alexander's conquests, v. 5. 1.
The kingdom of Egypt, which was made consider-
able by Ptolemæus Ligus, one of Alexander's cap-
tains, whose successors were from him called the
Lagides. He is called the king of the south, Egypt,
named here, v. 8, 42, 43. The countries that at
first belonged to Ptolemy, are reckoned to be Egypt,
Phœnicia, Arabia, Lybœa, Ethiopia, &c. Theocr.
Idyl. 17. 2. The kingdom of Syria, which was set
up by Seleucus, was, for the conquests he made, one of
Alexander's princes, and became stronger than the
other, and had the greatest dominion of all,
was the most powerful of all Alexander's successors;
it was said that he had no less than seventy-two
kings under him. Both these were strong against
Judah; (the affairs of which are particularly eyed
in this prediction;) Ptolemy, soon after he gained
Egypt, invaded Judea, and took Jerusalem on a sub-
noise, pretending a friendly visit. Seleucus also gave
disturbance to Judæa.

II. The fruitless attempt to unite these two king-
doms, as iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image;
(v. 6.) At the end of certain years, about seventy
after Alexander's death, the Lagide and the Se-
lecide shall associate, but not in sincerity. Ptolemy
Philippus, king of Egypt, shall marry his daugh-
ter Berenice to Antiochus Theos, king of Syria,
who had already a wife called Laodice. Berenice
shall come to the king of the north, to make an
agreement, but it shall not hold; She shall not retain
the power of the arm; neither she nor her posterity
shall establish themselves in the kingdom of the
north, neither shall Ptolemy her father, nor An-
tiochus her husband, (betwixt whom there was to be
a great alliance,) stand, nor their arm, but she
shall be given up, and they that brought her, all that pro-
jected that unhappy marriage between her and An-
tiochus, which occasioned so much mischief, instead of
producing a coalition between the northern and
southern crowns, as was hoped. Antiochus divorced
Berenice, took his former wife Laodice again, who
soon after poisoned him, procured Berenice and her
son to be murdered, and set up her own son by An-
tiochus, to be king, who was called Seleucus Calli-
nicus.

III. A war between the two kingdoms; (v. 7. 8.)
a branch from the same root with Berenice shall
stand up in his estate. Ptolemeus Evergetes, the
son and successor of Ptolemeus Philippus, shall
come with an army against Seleucus Callinicus, king
of Syria, to avenge his sister's quarrel, and shall prevail.
And he shall carry away a rich booty both
of persons and goods into Egypt; and shall continue
about two years in the government of the king-
doms; and Justin says that if his own affairs had not called him home, he had,
in this war, made himself master of the whole king-
dom of Syria. But (v. 9.) he shall be forced to
come into his kingdom, and return into his own land,
to keep peace there, so that he can no longer carry
on the war abroad. Note, It is very common for a
treacherous peace to end in a bloody war.

IV. The last and busy reig of Antiochus the
Great, king of Syria. Seleucus Callinicus, that
king of the north, that was overcome, (v. 7.) and
died miserably, left two sons, Seleucus and An-
tiochus; these are his sons, the sons of the king of the
north, that shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a
multitude of great forces, to recover what their
father had lost. But Seleucus, the elder son, was a
man of strong arm, and unable to rule his army, was poisoned by
his friends, and reigned only two years; and his bro-
ther Antiochus succeeded him, who reigned thirty-
seven years, and was called the Great. And there-
fore the angel, though he speaks of sons at first,
goes on with the account of one only; who was out
fifteen years old when he began to reign, and he
shall certainly come, and overflourish, and remain,
and shall be restored to length of what he had under
his father less.

1. The king of the south, in this war, shall at first
have very great success. Ptolemeus Philopater,
moved with indignation at the indignities done
by Antiochus the Great, shall (though otherwise a
slavish prince) come forth, and fight with him, and
shall bring a vast army into the field of 70,000 foot,
and 5,000 horse, and 73 elephants. And the other
kingdom, (that is, Syria,) shall have a larger army,
62,000 foot, and 6,000 horse, and 102 elephants) shall
be given into his hand. Polybius, who lived with
Scipio, has given a particular account of this battle
of Raphia. Ptolemæus Philopater, having gained
this victory, grew very insolent; his heart was lifted
up, then he went into the temple of God at Jerusa-
lem, and, in defiance of the law, entered the most
holy place; for which God has a controversy with
him, that so, though he shall cast down many myri-
ads, yet he shall not be strengthened by it, so as to
secure his interest. For, 2. The king of the north,
Antiochus the Great, shall return with a greater
army than the former; and, at the end of times,
that is, years, he shall come often with a mighty
army, and great riches, against the king of the south.
This, Ptolemæus Ephiphanes, which succeeded
Ptolemeus Philopater his father, when he was a child,
which gave advantage to Antiochus the Great.
In this expedition, he had some powerful allies; (v.
14.) Many shall stand up against the king of the
south; Philip of Macedon was confederate with An-
tiochus against the king of Egypt, and Scopas his
general, whom he sent into Syria; Antiochus routed
him, destroyed a great part of his army; whereupon
the Jews willingly yielded to Antiochus, joined
with him, helped him to besiege Ptolemæus's garri-
sions; Then the robbers of the people shall exalt
themselves to establish the vision, to help forward
the accomplishment of this prophecy; but they shall
fall, and shall come to nothing, v. 14. Hereupon, (v. 15.) the king of the north, this same Antiochus Magnus, shall carry on his design against the king of the south another way. (1.) He shall surprise his strong holds; all that he has got in Syria and Samaria, and the arms of the south, all the power of the king of the south shall now yield to him. See how dubious and variable the turns of the scale of war are; like buying and selling, it is winning and losing; sometimes one side gets the better, and sometimes the other; yet neither by chance; it is not, as they call it, the fortune of war, but according to the will and counsel of God, who brings some low, and raises others up. (2.) He shall make land wars, as well as sea wars, and shall carry against him, that comes against him, that is, the king of the north, shall carry all before him, and do what he pleases, and he shall stand, and get footing, in the glorious land; so the land of Israel was, and by his hand it was wasted and consumed; for with the spoil of that good land he victualled his vast army. The land of Judea lay between these two potent kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, so that in all the struggles between them, that was sure to suffer; for to it they both bore ill will. Yet some read this, By his hand it shall be perfected; as if it intimates that the land of Judea, being taken under the protection of this Antiochus, shall flourish, and be in better condition than it had been. (3.) He shall still push on his war against the king of Egypt, and set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, taking advantage of the state of Ptolemy Epiphanes, and the upright ones, many of the pious Israelites, siding with him, v. 17. In prosecution of his design, he shall give him his daughter Cleopatra to wife; designing, as Saul in giving his daughter to David, that she should be a snare to him, and do him a mischief; but she shall not stand of her father's side, nor be for him, but for her husband, and so that plot failed him. (4.) His war with the Romans is here foretold; (v. 18.) He shall turn his face to the isles, (v. 18.) the isles of the Gentiles, (Gen. x. 5.) Greece and Italy. He took many of the isles about the Hellespont—Rhodes, Samos, Delos, &c. which by war or treaty he made himself master of; but a prince, or state, (so some,) even the Roman senate, or a leader, even the Roman general, that shall return his reproach offered him, which abused the Romans, upon himself, or shall make his shame rest on himself; and, without his own shame, or any disgrace to himself, shall pay him again. This was fulfilled when the two Scipios were sent with an army against Antiochus; Hannibal was then with him, and advised him to invade Italy, and waste it as he had done; but he did not take his advice; and Scipio joined battle with him, and gave him a total defeat, though Antiochus had 70,000 men, and the Romans but 30,000. Thus he caused the reproach offered by him to cease. (5.) His fall. When he was totally routed by the Romans, and was forced to abandon to them all he had in Europe, and had a very heavy tribute exacted from him, he turned to his own land, and, not knowing which way to raise money to pay his tribute, he plundered a temple of a total deplacement, though he had his own overlords against him, that they set upon him, and killed him; so he was overthrown, and fell, and was no more found, v. 19. (6.) His next successor, v. 20. There rose up one in his place, a raising of a tax, a wdder forth of the extortioner, or extortioner. This character was remarkably answered in Seleucus Philopater, the elder son of Antiochus the Great, who oppressed with great impositions and exactions all objects against him, that they set upon him, and killed him; so he was overthrown, and fell, and was no more found, v. 19. (6.) His next successor, v. 20. There rose up one in his place, a raising of a tax, a wdder forth of the extortioner, or extortioner.

DANIEL, XI.

21. And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overthrown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. 24. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches; yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. 25. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26. Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain. 27. And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. 28. Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits and return to his own land. 29. At the time
appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. 30. For the ships of Chittim shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. 31. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. 32. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. 33. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. 34. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. 36. And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that is determined shall be done. 37. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain. 40. And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver; and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. 44. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. 45. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain: yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

All this is a prophecy of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn spoken of before, (ch. viii. 9.) a sworn enemy to the Jewish religion, and a bitter persecutor of those that adhered to it. What troubles the Jews in this prediction were the revolt of the Persian kings, which were not so particularly foretold to Daniel as these; because then they had living prophets with them, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage them; but these troubles in the days of Antiochus were foretold, because, before that time, prophecy would cease, and they would find it necessary to have recourse to the written word. Some things in this prediction concerning Antiochus are alluded to in the New Testament predictions of the antichrist, especially v. 36, 37. And as it is usual with the prophets, when they foretell the prosperity of the Jewish church, to make use of such expressions as were applicable to the kingdom of Christ, and insensibly to slide into a prophecy of that, so, when they foretell the troubles of the church, they make use of such expressions as have a further reference to the kingdom of the antichrist, the rise and ruin of that.

Now concerning Antiochus, the angel foretells here,

I. His character. He shall be a vile person. He called himself Epiphanes—the illustrious, but his character was the reverse of his surname. The heathen writers describe him to be an odd-humoured man, rude and boisterous, base and sordid. He would sometimes steal out of the court into the city, and herd himself with any infamous company, in-cognito—in disguise; he made himself a companion of the common sort, and of the basest strangers that came to town. He had the most unaccountable whims, so that some took him to be silly, others to be mad. He was called Epiphanes—the mad man. He is called a vile person. He was to do great things by a long time a hostage at Rome for the fidelity of his father, when the Romans had subdued him; and it was agreed that when the other hostages were exchanged, he should continue a prisoner at large.

II. His accession to the crown. By a trick he got his elder brother’s son, Demetrius, to be sent a hostage to Rome, in exchange for him, contrary to the cartel; and his elder brother being made away with by Heliodorus, (v. 20.) he took the kingdom. The states of Syria did not give it him, (v. 21.) because they knew it belonged to his elder brother’s son, nor did he get it by the sword, but came in peaceably, pretending to reign for his brother’s son, Demetrius, then a hostage at Rome. But with the help of Eumenes and Attalus, neighbouring princes, he gained an interest in the people, and by flatteries obtained the kingdom, established himself in it, and crushed Heliodorus, who made head against him with the arms of a fool; they that opposed him, were overthrown and broken before him: even the prince of the covenant, his nephew, the rightful heir, whom he pretended to covenant with. And he went with power; whenever he should return, v. 22. But (v. 23.) after the league was made with him, he shall work deceitfully, as one whose arrowed maxim it is, that princes ought not to be
bound by their word any longer than it is for their interest. And with a small people, that at first cleave to him, he shall become strong, and (v. 24.) he shall enter peaceably upon the fastest places of the kingdom of Syria, and, very unlike his predecessor, shall scatter among them the spoil, and riches, to insinuate himself into their affections; but at the same time, he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, to make himself master of them, so that his generocity shall last but for a time; when he has got the garrisons into his hands, he will scatter his spoil no more, but rule by force; as those commonly do, that come in by force.

Some understand these verses of his first expedition into Egypt, when he came not as an enemy, but as a friend and guardian to the young king Ptolemaus Philometer, and therefore brought with him but few followers, yet those stout men, and faithful to his interest, whom he placed in divers of the strong holds in Egypt, thereby making himself master of them.

III. His war with Egypt; which was his second expedition thither. This is described, v. 25.—27. Antiochus shall stir up his power and courage against Ptolemaus Philometer king of Egypt. Ptolemy, thereupon, shall be stirred up to battle against him, shall come against him with a very great and mighty army; but Ptolemy, though he has such a vast army, shall not be able to stand before him: for Antiochus, when he was appointed to be ruler of all the world, power it, and great multitudes of the Egyptian army shall fall down slain. And no marvel, for the king of Egypt shall be betrayed by his own counsellors; they that feed of the portion of his meat, that eat of his bread, and live upon him, being bribed by Antiochus, shall forecast devices against him, and even they shall destroy him; and what fence is there against such treachery? After the battle, a treaty of peace shall be set on foot, and these two kings shall meet at one council-board, to adjust the articles of peace between them; but they shall neither of them be sincer in it, for they shall, in their pretences and promises of amity and friendship, lie to one another, for their hearts shall be at the same time to do one another all the mischief they can. And then no manner of good will be preserved between them; but the end of it shall be at the time appointed in the Divine Providence, and then the war shall break out again, as a sore that is only skimmed over.

IV. Another expedition against Egypt. From the former he returned with great riches, (v. 28.) and therefore took the first occasion to invade Egypt again, at the time appointed by the Divine Providence, two years after, in the eighth year of his reign, v. 29. He shall come toward the south. But this attempt shall not succeed, as the former did, nor shall he gain his point, as he had done before once and again; for, (v. 30.) the ships of Chittim shall come against him, that is, the navy of the Romans, or only ambassadors from the Roman senate, who came in ships. Ptolemaus Philometer, king of Egypt, being now in a strict alliance with the Romans, crave their aid against Antiochus, who had besieged him and his mother Cleopatra in the city of Alexandria. The Roman senate, therefore, sent an embassy to Antiochus, to command him to raise the siege; which, when he desired some time to consider of, and consult with his friends, about Popilius, one of the ambassadors, with his friends in the senate, in a circle about him, and told him, as one having authority, he should give a positive answer before he came out of that circle; whereupon, fearing the Roman power, he was forced immediately to give orders for the raising of the siege, and the retreat of his army out of Egypt. So Livy and others relate the story which this prophecy refers to; He shall be grated, and return: for it was a great vexation to him to be forced to yield thus.

V. His rage and cruel practices against the Jews.

This is that part of his government, or mis-government, which was most hateful to the Jews. In his very expedition into Egypt, (which is prophesied of, v. 28.) he did exploit against the Jews, in the sixth year of his reign; then he spoiled the city and temple; but the most terrible storm was in his return from Egypt, two years after, prophesied of, v. 30. Then he took Judea in his way home; and because he could not bear the thought of it, he destroyed the temple there, over-pressing, he wreaked his revenge upon the poor Jews, who gave him no provocation, but had greatly provoked God to permit him to do it, Dan. viii. 23.

1. He had a roused antipathy to the Jews' religion; His heart was against the holy covenant, v. 28. And (v. 30.) he had indignation against the holy covenant; that covenant of peculiarity by which the Jews were incorporated a people distinct from all other nations, and dignified above them. He hated the law of Moses and the worship of the true God, and was vexed at the privileges of the Jewish nation and the promises made to them. Note, That which is the hope and joy of the people of God, is the envy of their neighbours, and that is, the holy covenant. Essau hated Jacob because he had got the blessing. Those that are strangers to the covenant are never enemies to it.

2. He carried on his malicious designs against the Jews by the assistance of some pernicious apostate Jews. He kept up intelligence with them that forsook the holy covenant, (v. 30.) some of the Jews, that were false to their religion, and introduced the customs of the heathen, with whom they made a covenant. See the fulfilling of this, 1 Mac. i. 11. Where it is expressed, they have carried about the renegado Jews, that they made themselves unceremonious, and forsook the holy covenant. We read (2 Mac. iv. 9.) of Jason, the brother of Onias the High Priest, who by the appointment of Antiochus set up a school at Jerusalem, for the training up of youth in the fashions of the heathen; and (2 Mac. iv. 23, &c.) of Menelaus, who fell in with the interests of Antiochus, and was sent into Jerusalem, now in his last return from Egypt. We read much in the book of the Maccabees of the mischief done to the Jews by these treacherous men of their own nation, Jason and Menelaus, and their party. These upon all occasions he made use of; such as do wickedly against the covenant, such as throw up their religion, and comply with the heathen; he shall corrupt with flatteries, to harden them in their apostasy, and to make use of them as decoys to draw in others, v. 32. Note, It is not strange if those who do not live up to their religion, but in their conversations do wickedly against the covenant, are easily corrupted by flatteries to quit their religion. That they make shipwreck of a good conscience, will soon make shipwreck of the faith.

3. He profaned the temple. And stand on his heart, (v. 31.) not only his own army which he now brought from Egypt, but a great party of deservers from the Jewish religion that joined with them; and they polluted the sanctuary of strength, not only the holy city, but the temple. The story of this we have, 1 Mac. i. 21, &c. He entered proudly into the sanctuary, took away the golden altar, and the candlestick, &c. And (1 Mac. ii. 25.) there was a great mourning in Israel; the priests and others lamented, &c. And (2 Mac. v. 15, &c.) Antiochus went into the most holy temple, Menelaus, that traitor to the laws, and to his own country, being his guide. Antiochus, having resolved to bring all about him to be of his religion, took away the daily
sacrifice, v. 31. Some observe that the word Tu-
mith, which signifies no more than daily, is only here, and in the parallel place, used for the daily
sacrifice, if they suppose that the devoted liberty left to
supply it either with sacrifice, which was suppressed
by Antiochus, or with gospel-worship, which was
suppressed by the antichrist. Then lie set up
the abomination of desolation upon the altar, (1 Mac.
i. 54.) even an idolater, (v. 39.) and called the
temple The temple of Jupiter Olymipicus, 2 Mac. vi. 2.
6. He persecuted them, and they were punished for
their piety, and righteousness. Though there are many who forsake the
covenant, and do wickedly against it, yet there is
a people who do know their God, and retain the
knowledge of him, and they shall be strong, and do
exploits; (v. 32.) when others yield to the tyrant’s
demands, and surrender their consciences to his im-
positions, they bravely keep their ground, resist the
temptation, and make the tyrant himself ashamed of
his attempt upon them. Good old Eleazar, one of
the principal scribes, when he had swine’s flesh
thrust into his mouth, bravely spit it out again,
though he knew he must be tormented to death for
so doing; and was so, 2 Mac. vi. 19. The mother
and her seven sons were put to death for adhering
to their religion, 2 Mac. vii. This might well be
called the crown of their sufferings, a greater than sin, is a
great exploit. And it was by faith, by being strong in faith, that they did those ex-
pliots; that they were tortured, not accepting deli-
verance, as the apostle speaks, probably with refer-
tence to that story, Heb. xi. 35. Or, it may refer
to the military courage and achievements of Judas
Maccabaeus, and others in opposition to them. Note,
The right knowledge of God, and will be the
strength of the soul, and, in the strength of that,
gracious souls do exploits. They that know his
name, will put their trust in him, and by that trust
will do great things.
Now concerning this people that knew their God,
we are here told, (1.) That they shall instruct
many, v. 35. They shall make it their business to
show others what they have learned themselves of
the difference between truth and falsehood, good and
evil. Note, They that have the knowledge of God
themselves, should communicate their knowledge
to those about them, and this spiritual charity must
be extensive; they must instruct many. Some un-
derstand this of a society newly erected for the
propagating of divine knowledge, called Asissiae, godly men meet, (so the Vulgate expresses,) that
were well knowing the Jews in the last place were
instructed many. Note, In times of persecution and
apostacy, which are trying times, those that
have knowledge ought to make use of it for the
strengthening and establishing of others. They that
understand aright themselves, ought to do what
they can to bring others to understand; for know-
ledge is a talent that must be traded with. Or, They
shall not be ceased by their perseverance in their
duty, and their patient suffering for it. Good ex-
amples instruct many, and with many are the most
powerful instructions. (2.) They shall fall by the
cruelty of Antiochus; shall be put to the torture,
and put to death, by his rage. Though they are so
excellent and intelligent themselves, and so useful
and serviceable to others, that they have brought them
no mercy, but they shall fall for some days.
So it may be read, Rev. vii. 10. Thou shalt have
tribulation ten days. We read much, in the books
of the Maccabees, of Antiochus’s barbarous usage
of the pious Jews, how many he slew in wars, and
how many he murdered in cold blood. Women
were put to death for having their children circum-
cised, and their infants were hanged about their
necks, 1 Mac. i. 60, 61. But why did God suffer
this? How can this be reconciled with the justice
and goodness of God? (1.) Whether, very well, if we
consider what it was that God aimed at in this; (v. 35.) Some observe, of the destruction of
Antiochus; it shall be for the good of the church, and for their
own spiritual benefit. It shall be to try them, and
to purge, and to make them white. They needed
these afflictions themselves; the best have their
spots, which must be washed off, their cross, which
must be purged out; and their troubles, particularly
their share in the public troubles, help to do this;
and in their sufferings and trials, growing through them, they
are means of mortifying their corruptions, wean-
ning them from the world, and awakening them to
greater seriousness, and diligence in religion. They
try them, as silver in the furnace is refined from its
dross; they purge them, as wheat in the barn is
winnowed from the chaff; and make them white, as
cloth by the fuller is cleared from its spots. See 1 Pet. i. 7.
Their sufferings for righteousness, they try
and purge the nation of the Jews, would convince
them of the truth, excellency, and power of that
holy religion which these understanding men died
for their adherence to. The blood of the martyrs is
the seed of the church; it is precious blood, and not
a drop of it should be shed but upon such a valuable
consideration. (3.) The cause of religion, though
they should be put to death by the cruel Antiochus,
they shall fall, they shall not be utterly cast down,
but they shall be hewn with a little help, v. 34.
Judas Maccabaeus, and his brethren, and a few with
them, shall make head against the tyrant, and as-
sert the injured cause of their religion; they pulled
down the idolatrous altars, circumcised the children
that they found uncircumcised, recovered the law out
of the hand of the Gentiles, and the work prospered
in their hands. 1 Mac. ii. 45, &c. Note, Those
that stand by the cause of religion when it is threat-
ened and struck at, though they may not immedi-
ately be delivered, and made victors, shall yet
have present help. And a little help must not be
despaired of; but when times are very bad, we must be
thankful for some reviving. It is likewise foretold
that many shall cleave to them with, &c.; when they see the Maccabees prosper, some Jews shall
join with them, that are no true friends to religion,
but will only pretend friendship, either with design
to betray them, or in hope to rise with them; but the
fierce trial, (v. 35.) will separate between the pre-
cious and the vile, and by it they that are perfect
will be made manifest, and they that are not. (4.)
Though these troubles may continue long, yet they
shall not continue without a limited time, fixed in the
divine counsels; this warfare shall be accomplished; hitherto the power of the enemy shall come, and no further, here shall
its proud waves be stayd.
3. He grew very proud, insolent, and profane,
and, being puffed up with the conquests, bade de-
fiance to Heaven, and sampled upon every thing
he had to do. (1 Mac. iii. 30, &c.) This begins a prophecyl of the antichrist, the papal king-
dom. It is plain that St. Paul, in his prophecy of the
rise and reign of the man of sin, alludes to this
here, (2 Thess. ii. 4.) which shows that Antiochus
was a type and figure of that enemy, as Babylon also
was; but this being joined in a continued discourse
in the foregoing prophecies and concerning Antiochus,
not to mention the parable of the Jews and the antichrist
refers, and in him had its primary accomplishment,
and has reference to the other only by way of ac-
commodation. (1.) He shall impiously dishonour the God of Is-
rael, the only living and true God, called here the
God of gods. He shall, in defiance of him and his
authorities, do according to his will against his people
and his holy religion; he shall exalt himself above
him, as Sennacherib did, and shall speak marvellous
things against him, and against his laws and institutions. This was fulfilled when Antiochus forbade sacrifices to be offered in God's temple, and ordered the sabbaths to be profaned, the sanctuary and the holy people to be polluted, &c. to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And this, upon pain of death, 1 Mcr. i. 43.

(2.) He shall proudly put contempt upon all other gods; shall magnify himself above every god, even the god of the heathen kingdom, that every one should leave the gods he had worshipped, and worship such as he ordered, contrary to the practice of all the conquerors that went before him; (1 Mcr. i. 41, 42.) And all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king; fond as they were of their gods, they did not think them worth suffering for, but, their gods being idols, it was all alike to them what gods they worshipped. Antiochus did not regard any god, but magnified himself above all, v. 37. He was so proud, that he thought himself above the condition of a mortal man, that he could command the waves of the sea, and reach to the stars of heaven, as his insolence and haughtiness are expressed, 2 Mac. ix. 8, 10. Thus he carried all before him, till the in- dependents perished. (a.) he had run his length, and filled up the measure of his iniquity, for that which is determined shall be done, and nothing more, nothing short.

(3.) He shall, contrary to the way of the heathen, disregard the god of his fathers, v. 37. Though an affection to the religion of their ancestors was, among the heathen, almost as natural to them as the desire of women, (for if you search through the isles of Chittim, you will not find an instance of a nation that has changed its gods, Jer. ii. 10, 11.) yet Antiochus shall not regard the god of his fathers; he made laws to abolish the religion of his country, and to bring in the idols of the Greeks. And though his predecessors had honoured the God of Israel, and given great gifts to the temple at Jerusalem, (2 Mac. iii. 2, 3.) he did the greatest indignities to God and his temple. His not regarding the desire of women, may be spoken either his barbarous cruelty, he shall spare no age or sex, no, not the tender ones; or, his unnatural lusts, or, in general, his contempt of everything which men of honour have a concern for: or, it might be accomplished in something we meet not with in history. Its being joined to his not regarding the god of his fathers, intimates that the idolatries of the heathen were the chief, that had in them more of the gratifications of the flesh than any other heathen religion. (As has been written of the Syrian goddesses;) and yet that would not prevail to keep him to them.

(4.) He shall set up an unknown god, a new god, v. 38. In his estate, in the room of the god of his fathers, (Apollo and Diana, deities of his pleasure,) he shall honour the god of forces, a supposed deity of power; a god whom his fathers knew not, nor would they believe. And strength to excel his fathers, he shall honour this god with gold, and silver and precious stones, thinking nothing too good for the god he had taken a fancy to. This seems to be Jupiter Olympus; known among the Phœnicians by the name of Baal-Semeon, the lord of heaven, but never introduced among the Syrians till Antiochus did it. Thus he shall be a god of war and a god of spoil, a god of gold; but Antiochus, which is called the sanctuary of strength, (v. 31.) and here the fortresses of munities; there he shall set up the image of this strange god. Some read it, He shall commit the munities of strength, or of the most strong god, the city of Jerusalem, to a strange god; he put it under the protection and government of Jupiter Olympius. This god he shall not only acknowledge, but shall increase with glory, by setting his image even upon God's altar.

And he shall cause them that minister to this idol, to rule over many, shall put them into places of power and trust, and they shall divide the land for gain, shall be maintained richly out of the profits of the country. Some by the Mahuzzim, or god of forces, that Antiochus shall worship, understand money, which is said to answer all things, and which is the great idol of worldly people.

Now here is very much that is applicable to the ministry of the Papacy, and that authority of the Pope; to what is said of the god, or that is worshipped; magnifies himself above all: his flatterers call him our lord god the pope. By biting marriage, and magnifying the single life, he pretends not to regard the desire of women; and honours the god of forces, the god Mahuzzim, or strong holds, saints and angels, whom his followers take for their protectors, as the heathen did of old their demons; these the above all that is called god, or that is worshipped; magnifies himself above all. These they honour with vast treasures dedicated to them, and therein the learned Mr. Mede thinks that this prophecy was fulfilled, and that it is referred to, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

VI. Here seems to be another expedition into Egypt, or, at least, a struggle with Egypt. The Romans had tied him up from invading Parthia, but now that king of the south pushes at him; (v. 40.) neither is the king of the north, Antiochus, as before his predecessors, magnified above his own territories; wherupon Antiochus, the king of the north, comes against him like a whirlwind, with incredible swiftness and fury, with chariots, and horses, and many ships, a great force; he shall come through countries, and shall overthrow and pass over; in this flying march many countries shall be overthrown by him; and he shall enter into the glorious land, the land of Israel; it is the same word that is translated the pleasant land, ch. viii. 9. He shall make dreadful work among the nations therewith; yet some shall escape his fury, particularly Edom and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon, v. 41. He did not put these countries under contribution, because they had joined with him against the Jews. But especially the land of Egypt shall not escape, but he will quite beggar that, so bare will he strip it. This some reckon his fourth and last expedition against Egypt, in the tent or eleventh year of his reign, under pretence of assisting the younger brother of Parthianus Philometer against him. We read not of any great slaughter made in this expedition, but great plunder; for, it should seem, that was it he came for; He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and over all the wealth of the kingdoms of the north, (out of the north-east,) shall trouble him, v. 44. Or, He shall have intelligence, both from the eastern and northern parts, that the king of Parthia is invading his kingdom. This obliged him to drop the enterprises he had in hand, and to go against the Persians and Parthians that were revolting from him; and this vexed him; for now he thought utterly to have ruined and extinguished the Jewish nation, when that expedition called him off.
in which he perished. This is explained by a passage in Tacitus, (though an impious one,) where he commends Antiochus for his attempt to take away the superordination of the Jews, and bring in the manners of the Greeks among them, (at terterramin genere in melius natura—to more an odious nation,) and laments that he was hindered from accomplishing it by the Parthian war. Now here is,

1. The last effect of his rage against the Jews; when he finds himself perplexed and embarrassed in his affairs, he shall go forth with great fury, to destroy and utterly to make away many, v. 44.

The story of this we have, 1 Mac. iii. 27. &c. When he had shown himself the spoiler of the successes of Judas Maccabaeus, and the orders he gave to Lyssias to destroy Jerusalem! Then he planted the tabernacles of his palace, or tents of his court, between the sea, between the Great sea and the Dead sea. He set up his royal pavilion at Emmaus, near Jerusalem, in token, that though he could not be present himself, yet he gave full power to his captains to prosecute the war against the Jews with the utmost rigor. He placed his tent there, as if he had taken possession of the glorious holy mountain, and called it his own. Note, When impiety grows very impudent, we may see its ruin near.

2. His exit; He shall come to his end, and none shall help him, God shall cut him off in the midst of his days, and none shall be able to help him. This is an answer to that which was foretold, (ch. viii. 24.) He shall be broken without hand; where we took a view of his miserable end. Note, When God's time is come to bring proud oppressors to their end, none shall be able to help them, nor perhaps inclined to help them; for those that covet to be feared by all, when they are in their grandeur, will have no distress; when they are in their destruction, none will help them, none will lend them so much as a hand, or a prayer, to help them; and if the Lord do not help, who shall?

Of the kings that came after Antiochus, nothing is here prophesied, for that was the most malicious, mischievous enemy to the church, that was a type of the son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming, and none shall help him.

CHAP. XII.

After the prediction of the troubles of the Jews under Antiochus, prefiguring the troubles of the Christian church under the antichristian power, we have here, I. comforts, and very precious ones, prescribed as cordials for the support of God's people in those times of trouble, and they are as much as may indifferently serve both for those former times of trouble under Antiochus, and those latter which were prefigured by them, v. 1. . . . 4. II. A conference between Christ and an angel, concerning the time of the continuance of these events, designed for Daniel's satisfaction, v. 5. . . . 7. III. Daniel's inquiry for his own satisfaction, v. 8. And the answer he received to that inquiry, v. 9. . . . 13.

1. And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was, since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn

many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever. 4. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.

It is usual with the prophets, when they foretell the grievances of the church, to furnish it at the same time with proper antitheses; a remedy for every malady. And no relief is so sovereign, of such general application, so easily accommodated to every case, and of such powerful efficacy, as those that are fetched from Christ and the future state; thence the comforts here are fetched.

1. Jesus Christ shall appear his church's Patron and Protector. At that time, when the persecution is at the hottest, Michael shall stand up, v. 1. The angel had told Daniel what a first friend Michael was to the church, ch. x. 21. He all along showed it in the upper world, the angels knew it; but now Michael shall stand up in his providence, and work deliverance for the Jews, when he sees that their power is gone, Deut. xxxii. 36. Christ is that great Prince, for he is the Prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5. And if he stand up for his church, who can be against it? But this is not all; At that time, soon after, Michael shall stand up for the working out of our eternal salvation. He shall be the general manifestation to destroy the works of the devil. Christ stood up for the children of our people, when he was made Sin and a Curse for them, stood in their stead as a Sacrifice, bore the curse for them, to bear it from them. He stands for them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the vail; stands up for them, and stands their Friend. And after the last Great day, of whom Michael was a type, Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, shall appear for the complete redemption of all his.

2. When Christ appears, he will recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people. There shall be a time of trouble, threatening to all, but ruin to all the implacable enemies of God's kingdom among men, such trouble as never was since there was a nation. Which is applicable, (1.) To the destruction of Jerusalem; which Christ calls (perhaps with no eye to this here) such a great tribulation as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, Math. xxiv. 21. This the angel had spoken much of; (ch. ix. 26. 27.) and it happened about the same time, that Christ set up the gospel kingdom; and the kingdom of the Son of man shall be delivered; or, (2.) To the judgment of the great day; that day that shall burn as an oven, and consume the proud, and all that do wickedly; that will be such a day of trouble as never was, to all those whom Michael our Prince stands against.

3. He will work salvation for his people; "At that time thy people shall be delivered, delivered from thine enemies, and mine enemies, and mine enemies shall they be delivered by Antiochus, even all those that were marked for preservation, that were written among the living," Is. iv. 3. When Christ comes into the world, he will save his spiritual Israel from sin and hell, and will, at his second coming, complete their salvation, even the salvation of as many as were given him, as many as God had predestinated in the beginning, v. 4. They were written there before the world, and will be found written there at the end of the world, when the book shall be opened.

4. There shall be a distinguishing resurrection of them that sleep in the dust, v. 2. (1.) When God works deliverance for his people from persecution, it is a kind of resurrection; so the Jews relief out of Babylon was represented in vision, (Ezek. xxxvii,) and so the deliverance of the Jews from
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Antiochus, and other restorations of the church to outward glory, were as life unto the dead. Many of them who had long slept in the dust of obscurity and calamity, shall then awake, some to that life and honour and comfort which will be lasting, everlasting, but to others, who, when they return to their prosperity, will return to their iniquity, it will be a resurrection to shame and contempt, for the prosperity of fools will but expose them and their folly. (2.) When, upon the appearance of Michael our Prince, heaven is prepared, many of them who sleep in the dust, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be awakened by it, to take upon them a profession of religion, and shall rise out of their heathenism or Judaism; but since there will be always a mixture of hypocrites with true saints, it is but some of them who are raised to life, to whom the gospel is a salvation unto life, but others will be raised by it to shame and contempt, to whom the gospel of Christ will be a salvation of death unto death; and Christ himself set for their fall. The net of the gospel encloses both good and bad.

But, (3.) It must be meant of the general resurrection at the last day; The multitude of them that sleep in the dust, shall awake; that is, all, which shall be a great many. Or, Of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, they shall awake, and shall inherit the inheritance; (v. 20.) The Jews themselves understand this of the resurrection of the dead, at the end of time; and Christ seems to have had an eye to it, when he speaks of the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of damnation; (John v. 29.) and upon this the Jews are said by St. Paul to expect a resurrection of the dead both of the just and of the unjust, Acts xxvii. 15. And nothing could come in more seasonable, or more proper, for, under Antiochus's persecution, some basely betrayed their religion, others bravely adhered to it. Now it would be a trouble to them, that, when the storm was over, they could neither reward the one, nor punish the other; this therefore would be a satisfaction to them, that they would both be recompensed according to their works in the resurrection. And the apostle, speaking of the pious Jews that suffered martyrdom under Antiochus, tells us, that though they were tortured, yet they accepted not deliverance, because they hoped to obtain this better resurrection, Heb. xi. 35.

5. There shall be a glorious reward conferred on those who, in the day of trouble and distress, being themselves wise, did instruct many. Such were taken in particular notice of the prophets, (ch. xxvii. 33.) that they should do eminent service, and yet should fall by the sword and by flame; now if there were not another life after this, they would be of all men most miserable; and therefore we are here assured that they shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just; (v. 3.) They that are wise; (that are teachers, so some read it,) for particular notice hath been taken by God of them that have wisdom themselves, should communicate it to others, they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, shall shine in glory, heavenly glory, the glory of the upper world, and they that by the wisdom they have, and the instructions they give, are instrumental to turn any, especially to turn many, to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. If they have wisdom, and they shall be witnesses of God's glory; the saints in the future state, for all that are wise, wise for their souls and eternity. A man's wisdom now makes his face to shine; (Eccles. viii. 1.) but much more will it do so in that state where its power shall be perfected, and its services rewarded. (2.) The more good any do in this world, especially to their brethren, the greater reward shall be in the world in the other world. They that turn men to righteousness, that turn sinners from the errors of their ways, and help to save their souls from death, (Jam. v. 20.) will share in the glory of those they have helped to heaven, which will be a great addition to their reward in the world to come. They who have obtained mercy of him to be faithful and successful, and so are made burning and shining lights in this world, and shall shine very bright in the other world, shall shine as the stars. Christ is the Sun, the Fountain of the lights, both of grace and glory; ministers, as stars, shine in both, with a light derived from him, and a diminutive light in comparison of his. When that light, like the resurrections, it will be a glory infinitely transcending their deserts. They shall shine as the stars of different magnitudes, some in lesser, others in greater, lustre; but whereas the day is coming when the stars shall fall from heaven as leaves in autumn, these stars shall shine for ever and ever, shall never set, never be eclipsed.

6. That this prophecy of these times, though scaled up now, would be of great use to them that should live then, v. 4. Daniel must now shut up the words, and seal the book; because the time would be long ere these things would be accomplished; and it was some comfort that the Jewish nation, though, in the infancy of their return from Babylon, while they were few and weak, they met with obstructions in their work, yet they were not to let their religion till a long time after, when they were grown to some strength and maturity. He must seal the book, because it would not be understood, and therefore would not be regarded, till the things contained in it were accomplished; but he must keep it safe, as a treasure of great value, laid up for the ages to come, to whom it would be of great service; for many shall then run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. Then this hid treasure shall be opened, and many shall search into it, and dig for the knowledge of it, as for silver. They shall run to and fro, to inquire out copies of it, shall collate them, and see that they be true and authentic; they shall read it over and over, shall meditate upon it, and run it over in their minds; discern, they shall discourse of it, and talk it over among themselves, and compare notes about it, if by any means they may sift out the meaning of it, and thus knowledge shall be increased; by consulting this prophecy on this occasion they shall be led to search other scriptures, which shall contribute much to their advancement in useful knowledge; for then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, Hos. vii. 7. Wherefore, when knowledge shall be increased, must take pains, must not sit still in slothfulness and bare wishes, but run to and fro; must make use of all the means of knowledge, and improve all opportunities of getting their mistakes rectified, their doubts resolved, and their acquaintance with the things of God improved; to know more, and to know better, what they do know. And let us here see reason to hope that, (1.) Those things of God, which are now dark and obscure, will hereafter be made clear, and easy to be understood. Truth is the daughter of Time. Scripture-prophecies will be expanded by the accomplishment of them; therefore they are given, and for that explanation they are reserved. Therefore they are told us before, that when they do come to pass, we may believe; (2 Pet. iii. 19.) Those are things which would be despised and neglected, and thrown away as useless, shall be brought into reputation, shall be found to be of great service, and be brought into request; for divine revelation, however slighted for a time, shall be magnified and made honourable, and, above all, in the judgment of the great day, when the books shall be opened, and that book among the rest.

5. Then I Daniel looked, and, behold there stood other two, the one on this side...
of the bank of the river, and the other on the other side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river. How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and said by him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. 3. And I heard, but I understood not; then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? 4. And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up, and sealed till the time of the end. 10. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. 11. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. 13. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

Daniel had been made to foresee the amazing revolutions of states and kingdoms, as far as the Israel of God was concerned in them; in them he foresaw troublous times to the church, suffering, trying times, the prospect of which much afflicted him, and filled him with concern: now there were two questions proper to be asked upon this head: When shall the end be? And, What shall the end be? These questions are answered and asked here, in the close of the book; and though the comforts prescribed in the foregoing verses, one would think, were satisfactory enough, yet, for more abundant satisfaction, this is added.

1. The question, When the end shall be? is asked by an angel, v. 5, 6. Concerning this we may observe, 1. Who it was that asked the question. Daniel had had a vision of Christ in his glory, the Man clothed in linen, ch. x. 5. But his discourse had been with the angel Gabriel, and now he looks, and beheld, other two, (v. 5.) two angels that he had not seen before; one upon the bank of the river on one side, and the other on the other side, that, the river being between them, they might not whisper to one another, but what they said might be heard. Christ stood upon the waters of the river, (v. 6.) between the banks of Ulai; it was therefore proper that the angels his attendants should stand on either bank, that they might be ready to go one way, and the other the other way, as he should order them. These angels appeared, (1.) To adorn the vision, and make it the more illustrious; and to add to the glory of the Son of man, Heb. i. 6. Daniel had not seen them before, though it is probable that they were there; but now when they began to speak, he looked up, and saw them. Note, The further we look into the things of God, and the more we converse with them, the more we shall see of those things, and still new discoveries will be made to us; they that know much, if they improve it, shall know more. (2.) To confirm the discovery, that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses the word of God might be established. Three angels appeared to Abraham. (3.) To inform themselves, to hear and ask questions; for the mysteries of God's kingdom are things which the angels desire to look into, (1 Pet. i. 12.) and they are known to the church, Eph. iii. 10. Now one of these two angels said, When shall the end be? Perhaps they both asked, first one, and then the other, but Daniel heard only one. 2. To give in answer to this question: They are clothed in linen, of whom we read before; (ch. x. 5.) to Christ our great High Priest, who was upon the waters of the river, and whose spokesman, or interpreter, the angel Gabriel had all this while been. This river was Hiddekel, (ch. x. 4.) the same with Tigres, the place whereabout many of the events prophesied of would happen; therefore is the scene laid. Hiddekel was mentioned as one of the rivers that watered the garden of Eden; (Gen. ii. 14.) fitly therefore does Christ stand upon that river, for by him the trees in the paradise of God are watered. Waters signify people, and so his standing upon the waters denotes his dominion over all; he sits upon the flood, (Ps. xxix. 10.) he that is on the sea, (Isa. xli. 16.) as upon the earth, was the Son of God, and led Christ, to show that this was he, in the days of the flesh, walked upon the waters, Matth. xiv. 23. He was above the waters of the river; (so some read it) he appeared in the air over the river. 3. What the question was; How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? Daniel would not ask the question, because he would not pry into what was not for his good, nor concern himself with inquiring into times and the reasons, which the Father has put in his own power, Acts i. 7. But that he might have the satisfaction of the answer, the angel put the question in his hearing. Our Lord Jesus sometimes answered the questions which his disciples were afraid or ashamed to ask, John xvi. 19. The angel asked as one concerned, How long shall it be? This s^sv^es the question; the angel sets the period of the end of these wonders, these suffering, trying times, that are to pass over the people of God. Note, (1.) The troubles of the church are the wonder of angels. They are astonished that God will suffer his church to be thus afflicted, and are anxious to know what good he will do his church by its afflictions. (2.) Good angels know no more of things to come than God is pleased to discover them, much less do evil angels. (3.) The holy angels in heaven are concerned for the church on earth, and lay to heart its afflictions; how much more then should we, who are more immediately related to it, and have so much of our peace in its peace? 4. What answer was returned to it, by him who is indeed the Numberer of secrets, and knows things hid in the heavens, (ch. vi. 25.) he says, (1.) Here is a more general account given of the continuance of these troubles, to the angel that made the inquiry: (v. 7.) that they shall continue for a time, times, and a half; a year, two years, and a half year, as was before intimated, (ch. vii. 23.) but the one half of a prophetic week; some understand it indefinitely, a certain time for an uncertain time, it shall be for one time, a consummation time for times, a longer time yet, doubt to what it was thought at first that it would be; and yet indeed it shall be but half a time, or a part of a time; when it is over, it shall seem not half so much as was feared. But it is rather to be taken for a certain time; we meet with it in the Revelation, under the title sometimes of three days and a half, put for
three years and a half; sometimes forty-two months, sometimes 1260 days. Now this determination of the time is being confirmed by an oath. The man clothed in linen lifted both his hands to heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, that it shall be so. Thus the mighty angel whom St. John saw, is brought in, with a plain reference to this vision here, standing with his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and with his hand lifted up to heaven, swearing. Daniel will be made alive by the God of heaven in the midst of his enemies. The Mighty One that Daniel saw, stood with both feet on the water, and swears with both hands lifted up. Note, An oath is of use for confirmation; God only is to be sworn by, for he is the proper Judge to whom we are to appeal; and lifting up the hand is a very proper and significant sign to be used in a solemn oath.

[2.] It is illustrated with a reason; God will suffer him to prevail till he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people. God will suffer him to do his worst, and run his utmost length, and then all these things shall be finished. Note, God's time to succour and relieve his people, is when their affairs are brought to the last extremity; in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen that Isaac is saved just then when he lies ready to be sacrificed. Now the event fixed from which the time of the trouble is to be dated; from the taking away of the daily sacrifice by Antiochus, and the setting up of the image of Jupiter upon the altar, which was the abomination of desolation. Then they must reckon their troubles to begin indeed, when they were deprived of the benefit of public ordinances; that was to them the beginning of sorrows. It was living in poverty and disgrace; and when his power seemed to be quite scattered at his death, and his enemies triumphed over him, he obtained the most glorious victory, and said, It is finished.

[2.] The time of the trouble; it shall last 1290 days; three years and seven months, or, as some reckon, three years, six months, and fifteen days; and then, it is probable, the daily sacrifice was restored, and the abomination of desolation taken away, in remembrance of which the feast of dedication was observed even to our Saviour's time, John x. 24. Though it does not appear by the history, that it was a daily so long to a day, yet it appears that the beginning of the trouble was in the one hundred and forty-fifth year of the Seleucidae, and the end of it in the one hundred and forty-eighth year; and either the restoring of the sacrifice, and the taking away of the image, were just so many days after, or some other previous event that was remarkable, that it was done must to please the citeu. The time is particular times fixed in the scripture-prophecies, which it does not appear by any history, sacred or profane, that the event answered, and yet no doubt it did punctually; as Isa. xvi. 14. [3.] The completing of their deliverance, or at least a further advance towards it; which is here set forty-five days after the former, and, some think, points at the 13th of Nisan, which was the second day of the unfasting the temple. Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to that time. It is said (1 Mac. vi. 16.) that Antiochus died in the one hundred and forty-ninth year of the kingdom of the Greeks, and (2 Mac. xx. 28.—x. 1.) that the Macedons, having a divine conduct, recovered the temple and the city. Many good interpreters make these to be plain practical days, that is, so many years; and date them from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; but what events they then fall upon they are not agreed. Others date them from the corruption of the gospel-worship by the antichrist; whose reign is confined by the Apostle to 1800 days, that is, years, at the end of which he shall begin to fall; but thirty years after, he shall be quite fallen, at the end of 1290 days; and whoever lives forty years longer, to 1335 days, will see glorious times indeed. Whether it looks so far forward or no, I cannot tell; but this, however, we may learn, First, That there is a time fixed for the period of the church's troubles, and the bringing about of her deliverance, and that this time will be punctually observed to a day. Secondly, That this time must be waited for with faith and patience. Thirdly, That, when it comes, it will abundantly recompense us for our long expectations of it. Blessed is he who, having waited long, comes to it last, for he will then have reason to say, Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him. 11. The question, What the end shall be? is asked by Daniel, and an answer given to it. Observe, 1. Why Daniel asked this question: it was because, though he heard what was said to the angel, yet he did not understand it, v. 8. Daniel was a very intelligent man, and had been conversant in visions and prophecies, and yet here he was fuddled; he did not understand the meaning of the time, times, and the part of a time, at least, not so clearly and with so much certainty as he wished. Note, The best men are often much at a loss in their inquiries concerning divine things, and meet with that which they do not understand. But the better they are, the more sensible they are of their own weakness and ignorance, and the more ready to acknowledge it. 2. What the question was; O my Lord, What shall be the end of these things? He directs his inquisition, not to the angel that talked with him, but immediately to Christ, for to whom else should we go with our inquiries? What shall be the final issue of these events? What do they tend to? What will they end in? Note, When we take a view of the affairs of the church in particular, the question is this, What will God do by and by? We cannot but think, What will be the end of these things? We see things more as if they would end in the utter ruin of God's kingdom among men; when we observe the prevalence of vice and impiety, the decay of religion, the sufferings of the righteous, and the triumphs of the ungodly over them, we may well ask, O, my Lord, what will be the end of these things? But this must satisfy us in general, that all will end well at last. Great is the truth, and will prevail at long run. All opposing rule, principality, and power, will be put down, and holiness and love will triumph, and be in honour, to eternity. The end, this end, will come. 3. What answer is returned to this question. Beside what refers to the time, (v. 11. 12.) of which before, here are some general answers. Daniel, with which he is dismissed from further attendance.

[1.] He must content himself with the discoveries that had been made to him, and not inquire any further; "Go thy way, Daniel; let it suffice thee that thou hast been admitted thus far to the fore sight of things to come, but stop here." 1353, 1353. 1352, 1352. 1351, 1351. 1350, 1350. 1349, 1349. 1348, 1348. 1347, 1347. 1346, 1346. 1345, 1345. 1344, 1344. 1343, 1343. 1342, 1342. 1341, 1341. 1340, 1340. 1339, 1339. 1338, 1338. 1337, 1337. 1336, 1336. 1335, 1335. 1334, 1334. 1333, 1333. 1332, 1332. 1331, 1331. 1330, 1330. 1329, 1329. 1328, 1328. 1327, 1327. Go thy way, and record what thou hast seen and heard, for the benefit of posterity, and covet not to see and hear
more at present." Not. Communion with God is not our continual feast; this world is sometimes and we must to be witnesses of Christ's glory, and we say, Is good to be here; but we must go down from the mount, and have there no continuing cit- These that know much, know but in part; and still see there is a great deal that they are kept in the dark about; and are likely to be still the vail is rent; hitherto their knowledge shall go, but, no further; Go thy way, Daniel, satisfied with what thou hast known.

(2.) He must not expect that what had been said to him would be fully understood till it was accomplished: The words are closed up and sealed, are involved in perplexities, and are likely to be so, till the time of the end, till the end of these things: they were till the end of all things. Daniel was ordered to seal the book to the end of the end. Is. 4: 4. The Jews used to say, When Elias cometh he will tell us all things. They are closed up and sealed; the discovery designed to be made by them is now fully settled and completed; nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it, for it is closed up and sealed, ask not therefore after more.

Nescire velle quae Magister maximus docere non vult, erudita inscript a est

-He has learned much, who is willing to be ignorant of that which the great Teacher does not choose to impart.

(3.) He must count upon no other than that, as long as the world stands, there will still be in it such a mixture as now we see there is of good and bad, v. 10. We long to see all wheat, and no tares, in God's field; all corn, and no chaff, in God's floor; but it will not be till the time of gathering, till the winnowing-day comes; both must grow together unto the harvest. As it has been so, it is, and will be, The wicked shall do wickedly, but the wise shall understand. In this, as in other things, St. John's Revelation closes as Daniel's did; (Rev. xxi. 11.) He who is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he who is holy, let him be holy still.

1. There is no remedy, but that wicked people will do wickedly; and such people there are, and will be, in the world, to the end of time. So said the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceeds from the wicked; (1 Sam. xxix. 13.) and the observation of the moderns says the same. Bad men will do bad things; and a corrupt tree will never bear forth good fruit; do men gather grapes of thorns, or bring forth good things from an evil tree? No, says the apostle, There is nothing new under the sun; the natural products of wicked principles and dispositions. Marvel not at the matter then, Eccl. v. 8. We are told before, that the wicked will do wickedly, we can expect no better from them; but, which is worse, none of the wicked shall understand. This is either, First, A part of their sin they will not understand, they shut their eyes against the light, and none so blind as they that they see not. They shall do wickedly, because they will not understand. If they did but rightly know the truths of God, they would readily obey the laws of God, Ps. lxxxi. 5. Willful sin is the effect of willing ignorance; therefore they will not understand, because they are wicked; therefore they hate the light, and come not to the light, because their deeds are evil, John iii. 19. Or, Secondly, It is not that they will do wickedly, but the wicked are doing wickedly, and therefore God has given them up to Mindlessness of mind, and has said concerning them, They shall not understand, nor be converted and healed, Matth. xiii. 14, 15. God will not give them eyes to see, because they will do wickedly, Deut. xxix. 4.

2. Yet, bad as the world is, God will secure to himself a remnant of good people in it; still there shall be some, there shall be many, to whom the providences and ordinances of God shall be a savour of life unto life, while to others they are a savour of death unto death.

First. The providences of God shall do them good. Many shall be purged, and made white, and tried, by their troubles, (compare ch. xi. 35.) by the same troubles which but stir up the corruptions of the wicked, and make them do more wickedly. Note, The afflictions of good people are designed for their trial; but by these trials they are purged, and made white, and tried, and the evils that are, intended to be, shall be reserved, and the purposes of God's grace shall be accomplished.

Secondly. The word of God shall do them harm. We receiving the word with all readiness; but storing up in the word, the wise shall understand. Those who are wise in practice, shall understand doctrine; those who are influenced and governed by the divine law and love, shall be illuminated with a divine light. For if any man will do his will, he shall know the truth, John vii. 17. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser.

4. He must comfort himself with the pleasing prospect of the happy issue of his death, in judgment, and to eternity, v. 13. Daniel was now very old, and had been long engaged both in an intimate acquaintance with heaven, and in a great deal of public business on this earth. And now he must think of bidding farewell to this present state; Go thou thy way till the end. [1.] It is good for us all to think much of going away from this world; for when a man is going, and must be gone, the way of the all the earth. That must be our way; but this is our comfort, We shall not go till God calls us to another world, and till he has done with us in this world, till he says, "Go thou thy way, thou hast finished thy testimony, done thy work, and accomplished as a hireling thy day: therefore now, Go thy way, and leave it to others to take thy room." [2.] When a good man goes his way from this world, he enters into rest; Thou shalt rest from all thy present toils and toil, and shalt not see the evils that are coming on the next generation. Never could a child of God say more pertinently than in his dying moments, Return unto thy rest, O my soul. [3.] Time and days will have an end; not only our time and days will have an end, but a very great number of them will have an end at length; yet a little while, and time shall be no more; but all its revolutions will be numbered and finished. [4.] Our rest in the grave will be but till the end of the days; and then the perfect rest will be happily disturbed by a joyful resurrection. Job foresaw this when he said of the dead, Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep; in dying that then they shall, Job xix. 12. [5.] We must stand in our lot at the end of the days. In the judgment of the great day, we must have our allotment according to what we were, and what we did, in the body; either, Come, ye blessed, or, Go, ye cursed; and we must stand for ever in that lot. It was a comfort to Daniel, it is a comfort to all the saints, that whatever is to be done in the day of time, they shall have a happy lot in the end of the days, and have their lot among the chosen. And it ought to be the great care and concern of every one of us, to secure a happy lot at last in the end of the days, and then we may well be content with our present lot, welcome the will of God. [6.] A believing hope and prospect of a blessed lot in the heavenly Canaan, at the end of the days, will be an effectual support to us, when we are going our way out of this world, and will furnish us with living comforts in dying moments.